The Sierra Club has officially endorsed Senator Barack Obama for President. Simply put, we believe Obama shares our concerns, values and vision for a clean energy future. He agrees with us that it’s not time for half steps; that what America needs is bold, transformational action that will break the chokehold Big Oil has on our economy and Washington politics, provide short-term relief for American families and long-term solutions for our energy and economy problems.

Highlights of Obama’s Energy strategy include:

Providing relief for families struggling to pay their energy bills. His plan is to provide families with a $1,000 tax credit and stimulus checks paid for by taxing the oil companies’ record profits.

Investing $150 billion over the next ten years in alternative sources of energy - wind and solar power, and advanced biofuels, in the commercialization of plug-in hybrid cars, and development of a new digital electricity grid. This investment will create up to 5 million good-paying jobs that cannot be outsourced and will create the billions in new economic activity that will put America back on the path to prosperity.

Requiring 25% of US electricity to come from renewable sources by 2025 and increasing energy efficiency in the US 50% by 2030.

Attacking global warming. Obama has presented a bold and comprehensive plan for addressing global warming which includes a “cap and auction” system that would cut our carbon dioxide emissions 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Rejecting drilling as the answer to our energy woes. Obama knows that drilling off of our beaches and destroying our last special places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in order to pad Big Oil’s bottom line won’t do anything to lower gas prices today, tomorrow, or even a decade from now.

This Fall, The Sierra Club hopes to engage as many members in candidate campaign activities as possible. “The Obama campaign is putting together the largest and most sophisticated field operation in presidential history, and there will be meaningful ways for Sierra Club volunteers to engage,” said Bob Bingaman, the National Field Director for the Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club will be working to recruit team leaders and volunteers for the Obama campaign and for a number of pro-environmental races in seven target states - Colorado, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Members from other states will also be encouraged to get involved by traveling to our target states to volunteer. Ken Brame, member of the Club’s Political Committee, adds, “I hope Club members will do as much as they can for the Obama campaign and the Club-endorsed Congressional and state legislative candidates. Whether you can contribute a whole month or just an hour a week, volunteer help will make a big difference.”

For those Club members who are able to travel to other locations to help with efforts on the ground, or for members in target states who are able to help by housing out-of-town volunteers, please visit: http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageNavigator/Obama2008

- Tom Valtin, National Sierra Club Staff
This year may be the biggest for the famed “Gulf Dead Zone”. Floods in the upper Midwest have washed huge quantities of chemical fertilizers into tributaries of the Mississippi River moving an even higher than usual load of nitrogen from the watershed downstream to the Gulf of Mexico. The load of nitrogen causes hypoxia (lack of dissolved oxygen) in the river itself and in a huge area of the gulf, larger than the state of Massachusetts. The causes are fertilizer application to agricultural lands, the removal of upland wetlands due to development, and discharges of inadequately treated sewage. The culprit is anhydrous ammonia as Nitrogen from agricultural industry, and phosphorous from point sources of sewage dumped into the watershed. The problem is not limited to the Mississippi River watershed. Thirty to forty percent of water quality impaired waters in the US are listed as impaired by nitrogen and/or phosphorous.

I recently attended Sierra Club Mississippi River Issue Team and Clean Water Network meetings in Dubuque Iowa. We had farmers there and we had a gulf fisherman there to tell us their points of view. The fisherman was George Barishic. He says the hypoxic zone requires him to take his boat much farther out in the gulf to catch shrimp, and that the oyster beds are being badly starved of oxygen. With the price of fuel so high, he does not know if he can continue in business. The farmers say that with the incentives built into the current farm bill and the high prices they are getting for their products, they cannot afford not to plant and fertilize row crops of corn and soy beans. A few farmers are trying better care for the soil with four year crop rotations and building up of organic components in the soils that are ours to bear. The farmers say that with the incentives built into the current farm bill and the high prices they are getting for their products, they cannot afford not to plant and fertilize row crops of corn and soy beans. A few farmers are trying better care for the soil with four year crop rotations and building up of organic components in the soils that are currently excluded from subsidies for corn ethanol.

