

SIERRASCAPE

Eastern Missouri Group - Missouri Chapter Volume 36, Number 1 - Spring 2020



Lindbergh High School students help with trail maintenance on a Sierra Club outing at Hawn State Park for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day*
- *St. Louis County Inches Its Way Toward Flood Control*
- *Wires for Wind & When Will Ameren See the Light?*
- *Local Youth Activists Work Towards Climate Justice*
- *...more!*



**SIERRA
CLUB**

Enjoy, Explore & Protect the Planet

SIERRASCAPE

Volume 36, Number 1
Spring 2020

Sierra Club Eastern Missouri Group (EMG) is located at the Missouri Sierra Club office:

2818 Sutton Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63143
314-644-1011 & emg@missouri.sierraclub.org

EMG Monthly Meetings

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month from 7:00-8:30 pm at the Sierra Club Office. Contact the Sierra Club office with questions.

Contribute Material

SierraScape is published twice a year (Spring and Fall). Articles, photos, ideas and other member contributions are encouraged!

To contribute material contact **Caitlin Zera** at caitlinzera@gmail.com or 314-324-2417.
Deadline for Contributions for Fall 2020 Issue is June 12, 2020.

EMG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Chair: Ken Schechtman 314-721-7207
ken@wubios.wustl.edu

Treasurer: Robert Roberson
314-570-7944
bluefox12b40@gmail.com

Secretary: Caroline Pufalt*
314-721-7207 cpufalt@sbcglobal.net

Chapter Delegate: Tim Elwell
314-397-2997 timelwell@hotmail.com

Member at Large: John Feldmann
636-288-1055 johnfeldmann@msn.com

Member at Large: Ségolène Renazé
314-239-0014
segolene.renaze@hotmail.fr

Member at Large: Glenn May
314-647-0518
glenn.may@sbcglobal.net

Member at Large: Caitlin Zera
314-324-2417 caitlinzera@gmail.com

*non-Executive Committee member

EMG ACTIVITY COMMITTEES

Members of the Eastern Missouri Group Sierra Club work on a wide range of issues to promote a healthy environment and protect wild places for all to enjoy. Below are committees and activity areas. Reach out today to learn more about how you can help the Sierra Club explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

Calendars & Merchandise

Caroline Pufalt
314-721-7207
cpufalt@sbcglobal.net

Conservation

Caroline Pufalt
314-721-7207
cpufalt@sbcglobal.net

Energy

Henry Robertson
314-647-5603
henryr874@gmail.com

Fundraising

*Looking for Volunteer
Committee Chair*

Inspiring Connections Outdoors

Tim Pekarek
tapekarek@gmail.com

Lemonade Brigade

Jim Young
314-664-9392
jas.young@sbcglobal.net

Membership

*Looking for Volunteer
Committee Chair*

Newsletter Production

Caitlin Zera
caitlinzera@gmail.com
314-324-2417

Newsletter Committee

Tim Elwell
Caroline Pufalt
Caitlin Zera

Outings

Mark Schuermann
636-394-6265
mark_schuermann@sbcglobal.net

Political Action

Debi Pratt
underdogdeb2@gmail.com

Programs & Speakers

John Feldmann
314-862-3916
johnfeldmann@msn.com

Trail Maintenance

Becky Denney
636-751-3158
Dardenney3@gmail.com

Website

Mary Ballou
636-346-4077
balloulee@hotmail.com

Executive Committee

314-644-1011
Call the Office

Sierra Club Response to COVID-19

At this writing, we are all in the early stage of what looks like it will be a long period of adjustment to the COVID-19 threat. Check our website for information on our office, outings and meetings: <https://www.sierraclub.org/missouri>. We will postpone in-person activities as long as needed to protect our health and the health of others. All outings have been postponed until further notice. Please check park websites for updated information about open parks and conservation areas and follow all recommended guidelines to keep everyone safe while enjoying the outdoors. Sierra Club continues to monitor the evolving situation and updates about the status of in-person outings can be found online.

A message from Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director

"We're prioritizing the health of our volunteers, activists, staff, and entire community. The COVID-19 pandemic is a social and economic justice issue, as well as a health crisis. Protecting our community is our number one priority, and we recognize that we have a social responsibility to be good actors in keeping others safe, too.

