

# Palisades Views



Volume XXXIX No. 2

February 2010

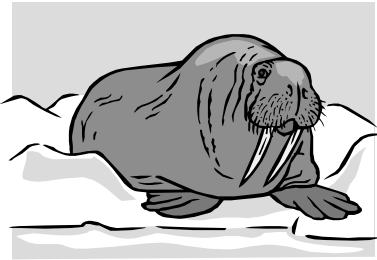
## Arctic seriously threatened by human activity

Kit McKurn, the Sierra Club's national Arctic organizer, will be the guest speaker at the February meeting of the Piasa Palisades Group. His presentation is entitled "Oil Development and Climate Change in America's Arctic."

Here is some information provided by McKurn:

"The Arctic ecosystem on the North Slope of Alaska represents a microcosm of the realities that society at large faces with regard to fossil-fuel dependency, climate change and the importance of protecting our last wild and pristine places.

"It is the canary in the coal mine with regard to the significant changes



our climate system and global ecosystems are undergoing.

"The Arctic region is the single most endangered ecosystem on the planet. Climate change caused by human combustion of fossil fuels is causing the Arctic ecosystem to undergo rapid changes that, if left unchecked, will fundamentally and permanently degrade this fragile and poorly studied ecosystem.

"Scientists have documented major changes, such as unprecedented sea-ice melt, permafrost thaw, ocean acidification and coastal erosion, as well as other numerous wildlife and food chain disruptions.

"In addition to the deleterious effects of climate change, America's portion of the Arctic ecosystem and its native peoples are experiencing widespread environmental degradation and negative subsistence impacts from continued onshore and offshore oil and gas development.

"The grand irony is that as global climate change undermines the Arctic ecosystem, the federal government and state of Alaska continue to approve additional oil and gas development both on and offshore.

"The Arctic region is the world's

refrigerator. It plays a prominent role in regulating the Earth's climate and ocean currents. As this ecosystem undergoes rapid changes, it has far-reaching effects for the rest of the planet.

"The changes that scientists are observing in the Arctic ecoregion are underscoring the fact of how connected and interdependent our global ecosystems truly are. We ignore the rapid changes occurring in the Far North at our own peril."

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 8, at the First Unitarian Church, Third and Alby streets in Alton.

In case of severe weather, check the Piasa Palisades Group's Web site at [www.illinois.sierraclub.org/piasapalisades](http://www.illinois.sierraclub.org/piasapalisades) for information on possible meeting cancellations.

### CONGRATS

Two newcomers were elected and three incumbents were re-elected to the Piasa Palisades Group Executive Committee last month

Newcomers Cathy Dondanville of Godfrey and Chris Krusa of Glen Carbon and incumbents Jim Bensman of Alton, Dave Gocken of Edwardsville and Wayne Politsch of Alton will serve two-year terms.

Congratulations! We appreciate your willingness to lead.

### NOTICE

The State of Illinois recently announced the Illinois Energy Star Appliance Rebate Program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

The program provides incentives for consumers to replace older appliances with specific residential Energy

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Published by the Piasa Palisades Group of the Sierra Club.  
Serving the Southwestern Illinois counties of  
Bond, Calhoun, Fayette, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison and Montgomery.

## Photography exhibit commemorates state milestone

By **Richard C. Keating**  
Group member

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission will hold a special event this month to celebrate the dedication of the state's 500th nature preserve.

The public is invited to the opening reception of a photography exhibit that consists of entries from a statewide photography contest. The theme is "Illinois Nature Preserves and Land and Water Reserves."

The reception will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 25, at the Environmental Law and Policy Center, 35 East Wacker Drive in Chicago.

It's a great opportunity to see images of the many natural treasures in the state. Many leaders of groups dedicated to protecting Illinois natural lands will attend.

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission is the oldest such commission in the nation, established in the 1960s.

It has overseen protection of more than 80,000 acres of prime natural landscape. Many rare and endangered species are dependent on this protection for their survival.

I plan to take Amtrak to Chicago on Thursday, stay the night and return on the 26<sup>th</sup>. For more information or to join this expedition, call me at (618) 656-3647.

**Editor's note:** Keating is a member of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and the Piasa Palisades Group.

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

#### Girl Scout Day

Sierra Club volunteers are needed to man activity booths for Girl Scout Day 2010: Girls Go Green on Saturday, March 6.

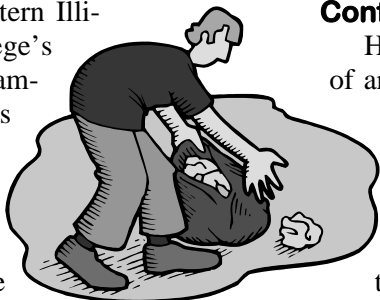
The event will take place

on Southwestern Illinois College's Belleville campus. Shifts are 10 a.m.

to noon and noon to 2 p.m.

