

“No Child Left Inside”

by Lois Lauer Program Chair

If you think kids are still riding their bikes or climbing trees these days, you're probably wrong. Most are in front of the TV, computer, iPhone or iPod screen. The unbelievably sad fact is that children ages 8-18 spend 6.5 hr/day with electronic media and ½ hour a week outdoors!



Exploring the lakeshore

Photo by Lois Lauer

Why and how has this happened? Children today spend less time outdoors for one or more of the following reasons: they have fewer places to play and explore outdoors, they are heavily scheduled and have less free time, they choose comfortable (temperature controlled) and attractive (often high-tech) activities, or they perceive the outdoors as being more dangerous. But according to research collected by the Children and Nature Network (childrenandnature.org), children are smarter, more cooperative, happier and healthier when they have frequent opportunities to play outdoors. Spending time outdoors has proven to be beneficial for a wide range of childhood diseases and problems, including obesity, diabetes, depression, stress, hyperactivity, and poor academic performance. Childhood outdoor experience has also been shown to be the best predictor of environmentally responsible adult behavior! So, not only does getting kids outdoors help them, it also helps the health of our planet.

So we as Sierrans have a lot of great reasons to promote outdoor experiences for kids! How can we do this?

- We can encourage kids to get outside!
- We can support organizations that provide outdoor exploratory experiences for kids.

- We can encourage our elected officials in Washington to support pertinent legislation.

On July 14, 2011, “No Child Left Inside” bills were introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate. The bills require states to promote environmental literacy and to partner with organizations to create outdoor and environmental education programs. Our two Illinois senators, Mark Kirk (R) and Dick Durbin (D), have each co-sponsored the Senate bill (S.B. 1372). Jesse Jackson is the only Illinois representative from the Sauk-Calumet region to co-sponsor the House bill (H.R. 2547) so far.

Please thank Senators Kirk and Durbin and Representative Jackson for supporting the bills, and write or call other representatives to ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 2547, the “No Child Left Inside Act of 2011.

And, by all means, get outside yourself – every chance you get!

“What a Long Strange Trip...”

by Steve Baker, former Chair

With apologies to the Grateful Dead, it's probably timely to announce that after 31 years with this Group, I've resigned as Chair to let some fresh faces take up the cause. Strangely enough, the Sauk-Calumet Group first coalesced around a scheme by the State to trade the Rice Lake Conservation area, home to a major collection of migratory and otherwise rare birds, for Banner Marsh, a motley collection of abandoned strip mines. Banner Marsh has grown into a quality location in its own right, and Rice Lake is still intact as a result of sustained advocacy by people who saw the value of such sites.

And the challenges never end. Just check the appropriations bills from the U.S. House for the EPA, which is under attack by the tea party gang. Dozens of attacks on environmental protection are finding traction while states remove protections in the name of economic development. Pro-environment, grass-roots leaders are still needed as badly as ever. Maybe that could be you.

We meet on the 2nd Monday of each month at the Frankfort Library for our program meetings. Why not drop by, meet a few new folks around the pizza table after the meeting, and sign on to help with the next challenge. The planet has to be self-sustaining ... well ...forever. You can help keep it that way!

Speak Up to Keep a Strong EPA

by Paul Strand, Conservation Co-Chair

Lately, the Tea Party wing of the Republican Party has been pushing for an end to the Environmental Protection Agency, or at least for enough budget cuts to strip the agency of much of its funding. This anti-government effort of budget cutting fervor is gripping Washington these days. The goal is to take us back to the days before 1970 when the EPA was established by President Richard Nixon. The EPA was charged with the responsibility of protecting human health and the environment by writing and enforcing regulations based on laws passed by Congress.

Do you remember what it was like before the EPA? In early October 1962, when I was still in high school and living in Des Plaines, my dad and I took a southbound trip through Chicago to enjoy a camping trip in the Indiana Dunes State Park. I had been to the Dunes a couple of times with family and friends during previous summers, but my dad and I wanted to see it with fall colors. As we headed south to Indiana by way of the Chicago Skyway (the Borman had not been finished at that time), we came to the point where the Skyway crosses Wolf Lake, just east of the Indiana state line. We were suddenly enveloped in a thick, brown fog. The fog no doubt came from the many factories that poured out smoke. Gagging from the smell, we immediately rolled up our windows. I wondered how anyone could live in the area and breathe the foul air. When I eventually moved to the southern suburbs, I talked to people in the area who remembered that the fog was called "the smell of money." It was not uncommon either for small streams in that area to have several inches of oil coating their shorelines, due to unregulated dumping.

