

## Dirty Business *“Clean Coal” and the Battle for Our Energy Future*

By **Lonnie Morris**

Flip a switch and lights go on. Electricity is as simple as that – until a power outage or until you begin thinking about the complicated corporate utility delivering the energy, the power-generating plants that make it, and for 50% of the electrons, the mines yielding the coal for burning.

The bright light shining in your home has a dirty history. On average, Americans burn through 20 pounds of coal produced electricity each day. The environmental and health impacts of burning fossil fuels have brought the country to a critical decision point on finding ways to move forward with clean energy.

The Sierra Club and Just Views of the DuPage Peace through Justice Coalition are co-sponsoring a showing of two movies, **Dirty Business**, an exploration of the coal industry’s “clean coal” publicity campaign and **Sinking the Heartland**, an examination of long wall mining in central Illinois. The movies will be followed by audience discussion.

America is moving forward with clean energy but the fossil fuel industries continue to slow the progress. Join us in shaping the landscape for the future of clean energy in Illinois.

### **Dirty Business** and **Sinking the Heartland**

March 9, at 7:20 pm

DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church  
 1828 Old Naperville Road

**Directions:** If coming from east or west on route I-88, exit at Naperville Road onto Freedom Drive. Turn left (East) onto Diehl Road and continue across Naperville Road/ Naper Blvd, and then turn left/north at the first street (Old Naperville Road). The Unitarian Church is down one block on your right. Note: For other route options and a map, see church web site: [www.dupageuuchurch.org](http://www.dupageuuchurch.org). The church phone is **630/505-9408**.



*When coal mining moves into an area,  
 farm land is lost, houses abandoned.*

*Photo by Joe P. Dick/Shooting Stars Inc.*

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[Http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg)

For activities, legislative action alerts, & outings information

**We are on Facebook!** Check out:

[http://www.facebook.com/pages/River-Prairie-Group\\_of\\_the\\_Sierra\\_Club/96257429851](http://www.facebook.com/pages/River-Prairie-Group_of_the_Sierra_Club/96257429851)

## You Can Make a Difference With the Energy Transition Committee

By *Lonnie Morris*

Weird weather and rising energy prices have kick-started serious conversations about adapting to the changing landscape of energy in America. If you're concerned about the fossil fuel industry's hold on America's energy future and want to team up with others who are involved with clean energy alternatives, an exciting volunteer opportunity has opened up with the Sierra Club.

In the summer of 2011, a new statewide Sierra Club committee was formed to champion clean energy solutions while working to put an end to big coal and big oil's grip on the market and state and local governments. The Energy Transition Committee is looking for representatives from all fifteen groups in the Illinois Sierra Club and there is an opening for a representative from the River Prairie Group.

Illinois has great renewable energy potential and needs local support to achieve statewide implementation. The Energy Transition Committee will identify areas of opportunity and engage volunteers to work with local governments and community groups to shift the focus from coal and oil projects to support new clean energy projects. The committee also represents a partnership between the Illinois Chapter and the national Beyond Coal campaign in an effort to encourage realistic and scalable projects in the transition to clean energy.

### *Projects under consideration include:*

- Lobbying state representatives on issues such as the Taylorville Energy Center, a proposed coal gasification plant that has been trying to be built for years. Tenaska the company responsible for the plant is lobbying for all utilities in Illinois to purchase electricity from Taylorville Energy Center for 30 years at its true cost;
- Advocating for the inclusion of renewable energy in municipal aggregated purchases of electricity. Community Choice Aggregation is a new way for communities to procure electricity, offering green energy options and cost savings.



*Wind farms allow the land to be twice as productive, producing energy and food.*

*Photo by Joe P. Dick/Shooting Stars Inc.*

- Encouraging local communities to purchase renewable energy in sufficient quantities to qualify as EPA Green Power Communities
- Opposing the expansion of long wall mining in central Illinois.

ETC members will work together to decide on presentations and projects that should be priorities in order to move Illinois toward clean energy. Bi-weekly conference calls and presentations will serve as meetings for the committee, while listservs will act as forums for sharing ideas and information with committee members.

The representative from the River Prairie Group will provide a connection between ETC and the RPG's executive committee by reporting to the group at regularly scheduled meetings. Interested volunteers, please contact: **Lonnie Morris, [herbdove@concast.net](mailto:herbdove@concast.net) or 630.627.3982**

## Three Amigas from the RPG Head to Washington DC To Protest Keystone Pipeline

By *Connie Schmidt*

This fall, three River Prairie Group (RPG) amigas made a spontaneous decision to join thousands of like minded environmentalists to stop the Keystone pipeline at a protest in Washington DC.

Thousands of people peacefully circled the White House on November 6, 2011 to send a message to President Obama that the pipeline, to be built from the tar sands oil fields in Canada to the refineries in Texas, would be a disaster. They were rewarded just four days later when the state department announced that the review process for the Keystone XL pipeline would be extended until after the 2012 election.

Linda Sullivan, Lonnie Morris and I decided just days before the event that we would drop our weekend plans and jump into Lonnie's Prius to drive the 750 miles to Washington DC over the weekend. T-Shirts were made at a local shop displaying the Illinois Sierra Club logo and the message: *President Obama, Illinois worked for you in 08, Be the change before it is too late.*

### STOP KEYSTONE XL.

The event was scheduled to begin at 1:30 on Sunday but none of us could wait so after a hearty breakfast provided by our hosts (my cousin who lives in DC) we walked to Lafayette Park just in front of the White House. The shirts were a perfect decision because as we approached the park, we were greeted by others who knew we were there on the same mission. Georgia, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Ohio, *the other Washington, CANADA*; people were there from all over!

There were busloads of college students from schools such as Washington U., Brown University and Kent State. And there were plenty

of people with gray hair like us who had protested many years ago as well. The early crowd soon began to mushroom as the stage and sound system were erected. Some people wore shirts identifying that they were amongst the hundreds who were arrested in August at a similar event (this one had a permit.) We were proud to join them and make their voices even louder this time. Reports of crowds ranging from 5,000 to 12,000 flashed on cell phones and twitter.

