



# The Heartland Sierran

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet

The Newsletter of the Thomas Hart Benton Group of the Sierra Club

<http://missouri.sierraclub.org/thb>

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February – April 2011

## Kansas City Nuclear Weapons Plants

Summarized by Patty Brown, THB ExCom

Contrary to Obama's rhetoric about working toward a nuclear weapons-free world, the U.S. is spending billions building three new facilities to produce plutonium pit "primaries" in Los Alamos, NM, to manufacture highly enriched uranium "secondaries" in Oak Ridge, TN and to make and/or procure nonnuclear components for nuclear weapons in Kansas City, MO. The Kansas City Plant (KCP) is the most productive of the eight sites in the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). It produces 85% of all nuclear weapons components. Their workload, the heaviest it has been in 20 years, is expected to last until 2015.

The facilities for handling plutonium and uranium will cost taxpayers up to \$5 billion

each. The new KCP is being built and operated by a private developer, CenterPoint Zimmer, LLC (CPZ). Zimmer "happened" to own the 165 acres of agricultural land that the federal government chose to use. Although the City's Planned Industrial Expansion Authority (PIEA) declared that the site was "blighted," CPZ sold it for around \$26,000 an acre, where farmland



*'KC Peace Planters' and Sierra Club members advocate for green jobs instead of deadly contamination.*

*Photo by Eric Garbison*

typically sells for \$2000–\$4000 an acre, one very tidy profit!

The Missouri legislature created the PIEA to counter urban/industrial blight and spur economic development. They're supposed to recommend to city councils whether or not tax abatements and/or bonds should be implemented. The enabling legislation says that Missouri municipal governments can act positively on a PIEA recommendation only when "the development of such area or areas is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals or welfare of the residents of such city."

KCMO is closing hospitals and schools and laying off city workers, but issued nearly \$700 million in municipal bonds to subsidize a new federal nuclear weapons production plant. The KCMO Council approved this to save 2,100 jobs (with one admirable dissenting vote-of-

*Turn to KC Plant, page 3*

### Eat Local (& Organic)! 13th Annual Exhibition of Farmers

Saturday, March 26, 2011  
Roger T. Sermon Community  
Center  
Intersection of Truman and  
Noland Rd  
Independence, MO,  
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 2, 2011  
Shawnee Civic Center  
13817 Johnson Dr.  
Shawnee, KS, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

--- Meet local organic farmers who can supply high quality fruits and veggies and free range meats & eggs for the coming season.

--- Buy organic seedlings for an early start on your garden.

--- Pick up a free copy of the 2011 Directory of Local Organic and Free Range Food Producers.

--- Free Admittance and Free Parking.

Same locations as last year, but note that the Independence event will be first this year!

Event is organized by the Kansas City Food Circle and Co-sponsored by the Sierra Club.

For more info contact David Lawrence, KC Food Circle at 913-620-8427 or email [kfoodcircle@gmail.com](mailto:kfoodcircle@gmail.com).

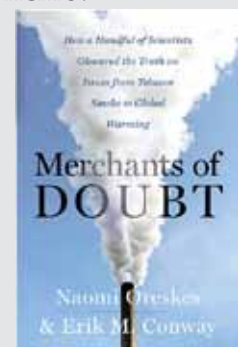


### Nature Lovers' Book Club

"*Merchants of Doubt*" should finally end the debate. A few scientists and advisers, committed to market fundamentalism and deeply connected to politics and industry, aided by a compliant media, have misled the public. If you care about democracy and the planet, join the discussion.

Contact Patty Brown at (816) 737-2804 or [pbbbrn5@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pbbbrn5@sbcglobal.net) to register.

We will meet on four alternate Wednesdays beginning Feb 2 (2/2, 2/16, 3/2, & 3/16), from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4501 Walnut, KCMO.



