

Joining Sierra Club members in Lake and Northeastern Cook Counties in Illinois

WOODS & WETLANDS News



OCTOBER MEETING

Tuesday, October 20
7:00 pm
Vernon Area Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire

Escape from the plains and enter undeveloped Utah and learn about one of our last, best wilderness areas with Bob Brister of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.



October program:

A visit to Utah's Red Rock Wilderness

Bob Brister, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Escape from the plains for a few minutes at our October meeting as we take a trip to some of the last true wilderness in America's western lands.

Harboring some of the largest and finest desert roadless areas anywhere in the world, undeveloped Utah includes the huge canyon systems of the Colorado, Green, San Juan, and Dolores rivers; the intimate slickrock narrows of the Escalante, Dirty Devil, Paria, and Virgin rivers; the vast tablelands and massive cliff-walls of the Kaiparowits Plateau, the Book Cliffs, and the Grand Staircase; and the isolated mountain ranges and desert riparian areas of Utah's Great Basin country. Over 9 million acres of public land. See this beautiful area and learn about its past and potential future from Bob Brister of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

Directions:

From the East: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west just past Milwaukee Ave (Route 21) to the first stop light (Olde Half Day Rd). Turn right, then quickly left into the library parking lot.

From the West: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) east. Just before you hit Milwaukee Ave (Route 21), turn left at the stop light for Olde Half Day Rd. Turn quickly left into the library parking lot. ☘

Get outdoors!

Barbara Bell, group outings co-chair

We climbed to the bottom of the only canyon in Cook County in May. In June, we paddled the Upper Fox Lake River, offering beginners a chance to hone their canoe skills and enjoy the Chain O' Lakes State Park.

On a hot weekend in July, we walked through a restored prairie near Grayslake, observing lush plants with roots 15 feet deep that kept the prairie green while lawns turned brown. Before Lake Forest officials decided to reject Costco, we visited the Middlefork Savanna, a Lake County forest preserve that would have been adversely affected if the big-box store had been approved.

Who are we? We're Woods & Wetlands Outings Committee and the events described were planned by us. In every outing, we endeavor to learn something new as well as appreciate the outdoors. It's a great opportunity to get off the couch and see something different. Watch the Illinois Sierra Club Web site and click on Get Outdoors for a list of upcoming outings. ☘

Two ways you can make a difference

Can you write?

Are you good at writing, perhaps in high school or college? Does your job require frequent writing, like for manuals or the law? If so, please consider spending some of your time with Sierra Club using your skill. It turns out that much of the toolbox we use to protect our air, land and water is, basically, writing, as in letters to the editor, newsletter articles or responses to governmental agencies.

If you'd rather put pen to paper than carry a protest sign, then we need your help. Please call or write Larry Marvet, 847-537-2083, ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org.

Are you organized?

If you're reading this newsletter and wishing you knew enough about it to help, here's more news: You can anyway! The group needs a secretary to help with the crucial role of scheduling leadership meetings, recording who volunteers to do what, and then helping us to stick to our goals. E-mail skills essential. A few evenings each month. Please contact group chair Evan Craig at 847-680-6437, ww-chair@illinois.sierraclub.org. ☘

URGENT—YOUR ACTION NEEDED !!!!!!!

If the vote hasn't already been held by the time you receive this newsletter and you're in the 10th District, please call Mark Kirk and tell him to vote AGAINST the budget reconciliation bill that has a hidden provision for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. If you're in the 8th District, call Melissa Bean and remind her to cast her vote against the budget reconciliation bill.

☎ Congressman Mark Kirk 847-940-0202
☎ Congresswoman Melissa Bean 847-519-3434

What happened to conservation?

Larry Marvet, Conservation Committee chair

This may be obvious, but in the midst of a national conservative tide overseen by our conservative Congress, we should expect conservation. It may be that our national leaders, from G. W. Bush through Tom DeLay, think that "conservative" is just a label needed for electioneering, but protection of air, water, wildlife and land for our grandchildren is the true definition of conservation. We aren't sure who twisted the conservation out of conservatives, but Ronald Reagan signed the California Wilderness Act, Richard Nixon started the Environmental Protection Agency, the Endangered Species Act and Clean Air Act. And, going back further, Republican president Abe Lincoln protected Yosemite.

An important test of our thinking is coming soon, as Congress readies a vote for oil drilling in America's last great wilderness, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Teddy Roosevelt originally established the Refuge system for our country and Dwight Eisenhower first protected this wonderful place. Unfortunately, in the intervening years it has become the only truly wild land remaining along the once amazingly rich northern coast of Alaska.