Why should we in Louisiana care? It is true to say the dead zone starts upstream. But the economic costs and cultural impacts on Gulf Coast fisheries are ours to bear. Numerous plans have been developed over the last fifteen years which identify the problem and a range of solutions. Early plans were voluntary and incentive based. The result has been complete failure to reduce the rate of increase in the dead zone. A few states make efforts to control non-point source pollution but the USEPA does not use the authority it has to monitor and set water quality standards.

At our meeting in Dubuque we came up with a list of things that we can do:

• We can push for passage of the Clean Water Restoration Act (HR 2421/ S1870) which will allow for protection of wetlands currently excluded from coverage and resolve jurisdictional issues not well defined in the existing law.

• We can support more effective lobbying to increase conservation portions of the farm bill (HR6124) and to do away with subsidies for corn ethanol.

• We can work towards creation of a regional entity that brings together parties in watershed states for a multidisciplinary approach to problem resolution like what was is being done with the Chesapeake Bay.

• We can push for better coordination within USACE for writing of 404 permits. We can work towards creation of a National Estuaries Partnership.

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This is a regional and federal problem and must be addressed on those levels with long term commitment to restoration of Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico water quality.

For further information on this issue go to www.cleanwaternetwork.org. The Sierra Club Delta Chapter is a member of the Clean Water Network.
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ome my dear friends and colleagues in the fight for the environment in Louisiana, I am bidding you fare-
well. My family is relocating to Portland, Oregon, in November. Despite the miles, we will still remain connected to my hus-
band’s native state and the community that so warmly adopted me as one of their own. I anticipate returning several times a year.

I wanted to reflect over the last seven years that we have been in the trenches together. Sometimes we forget to cel-
ebrate our victories although I know we learn from the losses. We didn’t stop the deterioration of the coast but we have made great strides in garnering national attention to our plight. A Cat-3 hurricane named Katrina helped make that national attention possible; now the question is whether we can get the funds we were promised actually released in order to restore our natural barriers rather than concentrating on manmade barriers. Some days I wish I had bought stock in concrete!

We were part of the most unusual coalition when Aaron Viles and Darryl Malek Stewart of the Gulf Coast looped us into their hurricane debris plan for future hurricane debris. We concentrated on manmade barriers. Katrina also brought us new partnerships that so warmly adopted me as one of the community, not a single “pleasure sports fishing enthusiast.” Without their help and willingness to serve on the National Radiation team and the Delta Chapter too. I will continue to serve on the National Radiation team and intend to remain active with the club and the Delta Chapter as well. The campaigns that I have mentioned are but a small representation of what the Delta Chapter has been involved in during the seven years that I have been privileged to be a member. I am going to an area where my group has 15,000 members. I intend to keep on remote with the club and keep the focus on the Delta Chapter. I plan to continue to serve on the National Radiation team and the Marine activist team, and I will listen in on the Gulf Restoration Taskforce.

Karstina also brought us some rewards. Never before have New Orleans and its neighboring communi-
ties been so willing to embrace energy efficiency and green building. Holy Cross is now a poster child for sustainability. The Sharp Solar project along with energy retrofitting paid for by the Delta Chapter dollars has benefitted so many people’s lives. Holy Cross has become our spokes-

people preferred insulated mugs that could be sipped while driving and talking on the phone and putting on make-
up and adjusting the car radio. Maybe the appearance of a surfset of outdoor gear, high tech and aggressively mar-
keted, made the old Sierra cup passé, so yesterday. Maybe the cup had become something identified with The Old Peo-

to return. We will always remember the creativity of fishing boats on trailers circling Shell Square. And the Gu-

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To the memory of those who have been fighting on our side, I am both proud and grateful for the fact that I fought with you in the Sierra Club. Ever since the Sierra Club was founded in 1901 by a group of pioneering Sierra Clubbers, the Sierra Club has been involved in issues that have a direct impact on the environment. The club has played a key role in protecting natural resources, fighting for clean air and water, and preserving habitat for wildlife. The Sierra Club has been a leader in the fight for a sustainable future, and I am honored to have been a part of that effort.