The impetus for the gathering was the Calgary based Keystone XL's plan to run a pipeline through 6 Midwestern states to carry crude dirty tar sands oil from Alberta to Texas for refining. The \$7 billion project would run a total of 1,702 miles. Confiscation of private land, destruction of habitat, contamination of aquifers providing precious water resources to the Great Plains, and yet more encouragement of dependence on finite resources were among the concerns that drew the crowd together.



(From left) Linda Sullivan, Lonnie Morris, Connie Schmidt

Photo by Ellen Scanley

*Three Amigas, continued*

Numerous speakers rallied the crowd beginning at 2:00 with speeches from dignitaries such as Academy Award nominated actor, Mark Ruffalo, 1997 Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams, Michael Brune of the Sierra Club and the famed author and leader of the U. S. environmental movement Bill McKibben. McKibben (founder of 350.org) was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced each speaker while maintaining the enthusiasm and dignity of the crowd.

During the remarks by the famous scientist James Hansen (who first reported Climate Change to congressional committees in 1988) the electronics suddenly failed. The "Mic Check" technique, borrowed from the Occupy Movement was spontaneously employed to relay his message through the throngs. After each phrase, the message was hollered back to those behind and echoed until it reached the rear. Soon the microphones were back in operation and we all heard him together. One moving quote from this esteemed man was that if this second largest reserve of oil began to be tapped, it would be "Game Over" for the atmosphere. The line in the sand was clear.

When the circle around the White House began (equivalent to 8 city blocks) groups were dispersed and followed designated leaders carrying huge colored flags to their respective sides of the White House. First around to the back, then each side and we finally left to cover the front. There were so many of us that we were 3 and 4 people deep in places.

Young people marched past the line with encouraging chants. Several people wore polar bear suits signifying

the concern presented by climate change. A huge, *HUGE*, mock pipeline was carried overhead by an army of college students with signs to: Stop Keystone XL. The ring of humans was later referred to as a "solidarity hug" as young and old gathered together to remind President Obama why we had worked so hard to help put him into office. Perhaps the words of Bill McKibben say it best when he declared at the rally, "*Forget this Red State, Blue State stuff. This is the whole county*" acting together to send a message.

Soon it was over. We learned that President Obama had been golfing until 5:00 pm but in watching the newsfeeds we were sure he would definitely notice the presence of the crowds. As we piled back into the little Prius and headed toward Virginia we couldn't stop talking about how thrilled we were to be part of this monumental experience. We made notes to write this article for you and most importantly we brainstormed *what now? How do we keep this momentum moving forward?*

The elections of 2012 are key. The RPG will be looking at local candidates for elected office and evaluating their positions on environmental issues. You can be part of electing officials who care about the environment by checking the RPG's website for endorsed candidates and voting in the 2012 elections. If you would like to become more active with the Sierra Club, program meetings will be held throughout the coming year. Come, meet your Ex-Com and learn how you can get be involved. Now it is all of our turn to keep the momentum moving forward. Once the elections are over, more decisions must be made.

## Join the River Prairie Group Listserv!

We encourage everyone to sign up so you do not miss out on any of our news and activities. Stay up-to-date on the River Prairie Group's latest activities by joining our listserv. The listserv is open to anyone interested in finding out more about our group. The purpose of this list is to announce the activities, meetings, news and special events of the the Sierra Club's River Prairie Group, located in DuPage County, Illinois. The format of the list is for announcement and news distribution only, so members will receive but not be able to post messages.

Anyone interested in subscribing to this list can join in either of two ways:

Go to: <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/IL-RPG-NEWS.html> and click on "Join or leave the list."

or send an email to: [Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org](mailto:Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org)

Leave the subject line blank, in the message area type: **SUBSCRIBE IL-RPG-NEWS Firstname Lastname**  
(substitute your first and last names)

## Taking Advantage of a Home Energy Assessment

By Cindy Ward

ComEd and NICOR Gas currently make home energy savings assessment available to customers in DuPage County. The result is a personalized report including recommendations to help increase the energy efficiency of a home.

I recently had an in-home assessment, and found it to be very useful. A professional came armed with CFL's, foam pipe covers, an energy efficient showerhead, an infrared scanner and plenty of advice.

On the main floor he started by replacing light bulbs. He would replace a standard bulb with a CFL. Since I had converted some time ago, he gave me some for a new 3-bulb lamp. He replaced the 10-year-old water-saver showerhead with a new one, and changed the aerators on the sink faucets. Both increased the pressure of the water. For an additional \$22 he would install a programmable thermostat, but I already had one in my home.

In the basement he analyzed the efficiency of the furnace and tested ventilation of the water heater. While there, he wrapped the hot water pipes to reduce the amount of heat lost.

Finally, he pulled out his infrared scanner and showed me all the areas of my home where I was losing heat. This was worth the cost of the assessment. It took the mystery out of the origins of the drafts in my 1950's build house and showed where it needed insulation.

At the end of the visit I received a written report of the recommendations and the estimated cost of the improvements. If I were to use the recommended company there is a rebate of 50% of the cost up to \$1250 available through Nicor, but there was no sales pressure.

Now, if you want to look into having a home energy savings assessment done, you can schedule an appointment by calling **877.821.9988**. It is currently available to residents in DuPage County who are customers of ComEd and Nicor and costs \$99.

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## National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's web site.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. Visit the Club's election web site: **<http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2012election/default.aspx>**

This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If necessary, you will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

## First-term Representative Figures Out Springfield Political Labyrinth and How His Wife Can Take Zumba:

*An interview with  
Rep. Chris Nybo (R-Elmhurst)*

By Linda Sullivan

Just over two years ago River Prairie Group Political Committee members waited at Caribou Coffee in Glen Ellyn for a city councilman from Elmhurst to show up at his interview. They had braved flooded viaducts, lightning and crashing trees to get there. The city councilman was stuck on a stopped train from Chicago waiting for debris to be cleared from the track. You know...a dark, stormy night.

