

# Palisades Views



Volume XXXVIII No. 3

March 2008

## *Watersheds are back on agenda*

Last month, winter weather kept one of two speakers and all but a dozen members and friends from attending the Piasa Palisades Group meeting on watershed issues.



This month, we'll continue to examine

efforts to keep sediments and pollutants from entering the Mississippi River, protecting life and the water we drink.

The guest speakers are Joel Schwab, Alton Sewer Department superintendent/operator in charge, and Alley Ringhausen, executive director of the Great Rivers Land Trust, based in Godfrey.

Schwab has been on the job 16 months. He will bring us up to speed on operation of Alton's sewage-treatment plant and development of "stormwater basins" for the city. These basins hold water for additional filtering, particularly after heavy rains, to keep polluted water from overflowing into the river.

Schwab also will discuss

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## Tis the season for volunteerism

Spring is when Mother Nature wakes up from her winter nap. It's also a busy time for Piasa Palisades Group staff person Christine Favilla, who is looking for volunteers to help with a dozen local events.

Do you have a few hours to donate to the environmental cause? If so, call Favilla in the Alton office at (618) 462-6802. Options include:

1. **Planting potatoes** at the Discovery Garden in Godfrey on March 28 (five volunteers needed).
2. **Operating a booth** at St. Peter's Hardware in Alton as part of a community litter clean-up on March 29 (five volunteers needed).
3. **Setting up** for a stormwater workshop at Lewis & Clark Community College in Godfrey on April 5 (three volunteers needed).
4. **Operating a booth** at an Earth Day celebration at Lewis & Clark Community College in Godfrey on April 9 (two volunteers needed).
5. **Picking up trash** on Chouteau Island on April 12 (10 volunteers needed).
6. **Assisting youths** with a gardening project at the Discovery Garden in Godfrey on April 12 (two volunteers needed).
7. **Operating a booth** at Southern Illinois University Edwards-

ville's Earth Day celebration on April 17 (two volunteers needed).

8. **Setting up** and directing foot traffic at a Satish Kumar event at the SIUE Religious Center on April 18 (five volunteers needed).

9. **Unloading computers** from vehicles and directing traffic at an electronics-recycling drive at Alton Square mall on April 19 (15 volunteers needed).

10. **Sprucing up grounds** and greeting people at an organic-gardening workshop at the Discovery Garden in Godfrey on April 20 (three volunteers needed).

11. **Unloading computers** from vehicles and directing traffic at an electronics-recycling drive in Hardin on April 23.

12. **Assisting youths** with activities at the Wings of Spring birding festival in West Alton, Mo., on April 25 and 26 (six volunteers needed each day).

**Ballots will arrive soon for the National Sierra Club Board of Directors election. Recent participation has dropped to below 10 percent. PLEASE VOTE and help maintain this democratically structured organization.**

# CALENDAR

**Monday, March 10 Piasa Palisades Group monthly program.** Joel Schwab and Alley Ringhausen will be the guest speakers (see related article). Meet at 7:30 p.m. in the community room at First Unitarian Church, Third and Alby Streets in Alton. For more information, call the Sierra Club office at (618) 462-6802.

**Wednesday, March 12 Knee-High Naturalists program** at The Nature Institute in Godfrey for children ages 3-5 accompanied by an adult. March's theme is "One Fish, Two Fish – More!" Learn about Mississippi River fish species such as blue gill, catfish, gar and carp from a fish biologist. Morning session from 10 to 11 a.m. and afternoon session from 1 to 2 p.m. The \$5 cost includes a nature walk, snack and craft. Register by Friday, March 7. For more information, call Patti Brown at (618) 466-9930.



**Wednesday, March 12 Family walk** at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville. Celebrate Living Well Week with University of Illinois Extension. Learn about the healthy habits of incorporating fresh air and exercise into your daily routine. Free. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, visit the Web sites at [www.learningandlivingwell.org](http://www.learningandlivingwell.org) or [watershed@cityofedwardsville.com](mailto:watershed@cityofedwardsville.com) or call (618) 650-5050 or (618) 692-7578.

**Saturday, March 15 Discovery Day Camp** early registration at The Nature Institute in Godfrey. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon at Talahi Lodge (see

directions for moonlight hike). Register children for summer environmental day camps. Each session limited to 40 children. Registration forms can be mailed, faxed or downloaded at [www.thenatureinstitute.org](http://www.thenatureinstitute.org) beginning March 18. For more information, call (618) 466-9930.