## General Meetings

**Feb 1 (Tue) Birding for Everyone.** A special meeting featuring birder John C. Robinson.

**Mar 1 (Tue) Electric Cars.** Discussion about potential impacts of electric cars.

**Apr 5 (Tue) Harvesting Wild Edibles.** Meet the "Wild Ones."

**General Meetings** are held the first Tuesday of the month at the Discovery Center, 4750 Troost unless otherwise indicated. Programs are open to the public and begin at 7 p.m.

**Executive Committee meetings** are held the last Tuesday of every month at Central United Methodist Church. Information: call **Claus**, 517-5244.

### The Heartland Sierran

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## Birding For Everyone

### February General Meeting

Instead of our usual monthly program, Sierra Club members have been invited to a special program put on by the Missouri Department of Conservation:

Anita B. Gorman Conservation

Discovery Center

Tuesday, February 1

7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.



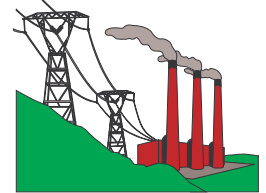
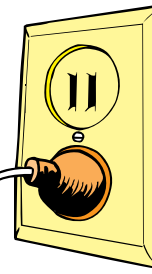
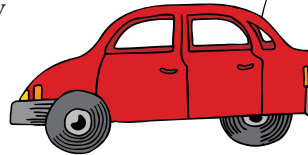
(All ages) Award-winning ornithologist, wildlife biologist and author John C. Robinson has introduced thousands of people all over the world to the joys of bird watching for nearly thirty years. Join us as John shares with us the joys of birding and methods to foster an appreciation of bird watching to a new generation. *THB*

## The Drive to Electrify Our Cars

### March General Meeting

Have you been wondering whether you should buy a hybrid car or wait until plug-in cars are more affordable? Join us on March 1st when John Kurmann will begin the meeting with an overview of gasoline-electric hybrid automobiles and the potential they offer to reduce oil consumption, carbon dioxide emissions, and air pollution.

Then, Craig Volland will address the impacts plug-in hybrids and battery-electric vehicles could have on carbon dioxide emissions and climate change and the changes we need to make to our electricity grid and regulatory system to maximize their benefits.



Craig Volland is the Air Quality Committee Chair of the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club and a long-time activist for transit and more efficient vehicles. John Kurmann is the

lead coordinator of ReEnergizeKC, which focuses on the need to switch to clean energy sources because fossil fuels are becoming increasingly dirty, destructive and expensive. *THB*

## Harvesting Wild Edibles

### April General Meeting

The Kansas City area, and especially Blue Springs, is waking up to a fun, healthy and frugal way to supplement their diets. Frances Matthews learned about wild edibles by gathering them with her family. Later she became a volunteer naturalist for the Missouri Conservation Department at Burr Oak Woods, where wild edible activities are now provided nearly monthly. Phyllis Boyd and several other volunteers (the "Wild Ones") began learning from Frances and each other while collecting edibles and trying out recipes. These ladies will share knowledge of various plants; how, which

parts, and where to collect; and how to prepare them. The April 5 program will focus on springtime edibles, tips on health aspects, safety and survival, plants to see and recipes to sample!

There will also be follow-up activities:

**April 20 (Wed, 1 p.m.) "The Coveted Dandelion," a hike in Blue Springs, MO**—When you see dandelions begin to poke their heads up across your lawn, what do you think of? Many vow to wage war. Let us introduce you to a new flower: the beautiful, versatile, and incredibly delicious and nutritious dandelion! Contact Burr Oak Woods at (816) 655-6263.

*THB*





## KC Plant, from page 1

conscience by Councilman Ed Ford). But why isn't Kansas City prioritizing healthy, sustainable green jobs instead of subsidizing a shrinking, politically vulnerable industry making WMDs! The Vatican declared, "Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st Century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation." Recently the inspector general for the General Services Administration (GSA), the landlord for federal properties at the Bannister Federal Complex, found that environmental monitoring at the old contaminated KCP site was lax and the public was misled about conditions there. Health claims have filed seeking compensation by 1,993 former KCP workers or their survivors (sadly, only 211 have been paid to date). Families of 122 former KCP workers say their family members died due to toxic contamination.