This is a good time to help your local community deal with the economic impacts of COVID-19. Consider donating to a local food bank or other entity which can help folks hurt most by the economic slowdown. And don't forget to contact your Federal, State and Local officials to let them know you support a robust response to our country's health & financial needs, especially those of vulnerable populations."

St. Louis County Inches Its Way Toward Flood Control

BY CAROLINE PUFALT
Conservation Chair

Climate change is bringing more precipitation to the Midwest with increased intense storms and snows. We can see the result in increased flooding along both large and small Missouri rivers in both rural and urban areas.

To reduce further flood impacts, we must plan for flood resilience. Resilience requires leaving room for the floodplain, elevating buildings and infrastructure still at risk, accepting different land uses for some acres, and determined enforcement of development limits.

This is never easy, but Missouri has recently made progress. The state has a flood study underway, focusing especially on rural areas in northwest Missouri which has experienced repeated, severe flooding. Levee setbacks are at least on the agenda. The state legislature is considering a bill to limit tax subsidies for floodplain development projects. In St Louis county such a tax

subsidy, called Tax Increment Financing (TIF) was recently rejected for a controversial floodplain-related development in Maryland Heights. Also, cities in the Lower Meramec River basin are considering flood resilience options prepared for review by the Army Corps of Engineers. The options are challenging, but early indications are that citizens and local governments recognize the need to embrace changes.

Finally, at this writing the St Louis County Council is considering a bill which would limit building in unincorporated areas so that any new development must not raise flood water level over one inch. Currently that limit is one foot. If the county passes this change it would help reduce rising flood heights. This is a reasonable step; a one-inch limit has already adopted by Jefferson County.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

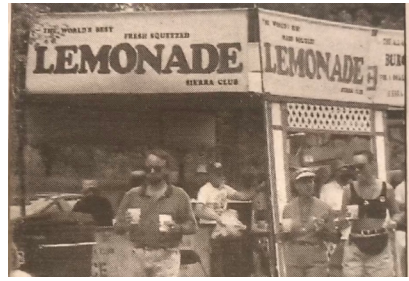
Contact Caroline at
cpufalt@sbcglobal.net.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day

BY CAROLINE PUFALT
Conservation Chair

It's easy to take a fifty-year tradition for granted. But as Earth Day turns 50 this April, we know, now more than ever, that we certainly cannot take the Earth for granted. Earth Day began in 1970 as an effort to raise awareness of environmental problems of that era, which included staggering water pollution, species loss, and more. That first Earth Day was centered in Washington DC, but the event grew and helped inspire a movement. By 1990 Earth Day was an international event. Here in St. Louis City events go back to 1989. Since 1990 Sierra Club EMG has participated with tables at which folks are encouraged to learn about issues, take action on legislation, take a hike and more. To fund our year-round work, in 1990 we sold our famous hand-squeezed lemonade and we started selling the Burger- For-A-Small-Planet. This was the inspiration of our organizer, Jim Young. Of course, we persist today selling lemonade and pretzels. Jim has been our invaluable leader on fundraising at Earth Day and

other events. Without his dedication, Sierra Club would not be thriving - and all those lemons don't squeeze themselves! Every year Sierra Club volunteers help with preparing and selling lemonade. Other volunteers work at our information table to share the Sierra Club story with visitors. Thanks to all!



Top:Lemonade at Earth Day 1995. Bottom: Lemonade at Earth Day 2019.

Former Intern Advocates for Climate Action

BY TIM ELWELL
EMG Executive Committee Member

Former Sierra Club intern Grace Tedder helps lead the St. Louis chapter of the Sunrise Movement, which is a youth-led political movement that advocates for climate action. Grace and her fellow volunteers, Matt Anderson and Sam Jones presented at the General Meeting on February 27 about The Green New Deal. Grace shared some points of emphasis about the effort.

Why is advocating for the Green New Deal as a policy change an effective tool for solving climate crisis concerns?

