



Sauk-Calumet Group

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Illiana Moving Forward

by *Connie Heinrich, Editor*

As reported in the spring edition of our newsletter, the Illiana is a proposed expressway that would connect I-65 in Indiana with I-55 in Illinois. It was originally proposed as an alternate route to I-80, a congested highway that has given motorists headaches for years. Urban sprawl has created obstacles to developing a route that would actually provide a viable alternative to I-80. As a result, the Indiana and Illinois Departments of Transportation (INDOT / IDOT) have proposed that an expressway be built further south than originally anticipated. This proposed expressway now appears to be more of a "make jobs" project.

Three alternative routes for the Illiana have been developed, A3S2, B3 and B4, although the B4 alternative is just a slightly modified version of B3. There is also a "no build" option. The B3 route, which happens to be the original preferred alternative, would connect I-55 at Wilmington with I-65 north of Lowell, Indiana. The route of B3 as it heads east from I-55 crosses the Kankakee River, cuts through a number of homes and subdivisions on the north side of Wilmington, and passes through the Des Plaines Conservation Area. It then passes just south of Midewin and the proposed third airport near Peotone. After that, it follows an almost straight course to I-65. The modified route, B4, would diverge from the B3 route at a point near the Illinois state line and angle south of Lowell, Indiana.

Because the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) stipulates that all viable alternatives must be presented for public review for a project of this type, the A3S2 route was added as a viable alternative. The A3S2 route is north of B3 and north of Midewin. It would connect to I-55 near the town of Channahon, then cross the Des Plaines River. It would pass through a corridor between Midewin's northeast corner and the village of Manhattan, cut across the top of the proposed third airport, then angle south to Lowell, Indiana where it would connect to I-65 at the same point as B3.

Although alternatives are being offered for public review and comment, IDOT is really promoting the B3 route. The July issue of IDOT's *Illiana News* states that Corridor B3 is the least costly to construct, the shortest and most flexible route, and it will attract more truck traffic. IDOT also contends that B3 would have less impact to buildings, wetlands, water bodies, parkland, and forested areas. No mention was made of impacts to farmland. While IDOT considers B3 to be the best route, the impacts to Midewin will be significant even though the B3 route alignment has been adjusted slightly further to the south away from Midewin's border.

IDOT acknowledges that the B3 route would primarily be used by trucks coming from nearby intermodal facilities, and the agency is considering locating an interchange on Route 53. Route 53 is also old Route 66 at that point, a highway that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Route 53 also bisects Midewin and runs along the east side of the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. IDOT gives no consideration to the impact that a large volume of trucks traveling on Route 53 would have as they pass through the middle of Midewin. Currently, intermodal truck traffic tends to travel north toward I-80. Neither is there much consideration given to the visitors who come from all over the world to travel Route 66. After all, aren't bumper-to-bumper trucks increasingly part of our American experience too?

Many of you are probably asking where is the state of Illinois going to get the money to build a new expressway. Illinois is broke! One plan is for the Illiana to be a public/private venture. Private investment would be used to fund the building of the highway. Of course, that means that the Illiana will be a toll road because investors expect to get a return on their investment. Interestingly, much of the projected traffic data provided by IDOT is based on freeway usage. Who exactly will want to use this highway if it levies hefty tolls? Obviously, the B3 route is further from high-density population centers so it would seem less desirable from an investment perspective. IDOT cites statistics that show an increase in population in the study area by 2040. An investor would have to be very patient to wait that long for a return.

Now that the Draft EIS has been published, it is incumbent on members of groups such as ours to find the flaws in the logic behind locating an expressway near the southern boundary of Midewin. IDOT is not looking for a public vote, but rather looking for substantive reasons to select one or none of the alternatives.

Illiana DEIS Available

The Tier One Illiana Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement is now available for public review and comment. It can be found at public libraries within the study area or on the project website at www.IllianaCorridor.org. Comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted through August 29, 2012.

Quinn Signs No More Landfills Bill

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison – Calumet Region

With great excitement, a large group surrounded Governor Pat Quinn as he explained the importance of signing the bill that would give all residents of the Lake Calumet area peace of mind about new or bigger landfills. The law prohibits landfills from operating or expanding within Cook County. The most recent catalyst for action was the threat by Land & Lakes (operators of the River Bend Prairie landfill at 138th and Cottage Grove) to annex Chicago property in order to expand their Dolton landfill, thereby allowing 20 more years of dumping.

Governor Quinn mentioned that an article in the *Chicago Tribune* from 1988 referred to a young community organizer that helped residents fight against the many landfills on the southeast side of Chicago. His name: Barack Obama. The Governor saved the pen used to sign the bill to send to President Obama to assure him that there would be no more landfills here.