KCMO will own the new KCP. As far as we know this is globally unprecedented. The PIEA will then lease it to CenterPoint Zimmer Holding LLC, who as sub-landlord, will lease it to CPZ. CPZ will then sub-lease the new plant to GSA who will then sub-sub-lease (really!) it to the NNSA.

Because of this convoluted financial scheme (very profitable to CPZ) the KCP isn't included in the NNSA's annual budget. This way it's outside of typical Congressional review and authorization with no risk of being rejected. It's a very sweet deal for CPZ, who first profited

by selling the land; is subsidized by the sale of municipal bonds to build the plant; is granted a 20-year lease-to-purchase by the PIEA in which it pays the bonds back with guaranteed income from the NNSA; and after that owns the Plant outright. NNSA asked Congress for around \$100 million annually from 2009–2015 for "transition costs," despite earlier claims that the new KCP would not cost the federal government anything up front. During this 20-year term the NNSA will pay \$1.2 billion. Overall leasing is more costly. Since Life Extension Programs for existing nuclear weapons, for which the KCP is the main supplier of parts, are scheduled to last until at least 2042, it could operate for 40–60 years, and the U.S. could pay another \$1.2 to \$2.4 billion in lease costs to CPZ.

The NNSA wrote recently that "because the new facility will be leased, there will be no capital investment and NNSA will not be burdened by costs for legacy disposition should the mission ever be discontinued." The "legacy" of the old Plant is one of serious contamination with cancer-causing, volatile organic compounds and PCBs, for which NNSA has made no comprehensive cleanup plan. NNSA plans for the new plant to be fully operational in a couple of years while in effect abandoning the old plant. Kansas City is counting on reusing the old plant for economic development, which probably cannot take place without comprehensive cleanup costing more than \$250 million.



"Stop destroying our mother!" was the message David Eldringhoff sent to drivers on MO Hwy. 150 on Dec. 18th, at the site for the nuclear weapons production plant to open in 2012.

Photo by Jim Hannah.



KC Peace Planters display 122 grave markers with the first name, diagnosis, and year of diagnosis of a former worker at the Bannister Federal Complex.

Photo by Jim Hannah

Kansas City subsidies reward the federal government who ignores its moral responsibility to protect its citizens and their future economic prosperity through full environmental restoration of the old Plant. The federal government should be cleaning up its nuclear weapons complex, not building it up! Anyone who wants to support the KC Peace Planters are asked to please join them at future rallies to share leaflets, display signs, grave marker crosses, etc. They will be from 2–3 p.m. on these Saturdays: Jan 29 and March 19. Rallies will be at the new plant site at 150 Hwy & Botts Rd, and the Feb. 26 rally will be at the current site at the Bannister Federal Complex, Bannister and Wayne (park on Lydia). **THB**

This was summarized from an article by Jay Coghlan, Executive Director, and John Witham, Communications Director, Nuclear Watch New Mexico, recently published in the new newsletter of the Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House, KCMO. See <http://www.peaceworkskc.org/kcplant.html> for the full article. For more information, visit <http://kcnukeswatch.wordpress.com/> or <http://www.nukewatch.org/KCNukePlant/index.html>. The KC Peace Planters coalition working on KCP issues includes: Physicians for Social Responsibility-Kansas City, PeaceWorks Kansas City, Cherith Brook and Holy Family Catholic Worker Houses, The Recipe LLC, KC's Loretto Peace & Justice Network, and Benedictines for Peace. For info or to help contact: Ann Suellentrop, 913-271-7925, or [annsuelletn@gmail.com](mailto:annsuelletn@gmail.com)

## Electric Vehicle Survey

We are conducting a survey on our Thomas Hart Benton Group website (<http://missouri.sierraclub.org/thb>) to provide information on small electric vehicles. It is the only survey like it in the nation (ie. in Sierra Club). We are trying to lead the way in finding out what potential users may want in future electric vehicles.