The Green New Deal is the only plan we've seen so far that addresses the climate crisis at the scale that we actually need. The Green New Deal views climate change as part of the same system of

oppression as socioeconomic and racial injustices in our country. And we can't isolate [climate change] from the other major problems in our society. Black, brown and indigenous communities (among other vulnerable communities) have been through centuries of oppression, exclusion, and environmental injustice. They're the Americans who have done the least to cause global warming, and yet they're often hit first and worst by climate chaos. The Green New Deal will guarantee a job with a livable wage for all, provide all people with high-quality healthcare and adequate housing, and ensure access to clean air, water, and food, which are essential parts of combating the climate crisis. *Continued on page 7.*

Protecting Democracy & Public Health in 2020

BY ASHTON KUEHNEL
Democracy Organizer

Missouri is one of 14 states to not expand the federal Medicaid insurance program, leaving over 200,000 Missourians without access to healthcare. Tired of our State Legislature's inaction, the Sierra Club and our coalition members launched an initiative petition campaign to put this issue on the November 2020 ballot.

The Sierra Club recognizes that climate change is causing more health problems for Missourians. Health insurance coverage helps mitigate those impacts for our most vulnerable neighbors. Health threats include: increased risk of heat stroke and heat related cardiovascular disease complications, more infections from vector-borne illnesses like West Nile Virus and Lyme disease, and asthma complications from air pollution, which disproportionately impacts low income and African American communities. As our state transitions to a clean energy economy, we need to guarantee access to health coverage for **all** workers and communities. Since the campaign launched in August of 2019, 45 members and volunteers have gathered over 5,800 signatures for the Healthcare for Missouri campaign. We thank circulators for their work!

Our Republican legislators in Jefferson City have made attacking our democracy a priority this legislative session. As of February 19, 2020, we have seen five bills filed to overturn the redistricting portion of the Clean Missouri amendment, which was passed by voters with 62% support in 2018. The new proposals would not

only overturn the will of voters, but also set up Missouri to become one of the most gerrymandered states in the country. Additionally, the proposed redistricting process would not account for Missouri children, which will leave a large and important portion of our population uncouncted. Fair redistricting would

mean elected officials would have to pay attention to what Missouri voters want. For example - Missourians support the environment - just look at the statewide votes on the Parks, Soil, and Water Tax in 2016 and the Renewable Energy Standard in 2008. Because of gerrymandered lines, politicians felt they could ignore the voters - so those politicians turned around and voted to sell off Eleven Point State Park and weaken the Renewable Energy Standard. That is not how democracy is supposed to work. We believe that voters should choose the politicians, NOT that politicians should be able to choose which voters they want. We anticipate that our Governor will disregard voters and make us vote yet again on this issue in August.



Intern Adam Hemauer collects signatures for Medicaid expansion at Affinia Health Care Center. Photo by: Ashton Kuehnel

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact Ashton Kuehnel at Ashton.kuehnel@sierraclub.org.

Important: Elections Postponed due to COVID-19



Mark your calendars! All Missouri municipal elections previously scheduled for April 7, 2020, are postponed to **June 2, 2020**. More information can be found on the St. Louis County Government's Election Board webpage.



Write your elected officials! Stay updated on ballot issues through the Sierra Club website & social media. Continue to contact your representatives about the environmental issues you care about. Visit senate.mo.gov/LegisLookup/ to find out your representatives & their contact information.

Wires for Wind & When Will Ameren See the Light?

BY HENRY ROBERTSON

Energy Chair

If you've followed the saga of the Grain Belt Express (GBE), it never seems to end. The GBE is a private, wind-only electric transmission line designed to carry low-cost Kansas wind power to the east, dropping off 500 megawatts in Missouri where municipal utilities are eager to take advantage of it. We fought for five years to help the line win approval from the Public Service Commission, which finally came last year.

All along GBE has faced determined opposition from a small group of landowners along the route who worry that it will spoil their views and their property values. Now that their appeals have failed, they're looking to the legislature in Jefferson City. Bills have been introduced that would deny Invenergy, the company that would build the GBE, the power of eminent domain. One of these, House Bill 2033, has passed the House. As I write, it is in the Senate, which blocked a similar bill last year. If it passes, a single landowner could stop this multi-state project. Invenergy has now sweetened the pot by promising to add rural broadband capacity to the line's infrastructure. Call your senator and ask for a NO vote on HB 2033.

Missouri burns more coal for electricity than any other state but Texas. Ameren Missouri is the worst offender. Coal has declined to the point where the average American utility gets about 30% of its power from coal. Ameren's still at 75%.

This stubborn refusal to let go of its aging coal plants is starting to cost Ameren. It's been found liable in federal court for violating the Clean Air Act at its Rush Island plant in Festus. Fixing that problem could cost Ameren hundreds of millions of dollars.