Natural areas were destroyed without thought in those days as well. In August 1961, I remember going past the site of the Zion Nuclear Plant, north of Illinois Beach State Park. The plant was to be built on the shore of Lake Michigan on a beautiful, unique *native* prairie. In the right season, a sea of pink Button Blazing Star (*Iatris aspera*) flourished, as did other native flora. Decision makers chose the location of the power plant without regard to the environment. There was no EPA then.

The EPA and Clean Air Act have cut dangerous pollution and have prevented premature deaths and reduced asthma attacks over the last 41 years. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the total value of the net benefits of the Clean Air Act to Americans reached \$50 trillion as of August 2, 2011.



Your Voice Needs to be Heard Now !

There will be a vote this September in the U.S. House on HB 2584 – the 2012 Interior and Environment Funding legislation. Take the opportunity NOW to contact your U.S. Representative about this bill. If you want to see a **strong** EPA, urge your Congressman to DEFEAT HB 2584. This is a spending bill that outlines the budget for the Department of the Interior and the EPA. The bill is an all-out attack on our air, water, lands and wildlife, and it includes nearly forty anti-health, anti-environment amendments, including an amendment that would prevent the EPA from reducing climate change emissions under the Clean Air Act.

As I write this, it is unclear if the EPA will even survive. Both U.S. House of Representatives Michelle Bachmann (R-MN and presidential candidate) and Joe Walsh (R-IL) support *eliminating* the EPA. Other Representatives may feel the same or may want to strip the EPA of as many powers as possible and will vote "yes" on the bill. As a constituent, your voice matters, just as every vote matters.

Contact your U.S. House of Representative about HB 2584 today. Remember, a NO vote saves the EPA as it is today: a YES vote strips the Agency of its power.

Illiana Expressway

by Connie Heinrich, editor

Plans are being made for the construction of an expressway that would connect I-65 in Indiana to I-57 and I-55 in Illinois. It would provide an alternative to driving the

congested I-80 / I-94 corridor between Illinois and Indiana. Now is the time to get in your comments while the planning is in its earliest stage. The proposed routes all cut through Will County so this plan definitely affects our Sauk-Calumet members that live south of I-80. For information and to see a map, visit www.illianacorridor.org

Legislative Update

by Mary Lubertozi, Political Education Chair

We ended the Illinois General Assembly session with some wins and some losses this year.

First, the losses: two Sierra Club priority bills that we *opposed* succeeded despite our efforts in the 2011 General Assembly session. The two Dirty Coal bills that we opposed have unfortunately been passed and signed by the Governor. SB 1553 (Leucadia) and SB 2169 (Power Holdings) will force Illinois residents to buy 25% of their gas from these synthetic natural gas plants at above market rates for the next 10-30 years. These plants produce pollution that is associated with serious health problems; and while the company proposes to capture a portion of the carbon dioxide that it produces, there are no federal health and safety standards to protect communities.

However, we have had some success. One Sierra Club priority bill that we supported passed the General Assembly and is being considered by the Governor. The Clean Energy bill, SB 1652, that includes ComEd's "smart grid" provision, will significantly expand clean energy and energy efficiency, and it will allow for a modernized electric grid that will empower consumers to make smarter energy decisions. Illinois may soon begin deploying rooftop wind and solar, thanks to two major policy changes in the legislation. SB 1652 is now on the desk of Governor Quinn who has expressed opposition to the rate increases that would pay for the grid upgrade. Governor Quinn has long been a champion of both clean energy and consumers. Hopefully, he is now in a position to improve the consumer protections in the bill so the clean energy provisions can take effect.

Another "win" is the protection of the Department of Natural Resources budget. After staggering cuts to the IDNR budget over the last decade, the agency was successful in avoiding further disproportionate cuts. Reductions were made, but new provisions in how the Department can administer existing funds should help them avert additional cuts in staff and programs.