### PLEASE TAKE OUR SURVEY.

The survey only takes a few minutes. We will use the data to create a report later this year for our group and our newsletter. You will see the results once we compile them. Thanks for your time. Help us be leaders with regard to electric vehicles and in moving away from fossil fuel powered vehicles. **THB**



### Retain the City Earnings Tax

On April 5, Kansas City voters will decide whether to retain the current earnings tax, which generates 40% of Kansas City's general revenue. The Sierra Club recommends a "yes" vote because maintaining the viability of the urban core is necessary for reducing sprawl, limiting greenhouse gases and facilitating energy efficiency.

City General Revenue funds many environmental programs,

including curbside recycling, environmental education at the Lakeside Nature Center, Bridging the Gap, and the KC Wildlands program that improves habitat at parks like Hidden Valley Park.

Volunteers are needed to get the word out—please email [claus@missouri.sierraclub.org](mailto:claus@missouri.sierraclub.org) to get involved. Also check [missouri.sierraclub.org/thb](http://missouri.sierraclub.org/thb) for last minute information.



## Outings & Other Activities

**Feb 4-6 (Fri-Sun) Caving Trip @ Ennis Cave, St. James, AR**—The Kansas City Area Grotto (KCAG), hosts this outing. Ennis Cave, a privately owned complex, is a 4.75-mile-long wild cave. Several wild cave exploration trips will be offered, from easy, two-to-three-hour walking trips, to eight-to-ten-hour deep-penetration trips, which require long crawls, tight squeezes, and wet conditions. All trips require entering and exiting the cave through a semi-vertical culvert via an easy-to-manage, forty-foot sloping ladder. Free “primitive” camping (no electricity or running water) is available on site, including use of three open pavilions. The camping area will accommodate travel trailers; motel accommodations can be had 14 miles away. Camping 300 feet inside the entrance of the cave is permitted. There will be a \$10 activity fee for this outing. A limited number of caving helmets with headlamps will be provided by the grotto. It is strongly recommended that participants attend an orientation meeting sometime in late January, for an introductory lecture on wild caving. In the event inclement weather in early February makes travel unsafe, a fall back/alternate date of March 17-21, 2011 has been arranged for this trip. For more info contact: Jim Cooley, [coolstoi@kc.rr.com](mailto:coolstoi@kc.rr.com)

**Feb 19 (Sat) Beginning Backpack Class Series, Part 1, Independence, MO** — Learn back packing basics in this 4-hour information filled class. We'll cover gear from head to foot and everything in between. Class size is limited to 25. This is part 1 of 2 classes, followed by a backpack trip. Participation in both classes ensures a place in the beginning backpack trip. Cost for series is \$ 50 per person. Paul Gross 816 228-6563, [wildwoodp@hotmail.com](mailto:wildwoodp@hotmail.com)

**Feb. 18-20 (Fri-Sun) Bell Mountain Wilderness, Potosi, MO**—Join us at Bell Mountain in the St. Francois Mountains, one of the oldest landforms in North America. The wilderness is characterized by steep felsite and rhyolite



outcroppings. Group size will be limited. \$10 donation requested. Bryan Ohrman, 816/215-3376. [pbandj14@comcast.net](mailto:pbandj14@comcast.net).

