

# Wild Onion

The Newsletter of the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club

First Quarter 2009

## Chicago's Climate Action Plan: Bringing it to the Streets

by Christine Williamson, Chicago Group Chair

Three years ago, I had an idea: Chicago Group needed an Air & Energy Committee where interested Sierra Club members could work on anything and everything within this broad category of environmental issues.

It was a good idea! The committee has grown and flourished and is reaching maturity at a perfect moment.

A few months ago, the city of Chicago released its Climate Action Plan. It is a fantastic plan, one that's surely destined to become a template for the rest of the cities in the world that want to curb or stop their contribution of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

Sierra Club staff and volunteers were involved in the plan's creation, but what the plan would entail and how credible it would be wasn't evident until the city put everything on public display at <http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org>.

Chicago has been at the forefront of environmental innovation and responsibility in most matters over the past 15 years, thanks largely to Mayor Daley. As the mayor said by way of introduction to the Climate Action Plan: "Since I have been mayor, my goal has been to make Chicago a shining example of how a large city can live in harmony with its environment and as a result, be a better place for all its residents."

The Chicago Climate Action plan acknowledges that global warming and climate change is real and that if immediate action is not taken, life on earth will be imperiled. Chicago is taking immediate action to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent of 1990 levels by the year 2050.

The plan is wonderfully detailed. Department of the Environment Commissioner Suzanne Malec-McKenna explained the guts of it to a packed Sierra Club audience Nov. 19 at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. (Visit: <http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org> to read the plan.) In a nutshell, Chicago has five strategies to reduce carbon emissions:

- energy efficient buildings;
- clean and renewable energy sources;

- improved transportation options;
- reduced waste & industrial pollution;
- adaptation.

Malec-McKenna is the city's best cheerleader for the plan: She is an environmentalist to the core (she worked for the OpenLands Project before Mayor Daley lured her into public service), optimistic, driven, passionate and smart about using community resources and allies. That's where the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club comes in.



Suzanne Malec-McKenna

The City of Chicago will work on the business community and its own infrastructure. There's a plan to educate Chicago residents and influence their actions so everyone is working to reduce carbon emissions. One of the things Sierra Club does really really well is grass roots organizing. We do it all the time, all over the country on all kinds of political and environmental matters. Now it's time to take that savvy to the streets of Chicago.

Chicago Group's Air & Energy Committee now has a Climate Action team that aims to educate all 9,000 of our members about the Chicago Climate Action Plan. We want every member to participate in the \$800 Savings Challenge (see next page) and then to begin to talk to neighbors and local businesses about doing the same. We will be at many major street festivals as well as at GreenFest in May, tabling and spreading the word about the Climate Action Plan and the energy savings challenge.

**Bring It to the Streets!**

Be part of the Chicago Group's Climate Action Plan team. Clean up your own act by taking the savings

challenge and then start talking to the rest of the city. We'll train you, support you and cheer you on as you rock the streets of Chicago with the Climate Action message.

Contact Bill Morrisett, the Climate Action team chair [morrisett@midwestcyber.com](mailto:morrisett@midwestcyber.com) or 847-650-8507 for information about getting involved with the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club's Climate Action team.



Tony Fuller and Cliff Zimmerman discuss the \$800 Challenge.

## Take the \$800 Savings Challenge!

Each of us can make a difference. Take the first step and commit to some — or all — of the actions on the list below. Watch your savings in both money and greenhouse gas emissions add up.

Calculate your total savings at the bottom of the page or complete the online form at: <http://climateactionplan.org>

