

The Kaskaskian

Kaskaskia Group, Illinois Chapter, Sierra Club

July 2009

From the chair...

What are your memories?



Amy Funk
ExCom Chair

Over the past several months, I have had the opportunity to highlight the Sierra Club at several community events. In doing this, I have met so many wonderful people, all with unique stories. I then began to wonder about our Kaskaskia Group and the stories of our members.

I am sure there is much to tell. In the spirit of the Illinois Chapter's 50th anniversary, we are calling on our members to submit their stories and memories of the Sierra Club and past community environmental efforts including outings. This is an opportunity to honor our achievements in protecting the Prairie State.

As we reflect on the past, we must embrace the present and hope for the future. We are faced with a variety of new challenges here locally that have the potential to adversely impact the environment and our quality of life. We will need your knowledge, experience and passion in order to confront the challenges we face today.

There is an old Greek proverb, "A civilization flourishes when people plant trees under which they will never sit." Let's plant trees together and work towards ensuring a hospitable planet for future generations. I value your support and welcome your ideas, time and talents. I look forward to meeting you and hearing your stories in the months ahead!

Please call Bonnie at 236-2931 if you'd like to share your memories or E-mail your stories and pictures to bonnie@riverwarner.com or by mail to Bonnie Warner, 9 Hollyhock Lane, Belleville, IL 62221.

Worst bill ever!

Tell governor to veto subsidies to develop in floodplains

Kathy Andria

Conservation Chair/Chair, Illinois Chapter Floodplain Task Force

Described variously as "TIF on steroids" or "Worst Bill Ever," SB 1909 — the STAR Bonds Financing Act - gives money to private developers at Illinois state taxpayers' expense to develop in the 100-year floodplain because "such sites are more likely to remain underutilized and undeveloped." Eligible sites must be vacant and no less than 600 acres, at least 30 percent of which is in the 100-year floodplain.

Floodplains should remain undeveloped. A floodplain is a land area adjacent to a river, stream or other water body that is subject to flooding. This area, if left undisturbed, acts to store excess floodwater. If developed, the floodwater runs off into other areas and causes increased flooding elsewhere.



Proposed site for STAR bonds development in American Bottom floodplain.

According to state floodplain management officials, Illinois is one of the nation's most flood-prone states, with flooding currently costing the state more than \$250 million a year. Development in flood-prone areas has caused an increasing level of damage and destruction.

Preservation of floodplains reduces the number and severity of floods, helps handle stormwater runoff and

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2** Groups join to fund addition
- 2** Preorder 2010 calendars today
- 4** Help make your city a "Cool City"

Groups join to fund addition

Conservation groups fund Valmeyer addition to Illinois Nature Preserves; Limestone Bluffs Area to Mitigate Land for Holcim Cement Kiln in Ste Genevieve, MO.

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and the Village of Valmeyer held a ceremony June 27 to dedicate 145 acres of Valmeyer Bluffs as a Land and Water Reserve. It will be added to the Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve and will include a trail linking the reserve to the village, which now sits on the bluffs after being relocated from the floodplain after the Great Flood of 1993.

The conservation easement for the land was purchased from the Valmeyer with funds secured by four environmental organizations in a settlement agreement with Holcim (US) over the construction of a cement kiln in Ste. Genevieve, MO. The organizations are American Bottom Conservancy, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Sierra Club and Webster Groves Nature Study Society.

The Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve is a 449-acre, mostly forested site on the limestone bluffs above the Mississippi River American Bottom floodplain. The 145-acre adjacent addition contains approximately 21 acres of the Columbia Hill Prairies Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) site and several threatened and endangered species. Valmeyer owns



Diane Albright, Sierra Club; Kathleen Logan Smith, MO Coalition for the Environment; Debbie Newman, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission; Kathy Andria, American Bottom Conservancy

approximately 750 acres of contiguous, undeveloped forested land, including most of the Columbia Hill Prairies INAI site.

“Since 1994 the Village of Valmeyer has voluntarily protected its very important and rare natural communities,” said INPC Biologist Debbie Newman,

Represent group at farmer’s market

On July 25 and Aug. 8, we will have a display table at the Mascoutah Farmer’s Market to highlight our local group. Feel free to join us or stop by just to say hello. We will also be selling reusable Sierra Club grocery bags. The market goes from 8 a.m. to noon each Saturday at the new Silver Creek Mill, Illinois Arts, Crafts, Garden Building at 602 S. Jefferson St.

Float trip

When summer comes with its heat and humidity, it’s hard to enjoy the outdoors without some water, so let’s go floating Aug. 9. What is floating? In this case, it’s a six- to eight-mile trip down one of Missouri’s cool, clear streams. The river will be picked according to which is in best condition, and canoes or kayaks will be available for rent. Contact Ted at 397-9430 or tjhorn49@yahoo.com for details.

Preorder 2010 calendars today

We will be selling the Wilderness (wall) Calendar for \$10.95 and the Engagement (desktop) Calendar for \$11.95. These prices are \$2 below retail price. The calendars will be available at all our socials and events starting in September. Don’t forget to buy them for friends and family as well -- they make great holiday gifts! Preordering is not necessary, but if you would like to ensure the quantity and type of calendars you want, E-mail Bonnie Warner at bonnie@riverwarner.com.

who proposed the Land and Water Reserve. “The village is committed to the long-term protection of the Columbia Hill Prairies INAI site and has demonstrated that commitment by registering Salt Lick Point as a Land and Water Reserve.” An Illinois Land and Water Reserve provides permanent legal protection to high quality natural areas.