For more information,

call the Piasa Palisades Group office at (618) 462-6802.



For more information, call the Piasa Palisades Group office at (618) 462-6802 or send an e-mail to christine.favilla@sierraclub.org.

#### Confluence Trash Bash

Help bring back the splendor of area waterways by participating in the 2010 Confluence Trash Bash from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 27.

Volunteers are needed to clean up around the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, west of Madison; other sites along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; Watkins Creek, Maline Creek, Cold Water Creek and Creve Coeur Creek.

It's a great way for service organizations, school and corporate groups, churches, families and individuals to get involved. Work with "stream teams" and more than 60 municipalities in St. Louis and St. Louis County.

Volunteers can be based on land or water. You choose!

"Trash artists" will recycle collected trash into artwork. Prizes will be awarded for the weirdest, largest or most valuable items found. Lunch will be provided from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

#### Cool Cities campaign

Sierra Club members who live in **Glen Carbon** are needed to help the village become a "cool city" and commit to reduce energy usage related to municipal buildings, vehicles and other operations.

Sierra Club members who live in **Collinsville** are needed to work with the Collinsville League of Women Voters, who already have started to make their city cool!

Sierra Club members who live in **Maryville** are needed to work with the Maryville Community Development Board on toward the same goal.

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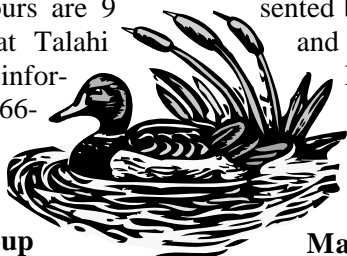
Star appliances, water heaters and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning equipment. They must be purchased in Illinois through participating retail stores or contractors.

The program will take effect in two phases: Consumers began getting rebates for heating and cooling equipment and water heaters on Jan. 31. Rebates on appliances (dishwashers, clothes washers, refrigerators, freezers and air-conditioning window units) will be available April 16-25.

For more information, call (877) 782-7005.

C A L E N D A R

**Saturday, Feb. 6 Monthly Walk-about** at The Nature Institute in Godfrey. February's theme is "Good Oak." Explore the beauty of magnificent trees, including mighty oaks. Geared toward adults with moderate to difficult hiking. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon. Meet at Talahi Lodge. Free. For more information, call (618) 466-9930.



**Monday, Feb. 8 Piasa Palisades Group monthly meeting.** Kit McKurn, the Sierra Club's national Arctic organizer, will be the guest speaker (see related article). Meet at 7:30 p.m. in the community room of First Unitarian Church, Third and Alby streets in Alton.

**Monday, Feb. 8 Seventh-annual Composting Symposium:** Backyard, Business and Beyond at University of Illinois Extension Sangamon-Menard Unit in Springfield. Learn about composting organic materials. Local and national experts will discuss backyard composting for beginners and large-scale projects for municipalities and farms. Hours are 12:30 to 6:30 p.m. To register, call the Illinois Stewardship Alliance at (217) 528-1563.

**Wednesday, Feb. 10 Solar Seminar** for residents, representatives of non-profit organizations, businesses, governments and other agencies to learn about putting solar voltaic cells on their homes/buildings. 6pm-8pm. Location: U of I Extension's Jersey County Office Auditorium; 200 North Lafayette, Suite 6; 2nd Floor Jerseyville, IL 62052. Information will be provided on the Illinois Department of Commerce and Eco-

nomics Opportunity's 2010 Fiscal Year Solar Rebate Program for the purchase and installation of grid-connected solar systems. This can absorb 60 percent of costs when combined with federal programs. Presented by the Sierra Club and Day and Night Solar. R.S.V.P. by Feb. 8 to cfavilla10@sbcglobal.net.

**Thursday, Feb. 11 Key EPA Tools for Watershed Management Course** at Lewis and Clark Community College, 5800 Godfrey Road in Godfrey. Presented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Watershed Academy and co-hosted by Prairie Rivers Network and National Great Rivers Research and Education Center. Learn to navigate EPA Web sites and gain information on watershed management. Meet from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Templin Nursing Building, Room 101. Pre-registration required by Feb. 4. Mail \$15 fee to Prairie Rivers Network, c/o Alison Meanor, 1902 Fox Drive, Suite G, Champaign, IL 61820. For more information, send an e-mail to ameanor@prairierivers.org or call (217) 344-2371.

**Monday, Feb. 15 Piasa Palisades Group Executive Committee meeting.** All members are welcome to attend! Meet at 7 p.m. at the Sierra Club office, 223 Market St. in Alton.

**Wednesday, Feb. 17 1pm-3pm Solar Seminar** (see Feb. 10th's details). U of I Extension's Calhoun County Office; 818 S. Park, P.O. Box 366; Hardin, IL 62047. R.S.V.P. by Feb. 15 to cfavilla10@sbcglobal.net.