Measure	Cost	Co2e Impact/ Participant (metric tons)	Annual Savings per Participant or Household
<b>Buildings</b>			
Reducing heating temperature by three degrees	None	0.522	\$129
Increasing cooling temperature by three degrees	None	0.075	\$13
Save 4 gallons of water a day, by turning off the water while brushing teeth or reducing shower time by one minute.	None	0.003	\$5
Replace nine incandescent bulbs with CFLs	Low	0.602	\$108
Replace home air conditioner filter	Low	0.083	\$15
Plug all appliances that use standby settings (like TVs and stereos) into a power strip; turn off power strip when not in use.	None	0.128	\$23
Plant one tree	Low	0.021	
Turn off three 60-watt bulbs for two hours per day.	None	0.080	\$14
<b>Transportation</b>			
Eliminate one 10-mile car trip per week	None	0.223	\$99
Keep car tuned up and tires properly inflated**	Low	0.799	\$360
<b>Renewable and Clean Energy</b>			
Replace outdoor lighting with solar lights***	Low	0.268	\$48
<b>Waste and Pollution</b>			
Disconnect downspouts and add a rain barrel	Low	0.018	\$8
Recycle every Sunday newspaper instead of throwing in trash.	Low/none	0.012	
	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Co2e Impact/ Participant (metric tons)</b>	<b>Annual Savings per Participant or Household</b>

### Total:

\*based on overall area average heating and air conditioning use. Individual results will vary.

\*\* assume vehicle driven 12,500 miles annually

\*\*\*assumes replacing a 150-watt bulb for 8 hours nightly for 365 days with a solar-powered light.

#### Chicago Group Information

For information about the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club, check the web site often: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>. You may also subscribe to e-News for e-mail delivery of a monthly calendar of activities.

Chicago Group's newsletter, *Wild Onion*, is a quarterly publication with in-depth news and discussion of local issues. *Wild Onion* now can be sent electronically, saving printing expenses and paper. To receive *Wild Onion* by e-mail, send your name, Sierra Club membership number and e-mail address to [editor@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:editor@illinois.sierraclub.org).

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# Becoming the Change

by Helen Costello, Air & Energy Committee member

Want to live more sustainably but find it hard to take your daily habits up to the next level? Feel like you'd need a year off to research all the eco-alternatives in your daily routine? Wonder what's the point of a canvas bag at the store, when it carries home eight plastic packages?

These are understandable questions that occur to almost everyone trying to live a responsible life. Sustainable living is a big undertaking and is not especially easy to achieve as a member of U.S. society.

America ranked 51st among the world's nations in terms of a nation's environmental sustainability, according to a 2007 Columbia University study. Thankfully, the Sierra Club is a great resource and offers a support network for sustainable living.

Each change you make will be a source of not only lowering your carbon footprint, but also of intense satisfaction for you and your family. For those just starting out, the best approach is to take actions that are very simple and within immediate reach, needing no special equipment or effort.

Right now, today, this minute, you could:

- wash your clothes in cold water;
- turn down your thermostat a few degrees in winter and up a few in summer to save energy and money;
- make a commitment to walk, cycle or use public transportation to patronize local stores and restaurants in your neighborhood to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and boost the neighborhood economy;
- use energy efficient light bulbs everywhere in your house and office.

The next steps toward greening your lifestyle are a little more involved, but a good way to think about them is this: Replace activities you find less meaningful with those that will change your habits and your impact on the world.

It takes some nerve to leave the familiar for something new and not everything works out right away. For example, how eco-friendly should you be about toilet paper? If your family isn't supportive at first, you'll have to do some sustainable living conversion work. Given these challenges, credit is due for each decision made, each new habit cemented in place, each new product or technique you try and conquer. Just take one step at a time. Then bigger and bolder moves come a little easier. How much bolder? Some of the big issues for many family habits include:

- a switch to cloth from disposable diapers;
- line-drying clothes;
- using a push grass mower;
- eliminating plastic as much as you can;
- taking a shopping bag everywhere you go;
- going vegetarian.

Perhaps the biggest move for many Americans, one that deserves the most applause, is living without a car. If you need a car now, work on driving less, by replacing some miles with public transportation, walking or biking. Also, fuel-efficient driving practices like hyper-miling will make each tank of gas go further.

Sustainable living is a work in progress for everyone. In the end, I know my own personal actions won't reverse global warming or solve the world's other environmental challenges. But they do solve the conflict within.

Our own personal world is the most immediate reality each of us has. It's where your actions have the most impact. To borrow Gandhi's hopeful words, when you "become the change you wish to see in the world," your life becomes more meaningful. It's a blessing to ourselves as much as it is to the world. Good luck and enjoy the journey!

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## Subscribe to Chicago Group e-News

Chicago Group has a better way to keep members up-to-date with news and events: Chicago Group e-News.