It was nearly 10 pm when Chris Nybo arrived at the coffee house hoping to be endorsed by Sierra Club for Illinois House District 41. To the astonishment of committee members, he arrived with a two-inch thick packet of research on renewable energy and energy efficiency in Illinois. He was completely knowledgeable on our bills and his enthusiasm for Illinois' clean future matched the committee's own.

While his passion for clean energy was impossible to doubt, the committee asked if would stand up to ComEd which had been able to block our clean energy bills the previous year. He assured us that would be no problem.

That turned out to be true. In his first term, Nybo was one of eight environmental heroes who stood up to ComEd demanding that any Smart Grid legislation include the Sierra Club's initiatives on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Nybo also voted consistently against taxpayer subsidies to coal plants in Illinois.

I wanted to hear the representative's impressions of his first term in office.

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**Linda:** *One of the first things people see when they go on your website <http://www.chrisnybo.com> is a picture of you with your young family. I remember when Sierra Club went to Springfield for Lobby Day last April, you told me the hardest part of the job was missing your wife Faye and your three children. Can you tell us how you are coping with that?*

**Chris:** As tough as legislation can be, by far the most difficult part of being a legislator to me is the time spent away from Faye and our children. My wife is also an attorney with an excellent and thriving practice. In our case we're very



Chris Nybo

Submitted Photo

fortunate to have grandparents on both sides willing to provide a lot of help to us to juggle all of the obligations we have. It's important to compartmentalize all of the different roles in our lives. We're not exceptional in any way. As I walk around the district and speak with people, many families are coping with the same struggles of balancing their professional work lives with their family time.

I do volunteer as a referee in my son's soccer league. I'm on duty when Faye goes to Zumba classes. She's a remarkable mother and she's very good at helping me keep my priorities straight. She's highly organized, so I've got a pretty clear idea of what family obligations are not negotiable and where the important time to spend in public service is most available.

**Linda:** *Besides being away from your family, what else has been hard about serving in Springfield?*

**Chris:** I wish I could wave a magic wand and make the irrational and unacceptable parts of the Springfield culture go away. Often I tell people at their doors or I'll give speeches stating how unhealthy Springfield is. It's a very unpleasant place right now. There's enough of a silver lining beneath the horribly black cloud that hangs over the place to make a motivated public servant want to do what he or she can do to change things.

There's tremendously corrupting influences around the Capitol at all times. It has seeped into the culture there. The most distressing thing is that it's overwhelmed many of the people who've been there a long time; so much so that they don't seem to see how skewed things have become. I really do take a mental inventory of progress every

*continued on next page...*

*Nybo, continued*

time I drive into Springfield and every time I leave. I know it will take as long to clean things up as it took to get into the messes we're all in, but I measure progress in terms I can build on.

*Linda: What do you like about serving in Springfield? Is anything fun?*

**Chris:** It's a privilege to walk onto the floor of the General Assembly. Being the representative for 110,000 people in my district is a sacred trust. I know I am among a select few who can directly steer policy. Recognizing people from my district on the floor or in the gallery is always a fun thing to be able to do. In my first session, we made huge strides on Epi Pen legislation, getting rid of state sponsored Blago-style political billboards, workman's compensation reform and several other initiatives.

All of these efforts are worthwhile and make a sizable difference in people's lives. I'm not much of an evening socialite at home or in Springfield, so there's little about the nightlife I can share. One thing I do take advantage of is regular workouts while I'm away from home. It's not all gloom and doom, but I'm there to work. To the extent that work can also be fun, it's fun enough.

*Linda: What surprised you the most about being a legislator?*

**Chris:** Within weeks there are over 6000 bills presented for consideration. It's literally impossible to know the sum and substance of all of them. Only a fraction of them will really make it to an up or down vote, but the amount of reading and review is astounding. There is a frenetic and almost chaotic pace and sound on the floor. It's almost like being the Flight Director at NASA with several dozen people speaking into your ear, all with important information.

There are other times where absolutely nothing is happening as if it's just the calm before the storm. Issues can die an unceremonious death and then suddenly come back to life. Things can take forever or they can pass in the blink of an eye. Everything about this State's business is a bit surprising. We should work to make that not the case.

*Linda: You along with fellow DuPage legislators Sandra Pihos (R-Glen Ellyn) and Michael Fortner (R-West Chicago) have been praised for holding out for changes in the Smart Grid bill that made it environmental. In fact, you three withheld your vote until nearly all the changes that the Sierra Club was asking for were incorporated into the bill. Can you tell us how that happened and why you chose to do that?*

**Chris:** I'm fortunate in that I have a dedicated group of 65 people in the district serving on a Legislative Advisory Committee. They do a lot of research, a lot of deliberation and a lot of debates before many issues come to me. I had a lot of information on this bill. My district is particularly susceptible to power outages that are measured in days and weeks instead of just hours. They're demanding that something be done to improve the infrastructure in our communities. It's more than an inconvenience and it doesn't require a storm event to have random and long power outages.

Sierra Club does a great deal of research as well. They're particularly good at sharing the information. The changes they were asking for in this bill made terrific common sense and were not going to cost taxpayers more money to implement a better solution. If doing the right thing for the people of your district and your state makes you a hero, we should have had 118 heroes in the House. This was a bill that needed very wide support. Seeing that we provided good environmental stewardship was appropriate, reasonable and revenue neutral. We shouldn't legislate in a fashion that will cause us to go back later and fix something at a high cost that could have been addressed in the beginning without incurring cost.

*Linda: Sierra Club members know you are passionate about clean energy. Do you have any other interests relating to a clean environment?*

**Chris:** I'm the father of 3 young children. I want them and everyone else to breathe clean air and drink clean water. As we evolve into new areas of technology that provide for clean alternatives without creating economic hardship, we should move efficiently in that direction. The environment is not a partisan issue for me and no party has the franchise on environmental stewardship. People who willfully pollute and endanger people should be dealt with firmly, just like anyone else who would put innocent people in harm's way. We need to preserve and protect our environment and do so without the silly side shows that often enter the equation. It's serious business. I've been accused of being a serious person. I plead guilty to that one. We need to provide as good or better of an environment to those coming after us as the one we inherited. That's not a terribly high standard right now.