Moody's investor service recently found that Ameren is at the highest risk from climate change of any utility in the country. Then Morgan Stanley put Ameren in a group of four utilities that

could most benefit in earnings if it shuttered its uneconomical coal plants and invested in renewables instead. The investment sector has more clout with Ameren than the Sierra Club, I must admit, and they're sending increasingly loud and frequent signals.

When will Ameren see the light? One could almost feel sorry for them. They're starting to do some good things but they can't stop doing the bad things, like a driver who charges his electric car from solar panels but keeps his SUV.

Ameren did build a community solar project near Lambert Airport to let customers subscribe to solar power (for a higher rate). It sold out in no time, but Ameren is keeping a waiting list for possible future projects. Here's something you (I'm sure most readers are Ameren customers) can do: Add yourself to Ameren's community solar waiting list. Log on to your account or create one, click on Programs, then Community Solar. There's no immediate obligation.

Ameren has had to yield to the demands of major corporations for more renewable energy. They created a "green tariff" program called Renewable Choice for these customers to subscribe to wind power that Ameren will provide at no cost to other ratepayers. Ameren also made municipal governments eligible to subscribe, which means that Ameren may end up helping St. Louis meet its goal of 100% clean electricity by 2035. For that we're grateful.

Let's encourage Ameren to go on adding wind and solar to their system. But when they do this without retiring their aging coal plants, they're making us ratepayers pay for more generating capacity than we need. At some point the Public Service Commission will have to do something about excess capacity — but it mustn't be letting them burn more coal.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact Henry Robertson at
henryr874@gmail.com.

MO Legislature: Mid-Session Report

BY MICHAEL BERG

Sierra Club Organizer

Due to the global COVID-19 crisis the legislature left early for spring break. As their last act, the House passed an emergency budget to fund governance during time of pandemic (House Bill 2014). Astoundingly, the Republican leadership of the Missouri House rejected every Democratic amendment to the bill to utilize reserves of federal funds to provide emergency medical equipment and citizen relief. In the largest proposal (House Amendment 8), Representative Jon Carpenter (D - Kansas City) pleaded to House members to utilize \$87 million as he read a desperate plea from former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, presently trapped in Italy, to mobilize a World War II style response to the present crisis. Carpenter and Gingrich's pleas fell on deaf ears, as the House rejected the amendment, with all but two Republicans voting no and all Democrats voting yes. The following is a summary of issues we were dealing with and continue to monitor.



FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT: Due to climate change and constricted rivers, flooding is a bigger and bigger problem every year in our state. It does not make sense to make this problem worse – we should not give tax incentives for developments in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated floodplains. We support Senate Bill 570 and House Bill 1612, which would stop these incentives.



PROTECTING OUR PARKS: In the last several years there have been several legislative attempts to sell state parks. We successfully stopped them all. This year no bill has been filed, but an amendment was added to a bill on the House floor to sell the beautiful Eleven Point State Park. This amendment failed. We will continue to be vigilant.



GRAIN BELT EXPRESS: We oppose Senate Bills 597 & 604 and House Bill 2033. More in the article on Page 6.

Former Intern Advocates for Climate Action, cont.

What are you most excited to work on in your role as a volunteer with the Sunrise Movement this year?

Right now, I'm really fired up about the Earth Day climate strike. We're just getting started planning locally, but we're working to partner with other grassroots organizations to build stronger coalitions and networks for pushing for the type of transformative climate action that the Green New Deal outlines.

How can Sierra Club members be involved in/support the Sunrise Movement?

Sierra Club members can join us in actions and at meetings and other events. We're hosting an Earth Day Climate Strike (details to follow) that we'd love to have Sierra Club members at! We also are engaging in electoral

work and voter registration efforts, and welcome Sierra Club members to join in with that as well; and as a grassroots youth-led organization, we can of course always use donations!



Sunrise Movement Volunteers Matt Anderson, Grace Tedder, & Sam Jones present at February's EMG monthly meeting.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

For more information visit www.sunrisemovement.org.

SIERRASCAPE

**EASTERN MISSOURI GROUP
MISSOURI CHAPTER-SIERRA CLUB
2818 SUTTON BOULEVARD
ST. LOUIS, MO 63143-3010**

DATED MATERIAL