

Wild Onion

The Newsletter of the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club

Third Quarter 2007

Environmental Book Club Resumes in September, New Oak Park Club in Formation

Chicago Group's very popular Environmental Book Club is expanding!

In addition to our Lincoln Square group in Chicago, a new club is forming in Oak Park.

Read about and discuss the environmental issues facing global citizens today and more importantly, the solutions for those issues. Both book clubs meet on weekday evenings at convenient locations.

If you are interested in joining the Book Club in Oak Park or Lincoln Square, contact Take' Yamamoto at ch-socials@illinois.sierraclub.org or 773-528-7812 and indicate which group you wish to attend.

Co-leaders for the Oak Park Book Club are needed. Let Take' know if you are interested!

Hey, Hey! Holy Cow! Support Chicago Group at a Cubs Fundraiser!

It's true, everybody loves the Cubs. And everybody loves Sierra Club! Now you can combine your passions at a fundraiser for the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club.

Join other Sierrans for an evening to remember when the Chicago Cubs host the Milwaukee Brewers on Tuesday, August 28 at 7:05 p.m. The ivy on the walls won't be the only green in Wrigley Field that day.

Here are some activities your contribution helps us to do:

- have a direct, material impact on the environment in the Chicago land area, through close work with public officials and politicians. Our campaign —Chicago: The Cleanest, Greenest Olympics — is a great example;
- educate and entertain Sierra Club members through programs and film festivals, conservation and recreational outings, and special events with important and interesting local and national speakers;
- public outreach — especially to environmentally underserved communities — educates everyone about the need for clean water and air, protection of endangered species and habitats, and simple ways to live a more

sustainable, healthy life;

- hands-on stewardship at local natural areas, for example, Montrose Beach, gets members outside, working actively on direct improvements to the environment;
- providing relevant, high-quality training for members and committees results in volunteers well-equipped to fight for the highest environmental standards, especially clean air/energy and land management;
- help us keep you informed about Sierra Club issues and activities via our newsletters, web site and e-mail communications.

Interested in supporting your local group and the Cubs? Tickets are \$30 for seats in one of the upper deck infield sections. If you're interested, act quickly: There are only 40 tickets available. Limit five per household.

Mail a check made payable to the Sierra Club to: Take' Yamamoto, 555 W. Cornelia Ave., Apt. 301, Chicago, IL 60657. Include your name, address, e-mail address and phone number so tickets can be mailed to you.

Questions? Call event coordinator Take' at 773-528-7812.

Chicago Group Information

For information about the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club, check the web site often: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>. Contact details for group leaders who can answer questions about activities and how you can get more involved can be found on the home page. You may also subscribe to e-News for e-mail delivery of a monthly calendar of activities. To subscribe, click on the Chicago Group e-News box in the right column on the home page.

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

Chicago Group Moving to Electronic Communications

Goal: Electronic Delivery to 50 percent of Members by December 31

by Christine Williamson, Chair

Chicago Group of the Sierra Club is 100 percent committed to frequent, targeted communications with members about environmental issues. That's why we're mounting a HUGE campaign to get our members to move to digital communications.

First and foremost, using e-mail and web-based communication is FAST. When time really counts — say for an urgent action alert when members need education so they can influence environmental policy — nothing is faster than e-mail and the web site, <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>.

There are three ways you can help Chicago Group transform to an e-organization and save time and money.

Time to Move Away from Print Newsletters

Chicago Group has been experiencing very big delays in getting the print newsletter, *Wild Onion*, to members. The Postmaster General has acknowledged that Chicago has the **worst** delivery in the U.S.

Mail delivery from down town Chicago to members living on the north side took as long as **seven weeks** for the first quarter newsletter. Newsletter copy was prepared mid-February: Many members did not receive their print copy until the last week of April. We had a great Earth Day celebration at Montrose Beach on April 21, but the majority of Chicago Group members received their newsletter much too late to join the beach clean-up and habitat restoration activities.

Just like death and taxes, there's nothing you can do about bad postal delivery. So rather than fight fate, the Chicago Group ExComm is urging every member to move to an electronic subscription for *Wild Onion*.

Our goal is to get fifty percent or more of members to subscribe to *Wild Onion* by e-mail by Dec. 31, 2007.

This is an ambitious goal for a local Sierra Club group that has 9,000 members. But it is the **EASIEST** thing in the world to do. By taking 90 seconds to subscribe online, you will begin to receive your newsletter before the ink begins to hit the paper for the print version.

Save Trees and Tons of Money for Chicago Group.