Thank you for your support and understanding. We are committed to fighting for a healthy and sustainable environment for all Americans.

I wish you all the best in your future endeavors. Together we have made a difference, and together we will continue to make a difference.

Leslie March

A Farewell Message from Leslie: Reflections from the Past and the Challenges Ahead

I will always remember the creativity of fishing boats on trailers circling Shell Square. And the Gu-

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Leslie March

Earl’s Pearls

Whichever the Sierra Cup? There once were some cups called Sierra from which one could guzzle some Madeira. But they all went away, just why I can’t say, and now they are back and much dearer.

When I joined the Sierra Club, it was such a long ago that John Muir was but a child and had not yet grown his famous beard. One of the images that defined the Sierra Club in those days of yore was the Sierra Cup, a stainless-steel container with a rigid wire rim and handle. It held eight ounces in a relatively shallow bowl so that the handle could slip under the belt and dangle snugly against the hip while a hiker climbed and contemplated the majestic Sierra Nevada. It was handy for heating water or other liquid on a backpacker’s stove; it did service as a scoop, whether for digging a poopy pit or shoveling snow or sand. Proud Sierrans carried their eponymous cups to meet-
ings and on outings as an emblematic vade mecum, an identifying device not unlike a biker’s belt chain attached to a heavy wheel in his jeans.

Embosed on the bottom of the cup was “Sierra Club,” showing that it was the genuine article and not one of the copycat versions peddled by camp-gear catalogs. There was even a gold anodized version that was used at awards ceremonies, suitable for labeling.

The cup was touted not just as a sym-
bo of the Sierra Club, but was said to be more comfortable to use than the popular mess kits of the day from the Boy Scouts and army surplus stores. Those cups were aluminum, not stainless steel, did not have a wire rim, and by the time the edge of one of those cups was cool enough so that the drinker’s lip didn’t blister on contact, the liquid had cooled too. The myth has persisted seemingly for millennia that Sierra cups don’t burn your lips.

Don’t believe it. Although it is true that the wire handle and base will burn in state-of-the-art stainless steel is almost as good a conductor of heat as aluminum. Eager to get some Sierra cups in the newbies’ hands, I climbed out of my tent, I have on reserva-
ted reliance on that persistent myth and forgotten that the rules of thermody-
namics apply to coffee and Sierra cups.

In my cache of camping gear are two Si-
erra cups. They are not the official ones with embossed name but imitations that were given to all who participated in the most memorable Sierra Club trip I’ve ever taken. Many years ago my wife and I rode the raft through the Grand Canyon, drinking daily, including Colo-
rado River water, from the Sierra cups that the outfitter had supplied and which we kept as souvenirs. Still very serviceable and versatile and still burn-
ing lips, the cups have held many refreshments from coffee to wine, from whiskey to ice cream. I have used one for heating milk for cafe au lait while the other was for drinking. They are easily cleaned and don’t break. Then the cups were gone. Not mine, the Sierra Club’s.

Maybe their departure had to do with the general decline in outdoor activities, especially primitive camping. Maybe

If you want to buy one online, the Si-
erra club cup is not available at www.sie-
erraclubgear.com as you may think, but at the “books” link from the main site, www.sieraclub.org. Even going there won’t help. The search slot doesn’t know what you’re talking about. Trying to find an authentic Sierra Club cup online reminds me of the adage, “You can’t get there from here.” The best way to find your authentic Sierra Club cup, and the cup will show up on the books site, I think.

Drink up. The cup may disappear again.

– Earl Higgins

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How Hurricanes Gustav and Ike Affected the Region's Marine Life

One important effect of the hurricanes that may go largely unnoticed and unreported is the massively detrimental effect of the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast’s marine life. The Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, has produced a detailed report (“Hurricane Gustav Fish Kill Report,” 2008) of the fish and marine life killed or disturbed by hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Basinkeeper Dean Wilson, who is also chair of the Delta Chapter Atchafalaya Committee, has been extensively observed and photographed the water quality conditions in the basin. Wilson observed and photographed the water quality conditions in the basin throughout the system. While huge numbers of fish were dead in the basin after the recent hurricanes, Wilson’s report found that 40% of the electric power comes from coal-fired plants. Fewer know that an estimated 7-10% of the country’s total coal production comes from mountaintop removal (MTR) mines in Appalachia. Unfortunately, many Louisiana consumers are linked to MTR through their utility companies which use MTR coal.