**Saturday, March 15 Wildlife-control presentation** at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville. Laura Kammin of University of Illinois Extension will talk about safe interaction with animals in an urban setting, prevention of overabundance and local regulations on "nuisance" wildlife. The fee is \$3. Registration is required. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call Michaelen Gerken at (618) 692-7578 or visit the Web site at [watershed@cityofedwardsville.com](mailto:watershed@cityofedwardsville.com).

**Monday, March 17 Executive Committee meeting** of the Piasa Palisades Group. All members are welcome to attend! Meet at 7 p.m. at the Sierra Club office, 223 Market St. in Alton. For more information, call (618) 462-6802.

**Friday, March 21 Annual Easter egg hunt** and breakfast with the Easter bunny at The Nature Institute in Godfrey. For children up to 9 years old. Rain or shine. Continental breakfast at 9 a.m. followed by egg-hunting at 10 a.m. at Talahi Lodge (see directions for moonlight hike). The cost is \$5 per child. Parents can eat for \$2. Registration required by Friday, March 14. For more information, call (618) 466-9930.

**Friday, March 21 Monthly moonlight hike**, sponsored by the Piasa Palisades Group. Explore Mississippi Sanctuary and Olin Nature Preserve, 2213 S. Levis Lane in Godfrey. Meet at 7 p.m. at Talahi Lodge. From Homer Adams Parkway in Alton (Illinois 3), turn 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.

**Saturday and Sunday, March 29-30 Spring retreat** at La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey, sponsored by Oblate Ecological Initiative. The theme is "Silent Spring: Listening to the Voices of Extinction." Honor Rachel Carson's wisdom, learn from a scientist's presentation and "listen to the voices of extinct and endangered species speaking during the Council of All Beings ritual," according to a press release. Spend time on the land and ponder "how to pursue lives of integrity at this critical juncture in Earth's story." The retreat begins at 7 p.m. Saturday and continues through mid-day Sunday. The cost is \$75 for overnight guests or \$55 for commuters. To register or get more information, call (618) 466-5004.

**Wednesday, April 2 Sierra Club lobby day** in Springfield. Volunteers are needed to plead the environmental case to Illinois state legislators. To sign up or get more information, visit the Web site at <http://www.illinois.sierraclub.org/> or call Jen Hensley with the Illinois Chapter at (312) 251-1680, ext. 3.



# CALENDAR

## **Friday to Sunday, April 4-6 Spring in the Shawnee**

with the Kaskaskia Group. Back by popular demand! Day hikes to Bell Smith Springs, Burden Falls or the Cache River and a bike ride on the Tunnel Hill Trail in Shawnee National Forest. Tent or dorm lodging and breakfast at Camp Ondessonk. Hotels available in Vienna (12 miles away). The registration deadline is Friday, March 21. For more information, call Ted Horn at (618) 397-9430 or visit the Web site at [www.illinois.sierraclub.org/kgroup](http://www.illinois.sierraclub.org/kgroup).



**Sunday, April 6 Day hike in Jackson Hollow** with the Kaskaskia Group. Planned as an extension of Spring in the Shawnee. Follow the base of imposing, 60-foot-tall sandstone cliffs, wind through building-size boulders and pass 100-year-old beech trees. Fairly strenuous, 7-mile hike. Optional camping in a primitive Shawnee Forest campground. Limit of 8 people. Hiking boots required. To register, call Terry Allen at (618) 398-1087 or e-mail Suzanne Smith at [thissuzanne@yahoo.com](mailto:thissuzanne@yahoo.com).

**Tuesday, April 8 Spring wildflower walk** at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville, led by Natural Resources Educator Michaeleen Gerken. Start at 6:30 p.m. Families welcome! Free. Registration required. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call (618) 692-7578 or send an e-mail to [watershed@cityofedwardsville.com](mailto:watershed@cityofedwardsville.com).

**Wednesday, April 9 Knee-High Naturalists program** at The Nature Institute in Godfrey for children ages

3-5 accompanied by an adult. April's theme is "Magical Forest." Learn about morel mushrooms, beauties, peepers and other signs of spring. Morning session from 10 to 11 a.m. and afternoon session from 1 to 2 p.m. The \$5 cost includes a nature walk, snack and craft. Register by Friday, April 4. For more information, call Patti Brown at (618) 466-9930.

**Friday, April 11 and 18 Frog walks** at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville. Expert Paul Shetley will discuss calls and habits of frogs and toads and lead a wetlands walk. Starting time is 7 p.m. Families welcome! The fee is \$3. Registration required. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call Michaeleen Gerken at (618) 692-7578 or send an e-mail to [watershed@cityofedwardsville.com](mailto:watershed@cityofedwardsville.com).