Through e-News, subscribers are kept informed monthly about programs, socials, outings and environmental events in our neighborhoods.

This listserv is for members only; you must have a Sierra Club membership number to sign up. Check the

address label on *Sierra* magazine to find your number.

Take a minute to subscribe online to receive the next issue at <http://Illinois.SierraClub.org/Chicago/e-News>.

For information about Chicago Group's social outings, subscribe to the e-newsletter at: [http://illinois.sierraclub.org/chicago/socials/social\\_listserv.html](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/chicago/socials/social_listserv.html) and check the web at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/chicago/outings/>.

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Deadline for next issue is February 10, 2009.

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# Chicago Group's Holiday Service Party

## A new seasonal tradition

The Chicago Group of the Sierra Club hosted a party at the Illinois Chapter office in Chicago that put fun and service together in the same room. As with every Sierra Club event, we ate! We started with a lunch low on the food chain and as local and sustainable as we could manage and ended with a potluck dessert buffet that was absolutely magnificent. Sierra Club members outdid themselves in either baking or scouting out the best pastry chefs in Chicago to produce a very festive, very sweet end to an afternoon of volunteer work.

Our group of 40 split into three teams. One team applied their brains and brawn to clear out, organize and make useable again a storage room. The "before and after" was an amazing contrast and the room now will help Illinois Chapter staff be even more efficient in serving the state's 25,000 members.

Another team applied their analytical skills to filing and organizing a vast array of information about environmental activities in Illinois that impact the state. Chapter staff now has an easier way to find information about the issues they are

working on.

Finally, another team was able to put beautiful penmanship to work, hand-addressing hundreds of envelopes for an Illinois Chapter end-of-the-year fundraiser. Since this work was less consuming to brains and bodies, there was plenty of time for discussing environmental issues of the day, holiday plans and to get to know each other much better.



*Sierrans enjoy dessert after working.*

Thanks very much to all those who attended, provided a great assortment of desserts, and donated their time to making the Illinois Chapter office a more efficient work place.

Stay tuned for more service events this year, starting with an Earth Day clean-up of our adopted Montrose Beach on April 25.

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## Winter Activities

### **Nature Photography Discussion Group** Wednesday, January 7, 7:00 p.m.

Calling all photography buffs. Come join us for a fun evening of discussing nature photography. This month the Nature Photography Discussion Group will share our photographs we took at the North Park Village Nature Center and have a talk about the basics of digital photography. The group meets at the Lincoln Park Library, 1150 W. Fullerton at 7:00 p.m. Please RSVP to Take' Yamamoto at [ch-socials@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:ch-socials@illinois.sierraclub.org) or 773/528-7812.

### **Chicago Environmental Book Club** Thursday, January 8, 7:00 p.m.

Join fellow environmentalists as we read and explore the issues facing the world today. The book club meets at the Book Cellar Book Store, 4736 N. Lincoln at 7:00 p.m.

Our next reading is "The Future of Life" by Edward Wilson. This Pulitzer Prize winning author explores why biodiversity is important and how we can raise the standard of living around the world and still preserve the environment. To R.S.V.P., contact John Pearson at [jlarsp@rcn.com](mailto:jlarsp@rcn.com).

### **Sierrans Outdoors & New Member Party** Sunday, March 29, 1:00 p.m.

Join Sierrans for our annual afternoon Chicago Group Outings and New Member Party to socialize with fellow active and wannabe participants of outings past and future. We will again celebrate at the Little House "cabin in the woods" which includes a warming fireplace. We begin at 1:00 p.m. with an optional short walk, followed by a potluck at 2:00. A brief What-We-Do and How-To-Get-Involved presentation will be given around 3:00 and precedes our traditional door prize raffle. Finally, feel free to continue to meet, munch and chat away the remaining afternoon with us.

This gathering is a perfect casual opportunity to better know Sierra Club, meet leaders and fellow outdoor enthusiasts and learn about outings as both fun and educational experiences that support Sierra Club's motto: "Explore, Enjoy and Protect." Participants are asked to bring a favorite dish of their choosing. Cost is \$7. Contact George Kollar at [gkollar@aol.com](mailto:gkollar@aol.com) or 773-935-3058. Register online in February for this event at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>.

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