We've already trimmed costs on the group newsletter by attaching to the Illinois Chapter newsletter: Chapter pays the postage, a huge savings for the group. But our print expenses still are high: A four-page newsletter costs about \$1,300 per issue or \$5,200 per year. That's thousands of dollars that could be used for conservation work, volunteer training or public outreach. By moving to online newsletter delivery, it's like making a donation to Sierra Club. If fifty percent of mem-

bers move to e-delivery of the newsletter this year, it equates to a \$2,600 donation that will go to support local conversation activities.

The newsletter will arrive as a PDF file and is printable. You will receive both *Wild Onion* and *Lake & Prairie*, the newsletter of the Illinois Chapter.

Subscribe to e-Delivery of Wild Onion

To subscribe to the electronic version of *Wild Onion*, send your name, Sierra Club membership number and e-mail address to editor@illinois.sierraclub.org.

You can also download and print the most recent issue of the newsletter any time from the web site, <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>. You can download the whole Chapter newsletter — which contains *Wild Onion* — as well as news from other local groups from the Chapter web site <http://illinois.sierraclub.org>.

Internet: The Web is the Way to Go

For the most up-to-the-minute information about the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club, check our web site often: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>.

You'll find contact information for the right people to answer questions about the group, activities and how you can get more involved. All the best, freshest information about Sierra Club in Chicago is right there: Make it your home page to stay in constant contact.

Subscribe to Monthly E-Calendar

Chicago Group compiles all of its activities into a monthly calendar delivered by e-mail called e-News. The group's activities are delivered to your e-mailbox in one convenient package. To subscribe, click on the Chicago Group e-News box in the right column on the web site.

Thanks for taking this small but important step to streamlining communications and making them as convenient and affordable as possible.

Not Online and Happy About It? Or Are You an E-Mail Wannabe?

We realize not everyone has access to e-mail or the Internet and those that do may prefer print communications. That preference will be respected, although we hope everyone will consider the savings of time and money e-communications will bring to Chicago Group.

If you aren't online, haven't a clue, but really want to get started, contact me at 773-935-8439. Most public libraries offer free use of their computers to patrons. If enough online neophytes need help in getting starting, Chicago Group may offer training to make your migration to e-mail and the Internet as easy as possible.

Montrose Beach Natural Area is Expanded, Habitat Enhanced

by Leslie Born, Montrose Beach Steward

As the weather turns warm and the dunes come to life, there is much to celebrate. In late December, the Chicago Park District was awarded an Illinois Conservation 2000 (C2000) grant for restoration work at Montrose Beach Dunes. The C2000 program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources provides grants for conservation work that protects, preserves, and enhances biodiversity and Illinois' natural heritage. This is the first time the Chicago Park District has received a C2000 grant for one of its natural areas.

Applying for the grant in 2005 was a lot of hard work and required much documentation about the dunes' flora, fauna, and public use. The two-year grant will fund removal of major invasives in the dunes at Montrose Beach (targeting mainly Sandbar Willow), updated interpretive signage and a new dune protection fence. The grant is going to make a huge, positive difference in the future health and viability of the dunes.

Another great piece of news is that in mid-March, the Chicago Park District and City of Chicago approved the addition of one more acre of beach to the protected dunes area of Montrose Beach, just west of the current dune protection fence. Dune plants have been emerging in the area for the past two years because the sailboat owners started parking their boats there, which prevented the beach grooming machines from raking

and destroying vegetation. The boats have been relocated and a new dune protection fence installed farther west. This increases the size of the protected dune habitat to 10.25 acres.

It's thrilling and gratifying that on Chicago's largest public beach, despite huge pressures of active recreation and coastal development, the Park District and City have decided to set aside more land for nature.

Chicago Group Volunteers Add Habitat Work to Beach Workdays

Chicago Group, which is the official clean-up steward at Montrose Beach, has started to work with Leslie and her volunteer habitat crew on our spring, summer and fall work days. In addition to cleaning up trash, flotsam and jetsam, clearing invasive plants and replanting new native species is really satisfying.

Montrose Beach Dunes is the wildest natural place in Chicago. You can almost forget you're in the middle of one of the 10 largest U.S. cities. There are many migrant and resident birds, butterflies, dragonflies, mammals and native plants that call Montrose Beach Dunes home. Join in restoring this wonderful foredune habitat to its full potential.

Check the Chicago Group web site for summer work dates: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago>

Just Do It! Or, How I Bicycled to Work

by Take Yamamoto, Social Chair

For years, I've been saying I should bike to work. As coordinator for Team Sierra in the Bicycle to Work Week Campaign, I figured it was time to commute by bike.

Like many of us, I had the same excuses for not bike commuting: I couldn't figure out what to wear; I didn't know how to handle the personal hygiene issue; and I didn't know exactly which route to take. I finally broke down and said just do it. Here's what I did:

First, I had to figure out a route since I live near Addison and the lake and work near the Cumberland stop. I got out the Chicago Land Bicycle Federation bike map and the City of Chicago's Bike Map. Between the two of them, I figured out a general route to take.