## Moving Planet: *Individuals Making A Difference*

By Shannon Burns

In his 1964 book *Inventing the Future*, Dennis Gabor said, "Til now, man has been up against Nature; from now on, he will be against his own nature."

Most agree with Gabor; we've steadily made such a colossal mess of things that fixing Earth's environmental problems seems impossible. Living in the shadow of ginormous disasters, like the Exxon Valdez and BP Amoco oil spills, it is easy to forget that Earth's environmental problems are really only the accumulation of many small individual actions.

Because we so often lose site of the fact that large-scale disasters begin with every day decisions made by ordinary people – like you and me! – it's equally easy to forget that solutions also come from decisions made by ordinary people.

### **MOVING PLANET: Individuals Coming Together!**

**350.org's** September 24, 2011 international Moving Planet event brought people from all over the world together to celebrate locally-based solutions to the problem of global climate change.

**350.org** is dedicated to solving the world's climate crisis through grassroots organizing. On September 24, the River Prairie Group (RPG) joined 350.org in sponsoring one of the 2000 events in 175 countries around the world to promote grassroots solutions to Earth's global environmental problems.

### **COOL CITIES**

Closely aligned with 350.org is the grassroots **Cool Cities** movement. According to Lonnie Morris, chair of the RPG, "Both movements are a result of the Government's stalemate on climate change. Moving Planet and 350.org have effectively spread the word that action is needed. Cool Cities provides a concrete way for local people to work on practical solutions that will make a difference in reducing carbon emissions." Morris cited Cool Cities examples, such as improving energy efficiency of buildings and making communities more bicycle friendly, as proof that local communities can make a difference.



Photos by Chris Savaiano

### **PEOPLE of the MOVING PLANET**

Regular people of every age, from differing political parties, from diverse communities, with a wide range of personal interests, came together for a common goal on September 24. Whether coming from near or far, arriving by bike or on foot, participants in the RPG's **Moving Planet** event demonstrated the power of individuals working together to positively impact global climate change.

There were about 250 people converging in Villa Park on September 24th and I talked to many of them; too many to write about each one individually. Everyone attending was excited to be part of the solution and felt good about taking action toward creating a cool climate. There was an atmosphere of hope that positive change was possible if we all worked together

#### *Here are a few real people stories from the Moving Planet event:*

**Greg Brownfield**, an Attorney from Bartlett, rode 40 miles round trip to demonstrate his commitment to reducing fossil fuel emissions. The event gave Brownfield "the chance to retrace my old bike route from Bartlett to my office in Carol Stream." Brownfield, who may have ridden the most miles to participate in the event, noted that riding local trails combines the chance to exercise, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and lower commuting costs.

*continued on next page...*

*Moving Planet, continued*

**Sandy Kaptain**, wife of Elgin's Mayor Dave Kaptain, commented pre-event that she'd "be there one way or t'other!" Kaptain, who trained for several months to ride 17 miles from Army Trail Rd. to Villa Park on the Prairie Path, remembered biking as a kid. "It feels good to be back on my bike and able to ride for 15 miles!" she said. Kaptain was joined by **Linda Sullivan**, Sierra Club lobbyist, who rode from Lombard to meet the Elgin group at the Prairie Path connection in Wayne.

At 79, **Dave Segel** may be the most senior person to attend the event. Segel runs but does not bike so he carpooled to the Moving Planet event with **Elgin Mayor Dave Kaptain**. Participation in the Moving Planet was an extension of Segel's life-long interest in sustainable communities: He was a founding member of the advisory committee for Elgin's model sustainability plan. "Our program built a great foundation from the beginning" Segel said, "We started with over 100 volunteers!"

Eco-Club members from Glenbard West High School rode into Villa Park, excited about the chance to share their ideas for "being green" into the future. The Wheaton Chapter of the League of Women Voters (LWV) volunteered to manage checkpoints along the Prairie Path. Elgin area LWV members **Laurel Bault** and **Wendy Covich** attended the event in support of the LWV's National Agenda on Climate Change.

**Bob Sobie**, President of the IPP, noted that the Moving Planet event underscored the benefits of partnership: "Participation in the Moving Planet event allowed IPP to participate in a strategic partnership with the Sierra Club. Both organizations share common goals; we have like-minded members!"

**Lonnie Morris** found the event a great opportunity to "recognize mayors that have made a commitment to local solutions to climate change through the Cool Cities program. Villa Park and the neighboring communities of Lombard, Elmhurst, Westmont and Carol Stream are Cool Cities and have made energy efficiency and conservation part of how they do business." Mayors and community



activists from these communities, including **Bill Mueller** from Lombard, **Dave Kaptain** and **Aaron Cosentino** of Elgin, **Jan Smith** and **Mayor Saverino** from Carol Stream, Westmont's **George Hamper** and Villa Park's **Bob Wagner**, **Tom Cullerton**, and **Al Bultus** were recognized for their roles in supporting sustainable community activities at the Moving Planet event.

Singer/songwriter **Mike Schmidt**, of Warrenville, and the band Jykes, provided musical accompaniment to the day's activities. Jykes co-founder, **Karen Tlusty** said the band has "a deep care and concern for the environment. The universal language of music is the perfect platform for expressing these concerns."

My favorite comment from the Moving Planet event came from a kid: A girl who was maybe 7. I asked her what she thought about the big crowd. "It's cool" she said "we're all having fun." Maybe she's right: Maybe it's just that simple!

#### **A DAY TO REMEMBER . . .**

Moving Planet was a day to remember that solutions are created by individuals who – one person at a time – put forth the commitment to global change that will save our Earth. The local RPG's Moving Planet event proved it: When individuals committed to a common cause get together, what we do does make a difference! If you participated in Moving Planet, good for you! Don't stop now! Go out and tell others about it. Rally support in your neighborhood and at work for riding or walking as a way to cool our Earth. All it takes is one more person at a time, doing one more small thing in the right direction, and soon we will have a cooler Earth!