First developed around the 1970s with the innovation of massive dragline equipment, MTR is a method of coal mining which entails razing the tops of mountains with dynamite to reach the thin seams of coal buried underneath, and then dumping the crushed remains of the land into valleys. MTR is the cheapest method for coal companies because it is speedy and requires fewer employees than underground mining. The exponential growth of Americans’ energy consumption and the rising demand for low-sulfur bituminous coal has led to more MTR. That means dirtier air, more acid rain, and more global warming emissions. For the rest of us, more MTR leads to more burning of coal, which diverts resources away from alternative energy sources and greater reliance on coal-powered plants, which leads to even more MTR. That means dirtier air, more acid rain, and more global warming emissions. According to some estimates, about 1,200 miles of streams across Appalachia have been altered by the debris off coal. Eight years ago in Kentucky, one broke and released a torrent of over 300 million gallons of thick, toxic sludge which destroyed homes, farmlands, and 100 miles of waterways. Water full of arsenic and mercury, fly-ash, coke, and other toxic waste was released from the Mountaintop Removal (MTR) mining complexes, which hold back the wastewater created by washing the debris off coal.

The tragedy of MTR is not just the abstract notion of “losing” mountains, forests, and streams, however. For West Virginians, Virginians, Kentuckians, and Tennesseans living near the mines, it means undrinkable, rash-inducing water full of arsenic and mercury, flying boulders and earthquakes caused by the blasting, and dramatic depreciation of property value. They also live in the shadow of impoundments – dams that hold back the wastewater created by washing the debris off coal. Eight years ago in Kentucky, one broke and released a torrent of over 300 million gallons of thick, toxic sludge which destroyed homes, farmlands, and 100 miles of waterways.

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4.8% of the coal used in Louisiana power plants may come from MTR mines. Utilities such as Cleco Power LLC, Entergy Louisiana, and Southwestern Electric Power are all connected to MTR mining because some of their plants purchase coal from companies that operate MTR mines in Appalachia. (For more information on your community’s connection to MTR, visit www.givemetourmountains.org/my-connection.)

Rising gas prices opens the prospect of a coal-to-liquid industry which would lead to an even greater reliance on coal. The coal industry is peddling the false solution of converting coal into liquid fuel, but the reality is worse than being topless in Appalachia. Not only does it take one ton of coal to produce just two barrels of fuel, but burning liquid coal also releases double the global warming emissions per gallon as regular gasoline. Replacing our effort on coal with liquid fuel will be one of the largest sources of dangerous air pollution in the United States. Pollution from coal-fired power plants, like the proposed Little Gypsy plant, causes serious respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, and in some cases premature death.

http://www.sierraclub.org/cleanwater/mtr/.

For more information on how you can help, visit http://www.sierrachip.org/cleanwater/mtr/.

A Warm Welcome to Jordan Macha — Our New Conservation Organizer

W e are thrilled to introduce our new Conservation Organizer, Jordan Macha. Jordan will be planning, organizing, and implementing the education and mobilization efforts of our National Coal Campaign in Louisiana. September 22nd was her first day with us and we are excited to have her working with us on this crucial issue for both our state and the nation.

Originally from Houston, Texas, Jordan is a recent graduate from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, with Bachelor’s degrees in political science and Russian.

While at the University of the South, Jordan co-founded the Sewanee Peace Coalition, which works to raise awareness of various human rights issues ranging from the death penalty to the current energy crisis. Through the Sewanee Peace Coalition, she helped establish the annual Sewanee Music Peace Rally and a voters’ registration drive. During her four years of leadership, it grew to be one of the largest progressive organizations on campus.

Last summer she interned with People for the American Way where she developed two grants for the State of Texas, which focused on encouraging youth to become involved in the voting process. Jordan also wrote press releases and various news digests for their national webpage.