**Saturday, April 12 Spring clean-up** on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River at Old Chain of Rocks Bridge. Sponsored by Trailnet and Missouri River Relief. Volunteers needed to pick-up trash, plant shrubs and remove invasive honeysuckle. Hours are 8 a.m. to noon. Tools, bags, gloves and lunch provided. Registration required. Call Kevin Keach at (314) 436-1324, ext. 107, or send an e-mail to [kevinkeach@trailnet.org](mailto:kevinkeach@trailnet.org).

**Thursday, April 17 Birding workshop** at The Nature Institute in Godfrey. Moderated by Illinois Audubon Society member Edna Alexander and other experienced birders. Learn how to identify birds commonly seen in April and May.

Great opportunity for novices. Hours are 7 to 8 p.m. at Talahi Lodge (see directions for moonlight hike). Bring binoculars. Free. To register, call (618) 466-9930.

**Saturday, April 19 Bird walk** with veteran birders John and Ginger McCall at Watershed Nature Center in Edwardsville.

Learn how to spot and identify different species. Bring binoculars and field guides, if desired. Families welcome! The fee is \$3. Registration required. The center is at 1591 Tower Ave., across from Hoppe Park. For more information, call Michaeleen Gerken at (618) 692-7578 or send an e-mail to [watershed@cityofedwardsville.com](mailto:watershed@cityofedwardsville.com).



## Palisades Views

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**DEADLINE FOR APRIL:  
SATURDAY, MARCH 29**



## Commission has been preserving land since the '60s

By Rich Keating  
Group member

For a Midwestern state dominated by agriculture, Illinois has a significant amount of natural land and rich, surviving native flora and fauna. Much of the credit goes to the late George B. Fell.

The visionary Rockford conservationist called attention to the need to preserve organisms and habitat in the 1950s. Legislation he wrote to establish the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation system became law in 1963.

A national movement to follow this lead has proceeded slowly. Today, only 13 other states have similar systems.

Fell's legislation (525 ILCS 30) established the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission to organize and administer the acquisition and protection of land. Nine citizens appointed by the governor meet quarterly to

consider dedicating tracts of land that a field staff has identified as high-quality habitats and, frequently, home to endangered species.

The commission soon will confer protection on its 500th preserve. This is a high level of accomplishment considering the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory has identified only 654 undisturbed natural communities remaining in the state.

To date, the INPC has protected about 86,000 acres of land — some state-owned and some private — in 90 of the 102 counties in Illinois. Many are not in remote rural areas. Even the city of Chicago has a nature preserve.

Dedicated preserves can be visited for walks, wildlife viewing and nature photography, although permission is required from landowners.

To learn more, write the commission at 1 Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 785-8686 or visit the Web site at <http://dnr.state.il.us/INPC/>.

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

## WATERSHEDS—

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problems related to historic homes and other buildings in Alton. Many were fitted with gutters that direct water into the sewer system before the practice was prohibited by modern codes.

Ringhausen will speak about Great River's successful Piasa Creek Watershed project. It includes educational involvement by students, who have measured natural elements and contaminants, monitored discharges from homes and businesses and worked with the community to "clean" the watershed.

Piasa Creek project findings will be valuable to managers of all streams that feed into our rivers.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 10, in the community room at the First Unitarian Church, Third and Alby streets in Alton. Refreshments and discussion will follow presentations. For more information, call the Sierra Club office at (618) 462-6802.

## Celebrate Earth Day on SIUE's campus

The Student Organization for Sustainability (SOS) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is inviting the public to attend its first-annual Celebrate the Earth series April 16-22 in conjunction with Earth Day on April 22. Free activities will include lectures, a trash pick-up, bike ride and picnic.

"Please join us in our celebration, and bring your friends!" the group stated in a press release.

Confirmed speakers include Tom Clay of the Illinois Audubon Society; William Retzlaff of SIUE's Green Roof Project (presentation and tour); Katy Mike Smaistrle of Missouri Botanical Garden's EarthWays Center; Jeff Scheff of the Missouri Wilderness Coalition; Christine Favilla of the Sierra Club's Piasa Palisades

Group; Kathleen Gardner of SIUE Housing; and Susanna Fukes of the American Lung Association.

SOS is a new SIUE organization. Last month, it sponsored a campus showing of the Leonardo DiCaprio movie "The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour."

These environmentally conscious college students are reaching out to the Piasa Palisades Group with the idea of working together toward environmental goals. Let's do what we can to support and encourage them!

For more information on SOS or Celebrate the Earth, visit the Web site at [www.siue.edu/STACTV/sos/](http://www.siue.edu/STACTV/sos/) or send an e-mail to [siue-sos@gmail.com](mailto:siue-sos@gmail.com).