## RPG Chair Lonnie Morris wins Sierra Club Special Achievement Award

By Linda Sullivan

When RPG Chair Lonnie Morris was nominated for a national Sierra Club award, support from the Illinois Chapter was so overwhelming that at one point the Awards Committee chair emailed that we could stop sending recommendation letters because Ms. Morris was already definitely getting an award.

Morris won the award for her work as Illinois Cool Cities Chair. Since Morris became Illinois Cool Cities Chair, 56 Illinois towns have signed on as Cool Cities. Towns become Cool Cities when their mayor signs the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement pledging their town to do a carbon footprint inventory and implement a sustainability plan.

The Cool Cities program has an empowering effect on people who otherwise would have no concrete way to make local government greener. Morris teaches volunteers to form coalitions and approach their mayor and city council. Cool Cities' motto is "Solving global warming one city at a time."

Connie Schmidt, who originated the nomination, said she thought of it because Morris had "magnified her own ability to affect change by engaging multitudes of volunteers across Illinois." In fact, every letter of recommendation mentioned Morris' skill in developing volunteers.

The main nomination letter written by Schmidt, Jen Hensley and myself (Linda Sullivan) said, "One of Lonnie Morris' greatest leadership attributes is her ability to foster leadership roles in others. When she identifies a new volunteer she is quick to assess their areas of interest, talks with them individually to develop a plan and then continues to nurture them until they take up the gauntlet of leadership in their individual communities. Lonnie creates a ladder of engagement for new volunteers, which helps build success and imbues confidence in residents who want to make a bigger difference by convincing their town to adopt the Cool City goals."

Jack Darin, Illinois Sierra Club director said, "Lonnie Morris has done an incredible job building the Sierra Club's Cool Cities program. Her work has empowered hundreds of ordinary people who care about the environment to make a difference right in their own town. She is brilliant at mentoring volunteers and providing them with the resources to be successful."



Lonnie Morris  
Photo by Andrew Cohen

When Morris won the Sierra Club's highly competitive Special Achievement Award, she could have accepted the Club's offer of a free trip to San Francisco for herself and her husband Andrew Cohen with complimentary accommodations and a glitzy awards ceremony. She could have worn her slinky red dress and silver shoes.

But to minimize her carbon footprint, she opted instead to receive the award locally at RPG's Moving Planet Day which took place on September 24 in Villa Park. Mr. Darin presented the award.

She rode her bicycle to it. No red dress.

"I am thrilled and honored to receive this award," said Morris. "But it made sense to receive the award in DuPage County at Moving Planet Day, which is all about getting beyond carbon-based fossil fuels."

Two round-trip flights for Morris and her husband from O'Hare International Airport to San Francisco International would have produced 1,014 Kg of CO<sub>2</sub>, according to the International Civil Aviation Organization's carbon footprint calculator.

Aside from her state-wide role as Cool Cities chair, Morris is the chair of the River Prairie Group, the Sierra Club's DuPage County group. She owns a Prius but chooses to ride her bicycle on such errands as trips to the grocery store, post office, book club and health club, as well as recreationally. She is an avid gardener, reader and prairie restorationist. In addition to husband Andrew, she has three sons: Adam, Stephan and Max Morris-Cohen. She has a one-year-old grandson Henry. After Aldo Leopold's daughter recently died, she adopted the daughter's dog, a five-year-old lab.

## Calendar of Events

### Wednesday, January 11 – DuPage Environmental Summit 2012\*\*

11:30 am- 5:00 pm, Krasa Center at  
Benedictine University, 5700 College Rd., Lisle

The Earth Summit is free and open to the public. The Summit offers a mix of presentations from industry experts, professional exhibits and networking opportunities. The main focus of this year's summit is small scale renewable energy systems. Presentations include: *"It Starts with Energy Efficiency First," "Solar and Photovoltaic Systems," "Small Wind Systems," "Geothermal Systems," "Challenges for Local Implementation," "Investment Payback and Financial Incentives."* For more information or to register for the Summit contact **Carrie Thompson**, 630-428-4500 x10 or [cthompson@theconservationfoundation.org](mailto:cthompson@theconservationfoundation.org).

### Sunday January 29 – Green Readin': The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival, John Vaillant,

2:00 pm, Helen Plum Memorial Library,  
110 W. Maple St., Lombard

The first selection for the 2012 Green Readin' series, takes the reader on an exciting adventure into the heart of Russia's Far East and the complicated conflict between tiger and man. This cautionary tale of predator and prey sheds light on the continuing struggle between people and wildlife and how they can find ways to co-exist. Discussion questions for each selection are available at the Helen Plum Library and at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg>

### Friday, February 24 – Concert to Combat Coal Mining in Central Illinois Sierra Club Fundraiser with live music

7:30 – 10:00 pm, Warren Tavern  
3 S. 540 2nd Street, Warrenville IL 60555

Live music presented by the harmonizing vocals of TRIO. This popular local group offers a trip down memory lane with favorites from the 1960s and 70s. \$25 per adult, couples \$40. Two drinks included with admission. Call **Connie Schmidt** to volunteer or for further information 630-393-3276.

### Sunday February 26 – Green Readin': Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future by Jeff Goodell

2:00 pm, Helen Plum Memorial Library,  
110 W. Maple St., Lombard

The Green Readin' series continues with a look into America's dirty secret: energy dependence on coal. Big Coal reveals the true cost of this powerful and dangerous black rock. Discussion questions for each selection are available at the Helen Plum Library and at: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg>

### Friday, March 9 – Dirty Business and Sinking the Heartland

7:20 pm, DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church,  
1828 Old Naperville Road, Naperville

The Sierra Club and Just Views of the DuPage Peace through Justice Coalition are co-sponsoring a showing of two movies, **Dirty Business**, an exploration of the coal industry's "clean coal" publicity campaign and **Sinking the Heartland**, an examination of long wall mining in central Illinois. The movies will be followed by audience discussion. For directions and a map, see church web site: [www.dupageuuchurch.org](http://www.dupageuuchurch.org). The church phone is 630-505-9408.