Jordan is based in the New Orleans office and she can be reached by email at jordan.macha@sierraclub.org. Feel free to welcome Jordan to the club or share your ideas and experiences.

By Jordan Macha

Over the past year, Sierra Club has revved up its National Coal Campaign to keep coal out of our utility plants. In Louisiana, the Delta chapter is working keep Entergy’s Little Gypsy natural gas plant from converting to a coal-fired plant as well as Louisiana Generating from expanding the Big Cajun plants.

On September 22, 2008, Sierra Club and our coalition partners, Gulf Restoration Network and the Alliance for Affordable Energy, attended a public hearing conducted by Louisiana DEQ regarding the Maximum Achievable Control Technology mercury emission standards air permit for Little Gypsy. Sierra Club asked Entergy to look at cleaner, more efficient energy options that could meet Louisiana’s energy needs — instead of the Little Gypsy repowering project. There are alternative methods to coal, and by looking at our alternatives we can improve public health, boost the economy, and protect the environment.

Coal-fired power plants are one of the largest sources of dangerous air pollution in the United States. Pollution from coal-fired power plants, like the proposed Little Gypsy plant, causes serious respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, and in some cases premature death.

This year, the D.C. Circuit decided that mercury emissions would have to meet strict MACST standards under the Clean Air Act. Setting this new standard demonstrates that mercury emissions are a serious problem, both for the environment and public health. Coal technology has not improved enough to prevent mercury emissions which cause major health risks due to polluted air, land and water.

Currently, the Sierra Club – with the aid of the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic – is filing several EPA petitions regarding the MACST permits for Little Gypsy and Big Cajun I & II. In mid-November, the Little Gypsy petition is due. We plan to hold mercury hair-testing events, rallies and press events leading up to the EPA’s decision. We hope you will join us in this endeavor. We must work to halt the construction of dirty new coal plants, or conversions from cleaner technologies to coal, and direct the proposed investments into energy efficiency, renewable resources, and other forms of clean alternatives. By preventing the Little Gypsy repowering project and the expansion of Big Cajun, we can keep Louisiana’s environment and people safe and healthy.

Are you currently an Entergy consumer? Please email jordan.macha@sierraclub.org. We need to know how many of our current members are Entergy ratepayers.

By Woody Martin

The Sierra Club recently ran a campaign called “Lightbulbs to Leadership” in which more than 300 house parties were held all over the country. The idea of the campaign was to send the message to state governors that to really solve global warming, we need to change more than light bulbs -- we need to change direction and we need bold leadership. The campaign consisted of a series of three videos themed around light bulb jokes (“How many lawmakers does it take...?”) that documented the current lack of leadership on global warming, the fact that the people are ahead of the policymakers on climate change, and the opportunities that will be created by transitioning to a clean energy economy.

On a national conference call during the meeting, Washington Governor Christin Gregoire explained how, in only a few years, her state went from off-the-radar in clean energy to becoming the 3rd largest producer of wind and solar energy in the nation. We also heard from Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope on investing in clean energy and green job development is the way to fight global warming and boost the economy. The result of the meetings was the writing of letters to governors in all fifty states encouraging them to take steps to facilitate conversion to the green economy.

The national campaign was the first of many campaigns the Sierra Club will run to promote clean energy.
As the date of the September 23rd forum drew near, three candidates, Dan Kyle, Wayne Carter, and Ron Johnson, sent their RSVPs. No word from Mayor Kip Holden. Finally, within a day or two of the event, we were told that the mayor was busy with the city/parish recovery from Hurricane Gustav.

The forum, which was held from 7-9 p.m. at the LSU Energy, Coast and the Environment building, was well structured and focused on three aspects of transportation and development: “Smart Growth,” “Complete Streets,” and “Regional Transportation and Development.” LSU professor, Dr. Margaret Reams, moderated the forum.

Unfortunately, the candidates did not seem to be well versed on transportation choices that do not involve widening an interstate or building a bypass or a loop. Anyone who has ever traveled through Baton Rouge, especially post-Katrina, knows that traffic is a nightmare.