The Sauk-Calumet group encompasses a large geographic area; and state legislators who represent major numbers of our members include:

Senators:

Emil Jones (D) – 14	Edward Maloney (D) – 18
Maggie Crotty (D) – 19	Toi Hutchinson (D) – 40
Christine Rodogno (R) – 41	A. J. Wilhelmi (D) – 43

Representatives:

Monique Davis (D) – 27	William Davis (D) – 30
Wm. Cunningham (D) – 35	Kelly Burke (D) – 36
Kevin McCarthy (D) – 37	Al Riley (D) – 38
Lisa Dugan (D) – 79	Anthony DeLuca (D) – 80
Renee Kosel (R) – 81	Emily McAsey (D) – 85
Jack McGuire (D) - 86	

Unfortunately, most of our legislators voted for the Dirty Coal bills in opposition to the pro-environment position. The exceptions were Representatives Emily McAsey, who voted against both bills, and Monique Davis and Renee Kosel, who voted against SB 2169, the Power Holdings bill. All of our Senators voted for the two bills.

There was more support, however, for SB 1652, the Clean Energy – "smart grid" bill. All of our Senators voted for this bill. Support by the Representatives was mixed, with William Davis, Lisa Dugan, Renee Kosel, Kevin McCarthy (also a Chief Co-Sponsor), and Jack McGuire voting for it. The remaining Representatives voted against it.



Fall Volunteer Workdays

If you enjoy working outdoors, please consider volunteering in one or more of your local natural areas. Contact information for workday schedules is listed below:

Cook County Forest Preserves www.fpdcc.com

Will County Forest Preserves www.fpdwc.org

Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie
www.fs.usda.gov/midwin

Bartel Grassland - every 3rd Saturday of the month.
9:00 – 12:00 Contact Dick Riner 708-720-5683

Kickapoo Prairie - every 4th Saturday of the month.
10:00 – 1:00 Contact Eileen Klees 773-238-4221

Orland Grassland - 1st & 3rd Saturdays of Sept. & Oct.
Contact Suzanne Koglin 708-349-4913

Powderhorn Prairie - every 3rd Saturday of the month
9:00 - 12:00 Contact Alice Brandon 312-356-9990

Remember to dress for the weather, wear sturdy shoes or boots, and bring work gloves. Where no website is provided, call the listed contacts for directions and details

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at: sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

Please include your full name and address, and reference the article on which you are commenting.

Sauk-Calumet Group People You Should Know

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John Field* Treasurer / Web Site	630-852-8202
Connie Heinrich* Newsletter	815-476-6171
Jerry Heinrich* Conservation, Co-chair (West), Midewin Liaison	815-476-6171
Georganne Higgins* Membership	815-936-9040
Lois Lauer* Programs / Publicity	708-923-1550
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Mike Rzepka River Watch Program	708-532-1419
Rich Treptow Publications	708-747-0649

*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee

Sauk-Calumet Program Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 p.m. on the second Monday of every month at the Frankfort Library. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public.

Sept. 12 What's the Story of Your Food?

Rich Treptow and Lois Lauer will show and discuss the inspirational film *Nourish*. In the film, you will learn about the current food revolution that is awakening in us a desire to learn about the source and quality of our food. You will also learn about the impact of our food system and the benefits of organic farming, fair-trade products and community supported agriculture.

Oct. 10 Lake Michigan Water Issues

Jeanette Neagu of the Lake Michigan League of Women Voters will speak about maintaining the health and sustainability of the Lake Michigan ecosystem. Jeanette will show slides and discuss water quality, invasive species, and pertinent legislative issues.

Nov. 14 Mapping the Canadian Wilderness by Canoe

Avid canoeist Doug Blount joins a team of explorers each summer to map the portage trails in remote areas of the Canadian wilderness in and around Wabakimi Provincial Park. Doug will show a short video of Wabakimi and share stories of his travelling and mapping adventures in this far northern wilderness.

Dec. 12 Solar Power!

Peter Gorr of Palatine recently installed one of the largest residential solar electrical systems in the state. It will provide all the heating, cooling, and lighting power his home needs plus extra electricity for which he can get credit from ComEd. Peter will show slides and describe how he planned for this installation, and how he will benefit.

Jan. 9 Members' Slide Night

Calling all members! Please bring slides, digital images, or prints of your latest outdoor experience, be it a grand adventure on the other side of the globe or butterflies in your own backyard. Call Lois Lauer at 708-923-1550 if you have photos to share.