Using backroom maneuvers and tricks, the death blow for the Arctic Refuge—oil drilling—has been hidden within the arcane Budget Reconciliation bill, to be voted on within days. If this bill is passed, a massive spiders web of roads and construction will begin, ruining our beautiful land, eventually leading to a few months supply of oil—in 2015!

So who has pushed our conservative congress to the verge of squandering America's Serengeti? Maybe it's Alaskans, who drool over a possible billion dollar windfall. Or Big Oil, who've never seen a place they wouldn't drill. Or legislators trying desperately to refill our empty piggybank. Or even those who believe that oil from the Arctic Refuge can quench our ever increasing thirst.

Whatever the reasons, much of their underpinnings are way off base. Drilling advocates point to a \$2.4 billion outcome, but that incorrectly assumes that oil companies will pay 40 times the going rate for land. And these oil companies tell us we can expect to find 800,000 barrels of oil per day—a trickle compared to the 20 million barrels Americans burn daily.

Surprisingly, Lake County can turn back this bad idea. It happens that Big Oil thinks they can count on the vote of our own Congressman, Republican Mark Kirk of the 10th district. The vote was very close last time around, so Kirk—who is non-committal about his direction on this bill—could well be the deciding congressman.

Perhaps Mr. Kirk will take a step toward putting conservation back into the conservative wing by voting against this ruinous Budget Reconciliation bill. His vote can either protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or doom our children to a country without the open wilderness of Alaska, land that true conservatives would want to conserve. ☘

As we go to press, the Woods & Wetlands Conservation Committee is working with the Alaska Coalition and the Public Interest Research Group on a variety of activities to educate 10th District voters on the ANWR issue, and to convince U.S. Representative Mark Kirk to cast a vote for the environment. This is the kind of project the committee takes on. Our last project—a success!—was working to stop Costco and a municipal salt storage facility from locating adjacent to important wetlands in Lake Forest.

Please join us—come to the committee meeting on October 26 (see box on back at bottom left corner). You pick your level of involvement—make a phone call, write a letter, or run a campaign—it's up to you! For information or to share an idea, please call Larry Marvet at 847-537-2083.

Action plan: How to stop a zoning change

Evan Craig, group chair

There's lots of good stuff buried on the W&W website. Over the next few months the webmaster will be making it easier to find what's current, while keeping the important details. You probably were not aware of this material from one of the detailed pages, but please read on!

Zoning has been one of the primary factors encouraging sprawl, but now can be helpful in preventing it.

Zoning was conceived as a way for communities to isolate polluted and undesirable areas from places where affluent residents could live in peace. As population has grown, communities' boundaries have expanded toward each other, and the damage to our environment has become a vital concern of Americans. The use of zoning to ignore pollution and social dysfunction has become unpopular, and even illegal. With modern environmental laws, many industrial pollution sources have been restricted, and their impact has decreased, making industry more compatible with livable communities. Notable exceptions are facilities that predated the passage of our national environmental laws in the 1970s and continue to exploit enforcement loopholes in the 21st Century, and the entrenched enforcement practices of the IL EPA.

While pollution from industry is now less of a concern, many communities still have zoning in place that restricts uses in pre-designated areas, and the legal ability of a municipality to enforce its zoning relies on consistency, fairness, and benefit to the community. New communities are adopting mixed zoning that reduces transportation problems. And conservation zoning and open space districts, which recognize the value of open space in a community, have become more common.

Developers interested in maximizing their profits will typically envision more intensive use of the land, and seek a zoning change from the host community. If the land is presently unincorporated, this will often be a stipulation within a request for annexation into an incorporated village or city capable of supporting more services. Providing these services always places a greater burden on the community to maintain infrastructure and services that cannot be directly attributed to the new development, even if impact fees are levied to compensate for those that can.

The Lake County Board is presently not receptive to widespread zoning density increases, so annexation requests have become common to circumvent that as well. Higher density can be a good thing for the environment—and reduce sprawl—if it is adopted in urban areas with walkable and bikable access to transit and services, because it redirects development away from our prairies, woods, wetlands, savannas, bluffs; all areas we refer to as “open space.”

But we expect that those seeking urgent help regarding zoning are alarmed that a neighboring property is under consideration, are concerned that a change will damage the value of their property and their personal environment, and feel that anything like this should be “Not In My Back Yard.” If so, you are a NIMBY, and we hope you will join us with a more regional concern when you have done what you can to protect your neighborhood.