Unsurprisingly, most of the vehicles contain only one person: the driver. There is no HOV lane and the transit is not “mass” by any means.

No one brought up the idea that then-transit director, Dwight Brashear (a newcomer from San Diego), wanted to make a reality. Mr. Brashear was hoping to ask the voters to approve a property tax to fund a “Rapid Bus Transit” system that would have featured an express bus that would operate between Denham Springs and downtown Baton Rouge, using Florida Boulevard (Hwy. 190). It’s rapid due to limited stops and the ability of the driver to change a red light signal to a green light signal.

At the last minute, the administration chose to remove it from the ballot. Not long after, Mr. Brashear announced he was resigning to return to San Diego.

While the forum did not attract the mayor or front-page headlines [2], I do think that if we continue demanding efficient transit or rail, sidewalks and bike lanes that all of the time and energy spent planning the forum will not have been for naught.

1 Mayor Holden won the election by a landslide.
2 The Advocate and one of the television stations did run stories on it.

[CONT...]

“LIGHTBULBS TO LEADERSHIP” PARTY

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[CONT...] BATON ROUGE MAYORAL CANDIDATE FORUM ON TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT HELD
Meetings & Events

Be sure to check our website, at http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/ for all of our November and December events, meetings, and outings!

If you are interested in organizing or hosting an event, please contact your local group leader.

The Local Group Leader Contact Information is as follows:

The Acadian Group is the hub of Sierra Club activities in Lafayette, and its surrounding areas. Contact Harold Schoeffler, Acadian Group Chairman at 337-234-4042, or check their website at: http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/acadian/

- The Acadian Group holds its' Board & Conservation Committee meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the Acadiana Symphony Building (412 Travis St., Lafayette, LA) at 6:30 PM.
- Acadian Group of the Sierra Club has a general meeting and hosts a guest lecture on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Acadiana Symphony Building at 6:30 PM.

The New Orleans Group anchors all Sierra Club activities occurring in Southeast Louisiana south of Lake Pontchartrain, centered on the New Orleans metro area.

- The Sierra Club New Orleans Group meetings are now held at the NEW LOCATION at the Audubon Zoo, Dominion Auditorium near the main entrance, 6500 Magazine St. Drive to the front entrance to the Zoo, just off Magazine St. To the right of the Zoo’s main public entrance, go through gate and bear right to the Dominion Auditorium (more details here). There will be signs for directions. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the program starts at 7:00 pm. Admission is free and all are welcome. To get the latest details, call 1-504-836-3062.
- Calendar: If you want information about upcoming Programs, Conservation Committee Meetings, or Executive Committee (ExComm) meetings in our area, go to our online calendar or call 1-504-836-3062. General Programs are open to the public; other meetings are open to all members.

Email neworleans-chair@louisiana.sierraclub.org for info, or check out their website at: http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/neworleans/

For meeting times, contact Leslie March at 985-871-6695 or email neworleans-chair@louisiana.sierraclub.org.

The Honey Island Group covers the North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain including the Covington, Mandeville, Slidell, Hammond and Ponchatoula areas. This group is in transition and will have new events and outings planned soon! Check out their website at: http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/honeyisland/

The Kisatchie Group covers all Sierra Club activities in the northwestern region of the state centered on Shreveport. Contact Jeffrey Wellborn, 318-222-1801, jwellbrn@seaber.com. Check out their website at: http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/kisatchie/

The Baton Rouge Group is where you will find all the Sierra Club action in the Baton Rouge metro area. Contact Ann Shaneyfelt at ashaneyfelt@gmail.com.

There is a monthly “Save the Ales” “meet & greet” every 3rd Wednesday of the month at Chelsea’s (under the overpass on Perkins, http://www.chelseacafe.com)

- The Annual Holiday Party will be on December 14th from 5-8 Location TBD. (check website as we get closer)
- We encourage people to join our Facebook Group. - Baton Rouge Area Sierra Club.

Delta Sierran can be viewed on our website at http://louisiana.sierraclub.org.