**Friday, Feb. 19 Screening of "Food, Inc."** at LaVista Ecological Learning Center, 4300 Levis Lane in Godfrey. This 2009 independent film by Robert Kenner shows how our nation's food supply is controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihood of American farmers, worker safety and the environment. Hours are 7 to 9 p.m. Co-sponsored by the Sierra Club. Optional donation of \$5. To register, call (618) 466-5004.

**Sunday, Feb. 28 Piasa Palisades Group monthly moonlight hike** at The Nature Institute in Godfrey. Explore Mississippi Sanctuary and Olin Nature Preserve by the light of the full moon. Meet at 7 p.m. at Talahi Lodge, 2213 S. Levis Lane. From Homer Adams Parkway in Alton (Illinois 3), turn

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**Palisades Views**  
 is a monthly publication for  
 and about Sierra Club  
 members.

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To submit a newsletter item:  
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 palisadesviews@gmail.com

**DEADLINE FOR MARCH:  
 SATURDAY, FEB. 20**

# ALERT: Help defeat state STAR bonds legislation

By Joe Michlitsch  
ExCom member

The STAR (sales tax and revenue) bonds bill of last year has been re-introduced as an amendment to a mental disabilities bill (Senate Bill 2093) in the Illinois General Assembly.

There are differences between the amendment and original bill, but it still involves using public money to reward building in floodplains all over the state. The first project is planned for Glen Carbon.

Here are some points to consider:

1. STAR bond sites must be at least 600 acres and 90 percent vacant (not counting agriculture). At least 30 percent must be in a 100-year floodplain.

2. A floodplain is land adjacent to a river, stream or other water body subject to flooding when volume of water exceeds capacity of normal boundaries. This land, if left undisturbed, acts to store excess floodwa-

ter. If developed, it can no longer store floodwater and causes flooding elsewhere.

3. Floodplain preservation reduces the number and severity of floods, helps handle stormwater runoff and minimizes non-point water pollution. Wetlands store and filter floodwaters and help recharge aquifers.

4. The U.S. government recognizes states as the nation's principal floodplain managers.

5. Illinois is one of the nation's most flood-prone states, with flooding currently costing more than \$250 million a year, according to state floodplain-management officials.

6. The Great Flood of 1993 caused more than \$15 billion in damages along the Mississippi River. Afterward, the U.S. government determined our first priority should be to avoid unnecessary human use of floodplains to reduce vulnerability.

7. Development in flood-prone areas has caused increasing damage and destruction. It puts people, businesses and government funds at risk. Floodplains should remain undeveloped.

8. There have been many flooding events since 1993.

9. "Historic floods" and rainfall events are becoming more and more frequent due to global warming and climate change, according to experts. People, structures and activities in floodplains, even those with levee protection, remain at risk.

10. Given enough time, all levees will be overtopped or otherwise fail, according to experts such as the Association of State Floodplain Managers.

11. The Illinois Department of Revenue estimated last year that each STAR bond project could cost

the state \$15 million annually. Much of this loss is due to erosion of the state-government tax base that existed before creation of the STAR district.

12. There would also be a loss in revenue and jobs in nearby communities, estimated at \$5.5 million a year for each STAR bonds project.

13. Multiple areas could benefit from STAR bonds, potentially costing the state more than \$100 million a year. This could approach \$500,000 when added to the current cost of flood damage.

14. The American Bottom is on the New Madrid Fault Zone. The floodplain has serious potential for liquefaction in the event of a 7.5 earthquake. Liquefaction is a process where loose sand and silt saturated with water can behave like liquid when shaken by an earthquake.

15. An earthquake and resulting liquefaction would affect not only the proposed STAR bonds development in Glen Carbon, but also existing development, our entire levee system and, most importantly, citizens who live in the floodplain.

16. The American Bottom is in a non-attainment zone for the Clean Air Act.

17. One of the proposed businesses on the Glen Carbon site is a large amusement park, which would require large quantities of electricity garnered from local coal-fired power plants. This would increase air pollutants, lowering air quality and potentially harming local residents, especially youths and the elderly.

Now is the time to contact your state representative, state senator, speaker of the house and president of the senate and urge them to oppose the STAR bonds amendment to Senate Bill 2093. Also, let Gov. Pat Quinn know your position, as the Sierra Club is endorsing him.

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right on West Delmar in Godfrey (also Illinois 3), left on Levis Lane and left on South Levis. Bring a friend! For more information, call Sandy Wood at (618) 463-0358.

**Friday, March 5 Agroforestry Workshop** at McCully Heritage Project near Kampsville. Agroforestry is intensive land-use management combining trees and/or shrubs with crops and/or livestock. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The registration fee is \$20 for adults or \$10 for youths 18 and under until Feb. 23 and \$30 from Feb. 24 on. That includes a wholesome lunch and handouts. Send checks to Two Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council, P.O. Box 87, Pittsfield, IL 62363.