The next step was to actually scout the routes to see how they worked in practice. I did this over the weekend when I figured traffic would be lighter and I could take my time and figure out various options. It actually took two weekends to get the route nailed down.

Now I had no excuses. The big day came around. I said I would do it. I hemmed and hawed and guess what? I

chickened out. I made up all sorts of excuses. So, that night, I just pre-packed and tried to psyche myself into it. Morning came and I pushed myself out the door.

So, how did it go? Traffic was actually heavier on the weekend than during the week. Going to work was a breeze. I start work at 8:00 a.m. and traffic was very light. It was a little heavier going home, but not bad. I felt strange walking into the building wearing cycling clothes, so I may think that out a little more. I may check out some mountain bike apparel which tends to look more like street clothes than road bike apparel.

Will I do it again? You bet! Just have to psyche myself up again and not worry about the clothing for now.

So what's stopping you from bike commuting? Why not bike to the train station instead of using a car? Or just bike the whole way. Biking is fun, healthy, and a lot better for the environment than driving.

You can find information about bike commuting at the Chicago Land Bicycle Federation at: <http://www.bike-traffic.org/btwg> and <http://www.biketraffic.org/trickstips>.

From the Field: Having Fun with Hazardous Waste

by Christine Williamson, Chair

After reading about Chicago's new Household Waste and Computer Recycling facility at 1150 North Branch Street on Goose Island, I decided it sounded so cool, I'd plan an outing just to see what was going on there.

Sponsored by Chicago Group's Air/Energy Committee, the April 7 field trip attracted 35 members from our group and other Chicago area Sierra Club local groups. The day was very cold and from the outside, the Department of the Environment's recycling facility looked a little bleak.

I was prepared to be a little freaked out, actually. Formerly the animal incinerator for the City of Chicago's Streets and Sanitation Department, the building has a grisly past. I didn't tell the field trip participants about the site's less glorious former purpose, essential in a city which once relied on horses for transportation, but I definitely felt a little shudder when I went through the doors.

But the City of Chicago did a great job rehabbing the building. Unless you knew or our super-friendly guide, site manager Kevin Schnoes, happened to tell you the building's former purpose, you'd never guess.

Funded through state grants, the Household Waste and Computer Recycling facility is purpose-built to recycle computers and almost any electronic device, as well as most hazardous wastes. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) hauls much of the hazardous wastes away. To date, about 500 people have been dropping off materials at the site. In March, 30,000 pounds of electronics passed through the facility, which also accepts an average of 30,000 pounds of chemicals per month.

What IEPA won't take, Schnoes and his crew are finding — or creating — markets to accept the waste. For example, Schnoes told our group about the way Chicago is developing outlets to take propane tanks and car lead acid batteries. Ditto latex paint, which IEPA won't haul away because it's not toxic. Considering that oil-based and latex paint account for about 60 percent of the facility's waste stream, finding a market was important. The facility even recycles all paint cans.

And the recycling facility has set up a small swap room where anyone can drop off still-useable paint and household chemicals for someone else's use. It's a great way to use up paint and other materials so they don't have to enter the waste stream in the first place.

A program sponsored by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Development trains ex-offenders and puts them back to work. Another program gives computers to a rehabber who recycles them for use in schools and libraries.

Our tour took us through the whole facility. It's not that large, but there's so much activity and participants had so many questions, we spent a 90 minutes on-site.

The trip ended with a tour of the outside of the building, which was especially wonderful, because Schnoes demonstrated the site's sustainable landscaping. A bioswale was built to collect and filter rain water runoff before it is released into the Chicago River. All the plants used around the grounds are hardy natives. The building itself is very energy efficient, thanks to a heat wall on the south side of the building. The hollow wall absorbs heat from the sun in the winter, so the intake air is pre-heated before it goes into the heating business. There is no air conditioning in the building, but the hollow wall also cools the building in summer.

All in all, it was a great trip, one that we will repeat in October. Check the web site <http://illinois.sierra-club.org/Chicago>, e-News and *Wild Onion* for the date.

I loved dropping off pounds of old electronics knowing they'd be put to good use or recycled. But don't wait for the next field trip. Be sure to **use** the facility to help Chicago meet its goal of zero waste generation. It's located at 1150 N. North Branch Street, two blocks east of the Kennedy Expressway at Division Street and open for drop-offs on the following days: Tuesday (7:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.), Thursday (2:00-7:00 p.m.), and the first Saturday of every month (8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)

More information about the chemical and computer recycling facility can be found under Environmental Initiatives and Recycling at the city's web site: <http://cityofchicago.org>

Subscribe to Chicago Group e-News

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

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

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

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

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

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