### Sunday, March 25 – Green Readin': Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver

2:00 pm, Helen Plum Memorial Library,  
110 W. Maple St., Lombard

The Green Readin' series concludes with the Kingsolver family's memoir about their year as locavores. It's an inspirational way to kick off spring and the planting season. Discussion questions for each selection are available at the Helen Plum Library and at: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg>

### Sunday, May 20 – Party on the Farm Fundraiser

3:00 - 8:00 pm, 3S501 Landon Dr, Warrenville

**SAVE THE DATE** for the **2012 Party on the Farm** at Connie and Mike Schmidt's house in Warrenville. This annual event takes place the Sunday after Mother's Day from 3 - 8 pm and features live music from local artists including the **"Almost Brothers Band"**. Adults are \$15 each or 2 for \$25 and kids are free. Please leave your pets at home; we have plenty of animals to share with you.

*\*\*Indicates activities that are not sponsored nor administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision, or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service because it may be of interest to the readers of this publication.*

## River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings

**Note:** All local Group outings are offered at cost. Longer and more expensive outings require deposits (ask leader about refund policy). Including updates on those below, new RPG listings, and offerings from other local Groups, current listings are on the internet at: [illinois.sierraclub.org/outings](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/outings). Contact the leader or assistant indicated for more information and outing requirements..

*For up-to-date information, visit: [illinois.sierraclub.org/outings](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/outings)*

### Jan. 7 (Sat) Cross-Country Ski Workshop, Little House Cabin in Glencoe or Alternate Site, IL

Join us for a fun and informative afternoon to learn about cross-country skiing! This indoor workshop will be held at the "Little House in Glencoe" (or an alternate location) from 1:00 to 4:30 PM, and will be followed immediately by a potluck dinner. This is a great way to get up-to-date information before renting/buying equipment and is highly recommended to those attending the "on snow" instruction workshop. Topics to be covered include an overview of cross-country ski techniques, clothing, and equipment, as well as where to go. The \$15 fee (for workshop and facilities expenses) is due 01/04/2012. Coordinator is **Floyd Bednarz**. TO SIGN UP: contact **Floyd Bednarz** at **847-933-9340** or via email at [floydsoutings@gmail.com](mailto:floydsoutings@gmail.com)

*Note: Location subject to change! Sign-ups accepted until Jan 4th! For novices and experienced alike!*

### Jan. 14-15 Beginner Cross Country Ski Workshop, Berrien County, IL

Do you want to learn to cross country ski? Do you know how but want to improve your skiing techniques? If so, join us in southwest MI. Participants will learn basic skills in a controlled area and then improve their skills on the trails with instructors. The \$25 cost includes a donation to support cross country ski trails. Meals and lodging costs are not included. Limit 20 participants, intermediate and advanced skiers are welcome, but priority will be given to beginners. If the conditions are not suitable in MI the trip may be moved to a different location or re-scheduled for a different weekend. Trip leaders are **Donna** and **Steve Turner**, **Teri** and **Dave Barnard**, **Jeanette Vidmar** and **Mike Davis**. Contact **Teri** and **Dave** at **847-255-9982** beginning December 15 to reserve your spot.

### Jan. 21 (Sat) Eagles and Frozen Waterfalls, Waterway and Starved Rock State Park, IL

Come join us for a fun day watching eagles at the Waterway dam on the Illinois River and hiking to frozen waterfalls. At the Waterway, we will learn about the eagle and it's come back since being taken off of the endangered species list. Then we will hike the trails at a leisurely pace, depending on the ice, to the frozen water falls. On the way we will learn about ice colors

and minerals of Starved Rock. Cost: \$3. Limit: 20. Please contact leader **Jan Bradford** **847-455-2947** after 7pm or [jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net). Assisting leader **Reina Kalish**.

### Feb. 3-5 Cross Country Ski Trip, Stevens Point, WI

Dust off those skis and join us for cross country skiing at its best. We will stay in Stevens Point, about a 4 hour drive from Chicago and ski Saturday and Sunday on groomed trails in the area. The trails are suitable for skiers of all abilities however true beginners should attend the Beginner Cross Country Ski Clinic January 15 and 16 which will get you ready for this trip. The \$135 cost is for lodging (double occupancy) and trail passes but does not include food or transportation. If the conditions in Wisconsin are not good this trip may be moved to the Cadillac, MI area. To register, call the leaders **Donna** and **Steve Turner** at **630-782-5865** or email [sdturner@gmail.com](mailto:sdturner@gmail.com).

### Feb. 10-13 Cross-Country Ski Outing in Michigan's UP, Northern Wisconsin-Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Enjoy a 3-day cross-country ski trip in the great snow country of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Stay in fully-equipped deluxe cabins on the shore of a (frozen) lake near the town of Watersmeet. Three excellent areas with groomed trails will be skied (classical skiing). Trip fee of approximately \$150 includes 3 nights lodging, two home-cooked dinners, and Sierra Club fees. (S.C. members get \$5 discount.) \$75 deposit due Jan 6th. Limit 18. Leader is **Mike Davis**. Assistant leaders are **Berni Kolasa**, **Marlena Bertolozzi**, **Jerry Jaecks** and **Sharon Koontz**. Calls taken beginning December 14 by **Mike** at **815-331-3042**.

### Feb. 18 (Sat) Winter Hike at Indiana Dunes State Park, Chesterton, IN

Enjoy the late-winter quiet of this national treasure, first as we walk the wooded trails in the 1,800-acre forest, then view the golden grasses as we cross over the dunes and continue walking on a spectacular stretch of dunes and beach on one of the world's greatest lakes. We will cover about 8 miles at a moderate pace with a lunch stop at mid-point. Cost: \$3. Limit: 25. Leader is **Paul Saindon**. Assistant leader is **Mary Lorraine Fox**. To sign up email **Paul** at [paul@pauls.us](mailto:paul@pauls.us).