**Feb 26 (Sat) Bothwell State Park, Sedalia, MO**—Tour Bothwell Lodge described as an overgrown English style cottage and walk the short Stony ridge trail. The old stone lodge and the surrounding 250 acres north of Sedalia became a state park in 1974. \$5 donation requested. Eileen McManus, 816-523-7823, [eileen4250@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eileen4250@sbcglobal.net)

**Mar 4 (Fri) Tour of Smith Electric Vehicle Plant**—As a follow-up to our March 1 general meeting “The Drive to Electrify Our Cars” we will be touring the Smith Electric Vehicle plant located near the airport. SEV makes proven electric delivery vehicles that dramatically reduce noise and deadly exhaust all while cutting energy and maintenance costs. Eileen McManus, 816-523-7823, [eileen4250@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eileen4250@sbcglobal.net)

**Mar 5-2 (Sat) Beginning Backpack Class Series, Part 2, Independence, MO** — This 4-hour class, will offer hands on demonstrations of pack loading, tent pitching, water treatment, cat holes, repair basics. Paul Gross 816 228-6563 [wildwoodp@hotmail.com](mailto:wildwoodp@hotmail.com)

**Mar 11-13 (Fri-Sun) Backpacking, Eagle Rock Loop, Glenwood, AR** — Want to try a challenging weekend hike that has a good combination of easy, moderate, and difficult trails. The 26.8 mile loop in the Ouachita National Forest is comprised of three trails—The Little Missouri Trail, the Viles Branch Horse Trail, and the Athens Big Fork Trail. We'll cross the Little Missouri River nine times and ascend over nine mountains. Be prepared for a physical adventure. “LNT” fervently followed. Group size will be limited. \$10 donation requested. Ben Thiel, [ben\\_thiel@hotmail.com](mailto:ben_thiel@hotmail.com)

**Mar 18- 20 (Fri-Sun) Beginning Backpack Trip, Part 3, Mark Twain National Forest, Rolla, MO**—Apply what you learned in the backpacking classes. 2 nights and 2 days of backpacking on the Kaintuck trail in the Mark

Twain National Forest, The trip will focus on applying the knowledge you have acquired. Natural Springs and a 175' long Natural Bridge are some of highlights of this trip. Bryan Ohrman, 816/215-3376. [pbandj14@comcast.net](mailto:pbandj14@comcast.net).

**Mar 26 (Sat) Perry Lake Hiking Trail Maintenance, Perry, KS** — Join us as we help keep the Perry Lake Trail safe and enjoyable for hikers and backpackers. Please bring lunch, water, work gloves, bow saws and/or loppers if you have them. Steve Hassler, 913-707-3296, [hassler@planetkc.com](mailto:hassler@planetkc.com)

**Apr 15-17 (Fri-Sun) Hawn State Park, Ste. Genevieve, MO** — Join us as we hike the beautiful Whispering Pine Trail, enjoy the lofty pines, wild azaleas, sandstone barrens and cliffs, and sandy-bottomed streams. Bryan Ohrman, 816/215-3376, [pbandj14@comcast.net](mailto:pbandj14@comcast.net)

**April 19 (Wed) The Newsletter Mailing Committee**—This committee of hardworking people comes together to label and prepare the newsletter for mailing. Contact: Dennis Gredell, 816-926-1067, [gooseman-2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gooseman-2@sbcglobal.net)

**Apr 30 (Sat) Eddy & Ballentine Trail, Kansas City, MO** —Hike with Bill Eddy and Dick Ballentine, authors of Hiking Kansas City, on their namesake trail near Swope Park. The 3-mile trail has been partially re-routed and extended due to a land swap. Bring your lunch and we will sit on some limestone outcroppings overlooking the valley below. \$5 dollar donation requested. Eileen McManus, 816-523-7823, [eileen4250@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eileen4250@sbcglobal.net)

**Apr 30-May 1 Ozark Canoe Trip** — Bypass the crowds and explore a quiet Ozark stream on our laid-back canoe/kayak float trip. Catch the sunset and see the stars Saturday night from our sandbar campsite; share your stories around the campfire. \$5 donation requested. Terry DeFrates, 913-385-7374, [theerustbucket@aol.com](mailto:theerustbucket@aol.com)



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