Represented at the signing were IDNR's Mark Miller who emphasized the importance of the Millennium Reserve and protecting the land, Alderman John Pope (10th Ward) who alerted the community leaders of the latest landfill threat, and Tom Shepherd (Southeast Environmental Task Force) who made Dolton Mayor Ronnie Lewis aware of the problem. Mayor Lewis publicly thanked

Tom and was grateful for the huge effort made by area residents and groups to defeat the landfill. Cheryl Johnson (daughter of Hazel Johnson, the founder of People for Community Recovery) said her mother is smiling down now, and she insisted that Barack Obama learned everything he knows about landfills from her mother. Also speaking was Illinois State Senator Don Harmon, the author of the bill, and Illinois State Senator Donne Trotter, the co-signer of the bill. The bill was originally drafted in the Illinois House by Representative Marcus Evans. The many groups and allies who supported this bill thank them for their wisdom and courage in fighting the landfills.



More Landfill Victories Likely

by Jerry Heinrich, Sauk-Calumet Group Member

Congratulations to Calumet area citizens on your victory ensuring that all landfills in the area (and in all of Cook County) will be closed and no new landfills will be forthcoming. Indeed, this victory does officially put an end to landfills affecting the everyday lives of those that live in the area. Calumet area citizens have paid their dues.



However, can the singular action of having restricted the disposal of household waste in one's backyard be considered an environmental victory if the result of the action is only to have the waste transported to a landfill in someone else's backyard? A true environmental victory might include an improved, area-wide program to reduce the volume of waste generated, to allow for more reuse, and to promote recycling by local recycling facilities. The fact is, the moratoriums on landfills in Cook County, DuPage County, or any other county are really not environmental victories if the waste is just collected and trucked to some more distant landfill – "out of sight, out of mind". In time, the citizen's that live in the vicinity of operating landfills will rise up, protest the existence of the stinking landfill in their backyard, have the landfill closed, and celebrate another victory over another imposing landfill. Unless we do something different as a society, the string of victories over landfills will unfortunately continue.

And, after the last landfill battle is won, where will we dispose of our waste?

Legislative Update

by Mary Lubertozzi, Political Education Chair

The Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club endorsed two of our area state legislators for the fall election:

State Senator Toi Hutchinson, D-40

State Representative Al Riley, D-38

More information on endorsements will be available in early September. We encourage you to check the Illinois Chapter website for a full list of endorsements and backgrounds of endorsed candidates. You should also be alert to communications from your local election commissions (e.g. Cook County Clerk's Office or Will County Clerk's Office) regarding which districts you are now in, or you can request information from their offices if needed. Due to the redistricting that occurred based on the 2010 census, district lines for all Congressional Districts and State Legislative Districts were redrawn. All candidates on the ballot for these positions will be running in the newly drawn districts. Your personal district numbers for this election may be different from what they were in the 2010 election.

Thank You, Gov. Quinn

By Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison – Calumet Region and Peggy Salazar

On Friday, August 10, Governor Quinn vetoed SB3766, a bill that would have given Leucadia National Corp. a strong incentive to build a coal-to-gas plant on Chicago's southeast side. The veto of SB3766 is a big victory in our fight against Leucadia's coal plant, but the fight is not over. Leucadia still has guaranteed 84% funding of their project through a previously passed bill. However, there are numerous hurdles Leucadia has in front of it before the plant can go forward. Leucadia must obtain pollution credits from the Illinois Pollution Control Board in order to operate on the site. They also must apply for air and water permits with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Leucadia doesn't even own the land that they want to develop.

We will have further opportunities to engage in this process, and we will need your help to succeed once again! The community bombarded the Governor's office with 700 phone calls, 11,000 signatures on petition cards, and a 200-person rally at the Thompson Center in response to SB3766. If you want to get involved in the continuing effort to stop Leucadia's plans to build a coal-to-gas energy plant on the southeast side, please contact Kady McFadden at kady.mcfadden@sierraclub.org. She is heading up our "Beyond Coal" / Environmental Justice Alliance of the Southeast Side of Chicago.

Sharefest 2012

Received for posting from WillCountyGreen.com



Household Hazardous Waste & more recycling in New Lenox

Where: *Spencer Trail School Parking Lot
1701 Spencer Road, New Lenox*

When: *Saturday, Sept. 8th 9am-3pm*

Since 2007 the Village of New Lenox churches have joined together to offer a long list of ways for the community to assist one-another and the environment. This year continues in that spirit with volunteers being sought to pick up litter, donate blood, be part of a job fair, perform a small home repair or donate to the food pantry. Will County is proud to be part of this event and offers a special thank you to the New Lenox Township for their financial partnership in paying for a one-day collection of hazardous products. Clean out the clutter in your home, including items to donate or simply discard:

- Household Hazardous Materials (Motor Oil, Paint, Pesticides, Driveway Sealant, Mercury, Fluorescent Lights, etc.)
- Electronics (TV, Computer, VCR, Printer, Camera, etc.)
- Foam Plastic (meat trays, block, clamshells, no peanuts)
- Wood (plain, painted, stained, treated, with or without nails)
- Scrap Metal (keys, hangers, siding, brake rotors and drums, chassis parts, pipes, wires, metal rods, broken hinges, etc.)
- Clothing, home goods (furniture ReUse, drapes, blankets, etc.)
- Books



There's Lots to See in the Lake Calumet Area

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison – Calumet Region

The Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF) on the far southeast side of Chicago is again offering educational tours to one and all. Their nationally-acclaimed "Toxics to Treasures" tour that combines history, politics and environmental information, has been adapted for a variety of tours. Tours in July included a **Down in the Dumps Eco-Tour** that showed participants why the communities of South Chicago and Dolton wanted a permanent ban on expanding landfills. During the tour, they also learned of appropriate alternatives. On July 30, historian Rod Sellers and environmentalist Tom Shepherd led participants on the **Southeast Chicago Industrial History Tour**. Participants visited historic industrial sites, remarkable bridges, the historic town of Pullman, and the Calumet Industrial Heritage Project (where Chicago's steel-making history and artifacts are being preserved). On July 24, the leadership of SETF enjoyed a private tour of Testa Produce, a Platinum LEED certified facility at 45th and Racine.

THE NEXT SCHEDULED TOURS ARE:

Sept. 22 – Chicago Energy Bus Tour

Join SETF for a unique coach bus tour of Chicago's energy-producing facilities from the newest and most innovative to the grimmest and most antiquated. Visit the obsolete coal-fired power plants plus new wind, solar and geothermal options that are quickly beginning to be utilized. This tour also features a ride through the futuristic, massive BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana.

Oct. 20 – Open Spaces / Green Places Tour: *A Journey through the Millennium Reserve / Calumet Core Region*

Join SETF, Chicago Park District staff, and Friends of the Parks as they open your eyes to the vast open spaces of Chicago's southeast side. You'll see lakes, Chicago's "other river" - the Calumet, streams, ponds, marshes, a man-made waterfall, a world-class golf course built atop a garbage dump, and the tranquil preserve surrounded on three sides by landfills where a pair of Bald Eagles have nested and are raising their young. You will visit the nearly 600 acres of marshes and green space that the Chicago Park District has recently acquired and will learn what the plans are for these special places and for the Ford/Calumet Environmental Center. Share in the excitement of the developing Millennium Reserve plans slated for this unique landscape within the city.

Each tour costs \$40 and includes a light lunch. The tours start at 10:00 a.m. and end at approximately 2:30 and originate at the Chicago Cultural Center at Randolph and Michigan Avenue. Space is limited on these tours so sign up early at setaskforce.blogspot.com or call 773-646-0436.

Sauk-Calumet Outings

Oct. 27 - Saturday: *The Umpteenth Annual Fox River Color Cruise* - You've not seen Fall colors 'til you've seen them on the bluffs of the lower Fox River. If there's water enough to float, we'll have a great time and maybe explore a cave or waterfall while we're at it. You'll need to arrange for your own canoe/kayak for insurance reasons. Otherwise, bring a lunch and dry clothes, just in case. Pre-registration is required.

Nov. 25 - Sunday: Join us on our annual *Walk-Off-the-Turkey Hike*. We usually hike through the woods at Starved Rock State Park and stop for Cajun food afterward. Pre-register please.

For pre-registration or for further information, e-mail Steve Baker at trinitysb@msn.com

Volunteer Workdays Near Your Home

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 or
www.fotfp.org

Will County Forest Preserves www.fpdwc.org

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

Dress for the weather (layers) and wear gloves and sturdy shoes or boots.

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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Sharon Rolek Conservation Liaison, Calumet Region	773-646-0990
Mike Rzepka River Watch Program	708-532-1419

*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 with the exception of June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public.

The Frankfort Library at 21119 Pfeiffer Road is located on the south side of Lincoln Highway (Rte.30) between LaGrange Rd. and Harlem Ave.

Sept. 10 Reptiles of the Chicago Area

Herpetologist Mark Bavetz will share pictures and information about both the common and the rare reptile species of the Chicagoland region.

Oct. 8 Asian Carp

Shedd Aquarium Biologist Philip Willink will discuss what's true and untrue about the Asian Carp threat to the Great Lakes – also efforts to control the carp migration into Lake Michigan from the Illinois River.

Nov.12 Star Trails through the Night Sky

Photographer Bob Moffitt will show his time lapse movies and photos of star trails through the moonlit night sky that were taken during numerous trips to Arches National Park and other southwest locations.

Dec. 10 Update on Community Efforts to Manage Climate Change

We will look at what's happening with the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement and the nine cities in our group's area that have been working on becoming more energy-efficient "Cool Cities."

Jan. 14 Member's Slide Night