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*River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings, continued*

**Feb. 24-26 Wolf Tracking in Northern Wisconsin, Tomahawk, WI**

Come out for a winter weekend of wolf tracking activities in Northern Wisconsin. This unique winter outing will be held at Treehaven, an outdoor education center run by the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Activities will include an orientation on wolf behavior, outdoor winter survival skills, fort building, tracking, and a wolf howl on Saturday night. Snowshoes and cross country skis will be used for exploring this beautiful site. Approximate \$140 fee covers 2 nights lodging, 3 meals, all necessary equipment, and administrative fees. Limit 15. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Co-Leader is **Paul Saindon**. To sign up, contact **Mark** at **847-699-0329** or **bubbleman@earthlink.net**.

**Note:** [www.uwsp.edu/cnr/treehaven](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/treehaven)

**Apr. 22 (Sun) Spring Wildflower Hike: Black Partridge Preserve & Messenger Woods, Southern Cook/Northern Will Counties, IL**

Join us for a spring wildflower hike at these 2 areas. Black Partridge Preserve, dedicated as the second nature preserve in Illinois, is an 80-acre site located in southern Cook County. The trail follows a stream and goes up and down ravines. Messenger Woods, one of Will County's oldest and most unusual sites, covers 946 acres and is known for its abundance of spring wildflowers that carpet the forest floor. Red and white trillium, hepatica, blue-eyed Mary and Virginia Bluebells are the stars of the show. Cost: \$3. Limit: 15. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Co-Leader is **Paul Saindon**. To sign up, contact **Mark** at **847-699-0329** or **bubbleman@earthlink.net**. Assistant Leader needed.

**Apr. 28 (Sat) Glacial Park Geological Day Hike, Ringwood, IL**

A leisurely spring interpretive hike with a retired geologist, in Glacial Park, the crown jewel of the McHenry County Conservation District. We will hike approximately 6 miles and observe geological features and learn about their origins. Leader is **Mike Davis**. Assistant leader is **Berni Kolasa**. Cost: \$3. Limit: 20. Calls taken by **Mike** at **815-331-3042** or **mikeyd5600@comcast.net**.

**Apr. 28 (Sat) Day Hike at Franklin Creek State Natural Area, Franklin Grove, IL**

Join us for an April hike at this beautiful 664-acre park. We will hike about 7 miles. There are several stream crossings that can be up to 2 feet deep. Beautiful Franklin Creek flows throughout the 882 -acre park. Low lying areas along the creek bed support a bottomland forest dominated by silver maple and hackberry. Ravines support mesic (intermediate between wet and dry) upland forest characterized by sugar maple and basswood. We will learn about the many spring wildflowers including Virginia Bluebells,

Wild Columbine, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Wild Ginger, Mayapple, and Prairie Trillium. Cost: \$3. Limit: 16. Leader is **Paul Saindon**. Assistant Leader is **Joanne Reisner**. To sign up, email **Paul** at **paul@pauls.us**.

**Area Info:** <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgmt/parks/r1/franklin.htm>

**Apr. 29 (Sun) Spring Wildflower Hike: Red Mill County Park & Bendix Woods, LaPorte County, IN**

Join us to view the spring wildflowers in nearby LaPorte County Indiana. We will visit 2 county parks. Red Mill County Park is a 160 acre gem with 3 miles of trail winding through the woods and around the wetlands of the headwaters of the Little Calumet River. Bendix Woods County Park is the former testing grounds of the Studabaker automobile with 3 miles of trail. When I first visited here a year ago, I found a carpet of white blossoms (trillium, dutchman's breeches, bloodroot, spring beauties, anemone) that made my jaw drop!!! Cost: \$3. Limit: 15. To sign up, contact the Leader **Mark Ginger** at **847-699-0329/** email: **bubbleman@earthlink.net**. Assistant Leader needed.

**May 5 (Sat) Spring Wildflower Hike: Love Creek County Park & Fernwood Nature Preserve, Berrien Springs, MI**

Join us for a spring wildflower hike at 2 areas in southwest Michigan. Love Creek County Park is a 150-acre natural area that has 6 miles of hiking trails that wind through a mature Beech-Maple forest. Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve has a phenomenal collection of botanicals as well as woodlands that are carpeted with trilliums, anemones, violets, Solomon's seal and more. These 2 places provide for an ideal environment for viewing and getting educated about some spectacular spring wildflowers. Cost: \$3. Limit: 15. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. To sign up, call **Mark** at **847-699-0329/** email: **bubbleman@earthlink.net** beginning April 1st. Assistant Leader needed.

**May 13 (Sun) Annual Mother's Day Walk at Volo Bog, Ingleside, IL**

Our annual Mother's Day hike will be held at Volo Bog State Natural Area. This unique area was formed thousands of years ago by the Wisconsin Glacier. The morning will start with 3 miles of hiking around the bog, followed by an interpretive walk into the center of the bog. After lunch, we will continue with another short hike on nearby trails. We will also learn about local Spring flowers and birds. Families welcome. Cost: \$3. Limit: 20. Leaders: **Mark Ginger** and **Berni Kolasa**, Assistant Leader: **Steve Savocchi**. Call **Berni** starting April 1 at **847-885-2287**.

*For more and up-to-date information, visit: [illinois.sierraclub.org/outings](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/outings)*



## Glenbard West's Eco Club

### Sprog Sparks Passion and Ignites Inspiration for Glenbard West's Eco Club

By *Betsey Kinsey*

Stepping out of the house on a Saturday morning in autumn, I was filled with disbelief at the sight of fifty Styrofoam cups adorning my yard. This wasn't an act of the casual litter bug; this was an intentional prank on the leader of Glenbard West's Ecology Club.

Eco Club has always struggled. Unfortunately, as if the world's energy crisis, resource abuse, and pollution problems weren't enough to take on, Eco Club has also been forced to fight the uphill battle against The High School Status Quo. For some reason, our student body is not typically supportive of those who openly care for the environment and sustainability. I have been the butt of many "tree-hugger" jokes including the Styrofoam cups incident.