“We are thrilled to be able to use Holcim funds to partner with the Village and the INPC to preserve this important piece of land,” said Kathy Andria, president of American Bottom Conservancy and conservation chair of the Kaskaskia Group. “We wanted to find land similar to what is being lost in Ste. Genevieve. Since hill prairies, glades and large forest blocks are rare in Illinois, the preservation of this sizeable complex is important to the natural history of southwestern Illinois and to those of us who live here.”

Bill continued from Page 1

minimizes nonpoint water pollution. Floodplains frequently contain large tracts of wetlands and provide critical wildlife habitat. Wetlands store and filter floodwaters and help recharge aquifers.

The Illinois Department of Revenue estimates that each STAR bond project could cost the state \$15 million per project per year in lost tax revenue. Much of this loss will be due to the erosion of the State government tax base that existed before the STAR district was created. There would also be a loss in revenue and jobs to nearby communities. SB 1909 indicates there are a number of areas around the state with 100-year floodplains that could benefit from STAR bonds, potentially costing the state more than a \$100 million per year.

One of the sites already proposed for a STAR bonds project is in the Metro East in the American Bottom floodplain of the Mississippi River. The floodplain had been protected by a levee system, but the Army Corps of Engineers announced in 2007 it could no longer certify the structural integrity of the levees.

Such projects would be unwise anytime, but especially so now when the state already has an enormous deficit and faces severe budget cuts. STAR bonds projects can also harm nearby communities, both financially and environmentally.

The bill has already passed both the Illinois Senate and the House and awaits the governor's signature or veto. Gov. Pat Quinn has been a longtime champion of river ecosystems and wise floodplain management. SB 1909 promotes sprawl, rewards private developers for irresponsible floodplain development on the backs of taxpayers and goes against everything we have learned over the years about floodplain management.

Ask Gov. Quinn to protect communities, the environment, wildlife and taxpayer dollars. Ask him to deny special funding for private developers and VETO SB 1909—the STAR bonds bill.

You can call Gov. Quinn at 217.782-0244; write him at Office of the Governor, 207 State House, Springfield, IL 62706, or contact him at his website <http://www.illinois.gov/GOV/contactthegovernor.cfm>.

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Concrete plant in Mascoutah?

Recently, we became aware of a concrete plant being proposed in Mascoutah and are concerned about potential threats to air and water quality. We are looking for concerned persons to research this issue and help with informing local residents of the potential health and environmental risks associated with such a facility. If you live in or near Mascoutah and would like to have your voice heard about this issue, please contact Bonnie Warner at 236-2931 or E-mail at bonnie@riverwarner.com.

We want to hear from you!

All members are encouraged to submit news, ideas, and editorials to be included in the newsletter. What are your concerns and ideas? How do you suggest we work together to tackle the numerous environmental challenges we are faced with locally? Do you have practical suggestions on how to live green? What positive steps are being taken locally to tackle local environmental challenges? Please E-mail jason.warner@illinois.sierraclub.org.

Group hosts Illinois Chapter ExCom

On May 9, Chapter delegates gathered at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville for the Chapter's bimonthly board meeting. The Kaskaskia Group hosted the event thanks to the efforts of the ExCom.

We would like to offer special thanks to SWIC for the use of the room and help during the event along with campus dining services for the great service it provided.

A Cup of Joe

Let's get to know one another! Starting in the fall, we are proposing informal monthly discussions at local coffee shops throughout the area. This is an opportunity to not only get to know one another but to discuss various local environmental issues and success stories.

Our members are full of knowledge and experiences that are worth sharing. In addition, this is a great time to learn about local group happenings.

We would like your feedback and help! Do you have something on your mind? Do you have a favorite local coffee shop?

Please contact Amy at 215-2011 or E-mail amymkfunk@yahoo.com, or contact Bonnie Warner at 236-2931.

Help make your city a “Cool City”

The Sierra Club's Cool Cities initiative focuses on getting local communities to make commitments to curb global warming by putting smart energy solutions to work, such as greening municipal vehicle fleets, making buildings energy efficient and investing in safe renewable energy.

To encourage local municipalities to become Cool Cities, we need to build community support. If you belong to a church or other organizations that might be receptive to learning more about this initiative, please let us know. Let's work together at the local level to effectively meet the challenges of climate change. Call Amy Funk at 215-2011 or E-mail amymkfunk@yahoo.com. More information can be found at <http://www.coolcities.us>.

Send us your experiences with climate change

Sewers backing up. Farm fields too wet to put in crops. Creeks and rivers overflowing. Drought. Impacts on wildlife and habitat. We'd like to hear your observations or your experience with intense weather events and shifting seasons. Please E-mail kathyandria@gmail.com.

Recommended summer reading on global warming's impact on flooding:

Increased Flooding Risk: Global Warming's Wake-Up Call for Riverfront Communities

National Wildlife Federation 2009

http://www.nwf.org/extremeweather/pdfs/NWF_FloodReport_optimized.pdf

America's Flood Risk is Heating Up

Environmental Defense and National Wildlife Federation

http://www.corpsreform.org/sitepages/downloads/ToolsAndResources-Reports/CRN-trRpt-US_FloodRisk.pdf

<http://www.globalchange.gov/publications/reports/scientific-assessments/us-impacts>

U.S. Global Change Research Program -- most comprehensive report published to date



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