Zoning changes have been legally opposed and argued before courts in Illinois, and continue to be. The outcomes of these cases, and the judges' written opinions in deciding these outcomes, have become important precedents in arguing and deciding

future cases. Citing these requirements, whether or not one decides to sue to protect one's property, will signal to the municipality that they might have to defend their decision in court, and strongly encourage them not to take their responsibility to the community lightly. In 2000 the landmark case in *Lake County of Northern Trust Bank v. Co. of Lake, No. 2-99-0368* clearly set out the eight requirements for a zoning change.

In deciding whether the zoning change is valid, courts consider the following factors:

- 1 the existing uses and zoning of nearby property;
- 2 the extent to which property values are diminished by the particular zoning restrictions;
- 3 the extent to which the destruction of the value of plaintiffs' property promotes the health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the public;
- 4 the relative gain to the public compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner;
- 5 the suitability of the subject property for the zoned purposes;
- 6 the length of time the property has been vacant as zoned, considered in the context of land development in the vicinity;
- 7 community need for the proposed use; and
- 8 the care with which the community has undertaken to plan its land use development.

It's worthwhile devoting a little time researching each of these factors.

Zoning classification can be found on the Lake County planning website. Zoning can also often be determined through the village (check its website), or online at Lake County Maps Online (Click on Property Tax, select your area on the map, click on Topic, click Label, click Property Index Number, enter the 10 digit Property Index Number (PIN), click Search, enter the PIN. This site can also be used to determine the values of surrounding properties, which you can use to compare property values near similar developments to your own.)

The Framework Plan Map (a 14MB file!) is also available on the County's Framework Plan website, showing future land use zones, as well as the Environmental Resources Map (16MB!). Printed versions of these maps are available for \$10 each.

Items 3, 4 and 5 are good places to address details of the environmental impacts of the proposed development. When addressing item 8, be sure to stress that consistently applied and respected, well thought-out zoning is legally defensible, but that whimsical zoning changes can put the entire zoning classification on a slippery slope if a precedent for rezoning is set.

If the municipality or county appears in favor of the zoning change, you can still ask that they ask the developer for consideration in the plat in return, including: reduced impervious surface area, generous buffers around remaining wetlands, conservation development (clustered construction with larger contiguous open space protected by conservation easement), a bikeway cut-through to a planned transportation or recreational amenity, sidewalks, and any other feature that respects the nature of the site.

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Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands Group

illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w

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Woods & Wetlands News is a publication of the Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands Group, involving members in Lake and northeastern Cook counties in Illinois. It is published four times per year and is free to Woods & Wetlands Group members. Address: Woods & Wetlands News, Woods & Wetlands Group, 200 N. Michigan Avenue, St. 505, Chicago, IL 60601.

Woods & Wetlands Calendar of Events

- October 20** **General Meeting, 7pm—A Visit to Utah's Red Rock Wilderness**, speaker Bob Brister, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. Escape from the plains and enter undeveloped Utah, where we'll find some of the largest and finest desert roadless areas anywhere in the world. From the Green River canyons to the slickrock narrows of the Dirty Devil, learn about one of our last, best wilderness areas.
- November 17** **General Meeting, 7pm—Restore the Nippersink** speaker Mary Kozub, McHenry County Conservation District. Nippersink conjures thoughts of Al Capone-era resorts around Fox Lake, but nearby Nippersink Creek is more famous among nature lovers. As one of the world's first riverine restorations, the exciting story of this nearby—now wild—stream will make us all wish for more.
- December 15** **General Meeting, 7pm—Midwin: from World's Largest TNT Factory to 1st National Tall Grass Prairie** Speaker Joyce O'Keefe, Policy Director of Openlands Project. This beautiful prairie is now a nationally protected park on the site of the old Joliet Arsenal. Learn about its incredible history.

General meetings are held at Vernon Area Library, 300 Olde Half Day Road in Lincolnshire. Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west from Milwaukee Ave (Rt 21), turn north (right) at the first stop light, then quickly left into the Library parking lot.

WOODS & WETLANDS CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

October 26 7pm and November 30 7pm*

Conservation Committee Meetings are held at College of Lake County South Lake Campus Room TBA 1120 South Milwaukee (Brown brick building on west side of Milwaukee Ave., 0.2 miles north of US 45 and about 2 miles south of Town Line Rd; park and enter in back.) Call Larry Marvet, 847-537-2083 for details.

For maps and details, please visit <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet/index.html>