Despite Eco Club's lack of support, it is by no means a lost cause, and I have worked to ensure its progress. As a member for four years of high school I have had big ideas for the club. When I became president my junior year, I wasn't sure how to beget these changes. Through Eco Club's community outreach, I became familiar with members of the River Prairie Group. They asked me to join a planning committee for a local Moving Planet rally, part of the global day of green activism. After working together, the fantastic Lonnie Morris offered me a Sierra Club sponsorship to attend an environmental leadership camp called Sprog, created by the Sierra Student Coalition.

A week filled with training sessions and nightly bonding activities or guest speakers went beyond all expectations and even now, explanation. Most of my time was spent in an intimate classroom setting where I learned how to do everything from planning successful campaigns to understanding others in order to strengthen the common cause. Learning with peers who shared my concerns and passions was transformative. The other individuals in this entirely student-run program actively sought knowledge

in order to improve upon themselves and the world. This was precisely the atmosphere I needed to create in Eco Club to mitigate the limitations the group felt and to harness the potential of all members.

Once I was home from camp, Eco Club's revamp couldn't wait until fall. Through Sprog contacts, Eco Club attended a Clean Power Coalition meeting at the Sierra Club office. We canvassed Glen Ellyn, collecting 250 signatures in support of the Clean Power Ordinance, contributing to a larger goal of 5,000 signatures, which were delivered to Mayor Emanuel.

The club was proving its strength and attracting attention. Come fall our first meeting was unimaginable. When I saw fifty kids sitting before me, loud and excited about the environment at 7:00 am, I knew this year would be different. For every Styrofoam cup placed in my yard that night, there was an eager member of Eco Club. The power I felt within our group that morning, the potential of our team to push for change and break down the walls that keep other students from seeing the significance of our purpose, was inspiring.

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### A Strong Start to the School Year

By *Samantha Moriarty*

Eco Club, a continuously rising club at Glenbard West, got an early start this year by helping Chicago's Clean Power Coalition voice support for the Clean Power Ordinance.

The coalition is trying to make Chicago's energy more sustainable by enforcing higher standards on its two existing coal plants. The Fisk and Crawford coal plants undoubtedly contribute to the degradation of air quality as well as illnesses induced by the added pollution. The club members attended one of the coalition's field meetings in Chicago last August to discuss issues and provide extra sets of hands. The eco team canvassed Glen Ellyn and collected 250 signatures in support of the Clean Power Ordinance.

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Glenbard West Eco Club, continued



Glenbard West Eco Club  
Photo by Carrie Phillips

Currently the club is participating in the Biggest Loser: Energy Competition through ACE (the Alliance for Climate Education). By monitoring West's energy use in various rooms, members are able to see how many pounds of CO<sup>2</sup> their school can shave off by being more energy efficient. The club members make teachers aware of the amount of unnecessary energy they are using and explain to them how they can reduce their carbon footprint through simple tasks such as having fewer light switches turned on and unplugging electronics when not in use.

Eco Club rode in style this September, arriving at the Moving Planet rally in Villa Park on their bikes. The co-presidents Betsy Kinsey and Carrie Phillips were so excited to attend the rally they decided to go as green as possible. At the rally members learned other small steps they can take to save the Earth other than riding their bikes.

The club has weekly meetings with a huge turnout of 40 participating students. Currently Eco Club is focusing on improving their school by making it more eco friendly. They are working on getting a grant for solar panels and are trying to get their cafeteria to stop using Styrofoam.

## Join the Bluestem Network, The Official Lobbying Network of the River Prairie Group!

You'll receive a call whenever the Sierra Club Phone Tree Network is activated with an environmental action alert. Bluestem is generally activated on a monthly basis. Upon receiving the phone call notification, members can access the environmental action alert by two ways: receiving it at an email address or by checking the RPG Web page. The action alert instructs members how to place a call to elected representatives and the position that the Sierra Club has taken. A phone call to elected officials has proven to be the most effective way to have an impact on public policy. *To join, clip and mail the application to Linda Sullivan, 302 W. Windsor Ave., Lombard, IL 60148.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

IL County \_\_\_\_\_

Sierra Club Member? Yes  No

Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
(required to join)

Answering machine? Yes  No

Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
*if you wish to receive action alerts via email*



# TEAM 2012

SAVING THE PLANET – ONE VOTER AT A TIME!

**Our politics are broken – and certainly not up to the task of solving the climate crisis and protecting our environment for future generations.** What's an environmentalist to do, in the face of radicals who demonize science, and try to gut the clean air and water acts? Do we all stand a chance, with big coal and other corporations fueling the fire with huge sums of cash promoting their agenda, and their candidates? **Of course we do – this is still a democracy!**

We are the majority who value clean air and water, who want to protect our natural heritage, and who want to move beyond coal and oil to a clean energy future.

**Even in these troubled times, voters want to protect the environment.** Republicans, Independents, and Democrats can agree on that – even if our leaders cannot. **Sierra Club's Team 2012** will be focused on helping Illinois voters get what they want – elected officials who share their goal of a clean environment. With new electoral maps for Congress and Illinois General Assembly, 2012 will offer great opportunities for upgrading our elected officials. New districts will mean open seats and contested races that give us a chance to elect new environmentalists to office, and rare opportunities to defeat anti-environment incumbents.

**Sierra Club's Team 2012** will do this by:

- Holding current lawmakers accountable for their votes against clean water, clean air, and renewable energy
- Recruiting environmental leaders to run for office
- Evaluating candidates for local, state, and federal office, and making endorsements when we find clear differences
- Educating voters about the differences between candidates, and making the difference for environmental champions

## We Need Your Help - Join Team 2012!

- **Volunteer** – help us evaluate candidates, and elect the best! We're building our team of phonebankers, canvassers, online activists, and more.
- **Donate** – your gift to Sierra Club Illinois PAC helps us reach the voters who will make the difference!

**Join Team 2012 – Contact [Jennifer.Hensley@sierraclub.org](mailto:Jennifer.Hensley@sierraclub.org) to get started!**