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The Kaskaskian
9 Hollyhock Lane
Belleville, IL 62221

APRIL 2009

Kaskaskia Group, Illinois Chapter, Sierra Club

The Kaskaskian

For members in the Illinois counties of St. Clair, Monroe, Randolph, Washington, Clinton, Marion and Jefferson

Earth Day brings family fun, more

Mark your calendars for the first annual Kaskaskia group Earth Day celebration at Pleasant Ridge Park (kite friendly) in Fairview Heights on April 19, 2-4 p.m. What better way to celebrate the earth than getting outside with family and friends.

A variety of activities are planned including: Conservation trivia, nature walk, book/magazine/CD (for adults and children) exchange, as well as a raffle, attendance prizes and snacks. We will also have plenty for kids of all ages to do including face painting, recycling games, litter pick up, planting seeds, nature walk and crafts.

Come join us and don't forget to tell your family and friends! RSVP is requested but not required. Contact Bonnie Warner at 236-2931 or E-mail at

bonnie@riverwarner.com for more information or to RSVP. This event will go on rain or shine.

Book/magazine/CD exchange: Do you or your kids have any books or CD's you do not want or use anymore? Bring them to the Earth Day celebration and exchange them for "new" books, magazines and CD's.

Lastly, bring your aluminum cans to the event! One of our members will collect the cans for recycling with all proceeds going towards Sierra Club's Inner City Outings Program (ICO). ICO offers safe and enjoyable outdoor experiences to youths who might not otherwise have them, and aims to inspire a love and appreciation for the natural environment.

Hundreds gather to battle planned pollution

On March 3, more than 250 people filled the Knights of Columbus Hall in Du Bois to voice concern to the Illinois EPA over a planned coal to synthetic natural gas (syngas) plant proposed by Power Holdings of Aurora. Of the dozens of people who spoke, only two spoke in favor of the plant – the Jefferson County board chairman and the Jefferson County economic development director, who spoke on behalf of federal, state and local

politicians.

Mary Ellen Bechtel, the economic development director, said the plant would produce hundreds of jobs and pump millions of dollars into the local economy. Retired mineworker Fred Kreger answered: "I'm in favor of jobs, but at what cost?" Kreger opposes the plant and spoke for the "babies not yet born who will be forced to breathe the air and drink the water."

Kaskaskia Group

ExCom member Dale Wojtkowski, who lives about a mile from the Prairie State pulverized coal-fired plant now under construction in Washington County, told the local Jefferson County residents of his experience with Peabody and warned them not to pay attention to the promises of companies who promise jobs and economic benefits.

The plant would be located on the Washington-Jefferson

(See **Permit** on Page 3)



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Visit: illinois.sierraclub.org/kgroup

for up to date news and events!

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Permit No. 742



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Upcoming outings...

Saturday, March 28: We will be meeting at 1 p.m. for a tour of a couple of our members homestead and restored bluff and sinks holes area, west of Waterloo. Afterwards we will have a social time at the Schorr Lake Winery in Waterloo. Please contact Ted at 397-9430 or E-mail at tjhorn49@yahoo.com for meeting places.

Sunday, May 3: First Breakfast and then a hike in Stemler Woods. This hike is one of newest trails in St. Clair County, thanks to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. This is unique and a great place for beginner hikers and kids. We will also visit Falling Springs. Please contact Ted at 397-9430 or E-mail at tjhorn49@yahoo.com for the location of breakfast meeting place.

Saturday, May 16: Tour de Bluff bike ride starts at 10 a.m. at the Village of Fults Festival of the Bluffs and then travel through historical Maestown riding to the top of the bluff to enjoy the open space vistas. Casual ride speed for about 18 miles with some hills but mostly level.

Leader will talk and point out natural features and history of the area.

Saturday, June 6: At 2 p.m., we will meet up for an urban hike through historical Soulard in south St. Louis. This is an easy 1.8-mile hike where the leader will talk about the history and architectural feature of this neighborhood, where redevelopment instead new development was encourage. Come early to shop at Soulard's 200-year-old farmers market. After the hike there will be an opportunity to eat at one the area's unique outdoor patios. Please contact Ted at 397-9430 or E-mail at tjhorn49@yahoo.com for details.

Sunday, June 7: Hike the mountain of Illinois... Well, we will articulately go up and down the scenic Illinois bluffs at Fults Hill Prairie overlooking the Mississippi and the America bottoms. After enjoying lunch from our lofty perch, there is an optional trip to nearby Fort de Chartes where the 18th century will come back alive at the forts annual rendezvous. Please contact Ted at 397-9430 or E-mail at tjhorn49@yahoo.com.

Kaskaskia Group Executive Committee

Group Chair	Amy Funk	215-2011
Vice Chair	Ted Horn	397-9430
Treasurer	Bonnie Warner	236-2931
Secretary	Bonnie Warner	236-2931
Membership Chair	Amy Funk	215-2011
Conservation Chair	Kathy Andria	397-9430
Fundraising Chair	Penni Livingston	628-7700
Volunteer Coordinator	Dale Wojtkowski	397-9430
Newsletter Editor	Jason Warner	236-2931

Kaskaskia Group Website: illinois.sierraclub.org/kggroup

E-mail newsletter submissions to: jason.warner@illinois.sierraclub.org

Permit

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County border and would produce synthetic natural gas from coal through a gasification process. The process produces more global warming emissions than the use of regular coal and requires extensive water use. It would emit 10 million tons of CO2 per year and use eight million gallons of water a day from Rend Lake, nearly half the supply required for the 300,000 people who get their water from the lake.

Retired biologist and Illinois DNR administrator Dr. John Tranquilli warned in a letter that Rend Lake "does not hold an endless supply of water as everyone is led to believe." Besides the Power Holdings plant, several new mines and other industrial facilities have also received allocation for water from IDNR. "These lower water levels can have a devastating impact on the natural resources and recreational activities at Rend Lake."

While water and air pollution were important issues at the 3 1/2 hour-long hearing, some of the neighbors who would live within a half-mile of the plant expressed concern that a gas plant with the potential for explosion could be allowed to locate on top of a fault line which the owners of Power Holdings seemed to be unaware of at meeting a week earlier.

Power Holdings claims to

have spent \$10 million already (believed to have come from various public funding agencies) and yet they had not gotten a geological assessment of the site. There is another fault line on the other side of the county line road—information learned by neighbors Linda Borowiak and Jean Kujawa. Power Holdings has applied for some \$450 million in bonds from the Illinois Finance Authority, most of which would be borne by taxpayers should the project fail. (People can write and call Gov. Quinn to request that he not allow Power Holdings to receive the funds. The company and the project do not appear to be viable as proposed and located.)

Sierra Club met with the local farmers and helped them to organize, steering them to sources where they might find information. The group was led by Mark and Amy Spotanski and their children Rachel and Claudia, and Mark's parents, Chuck and Judy Spotanski. Said Kathy Andria, conservation chair of the Kaskaskia Group: "This might have been my most gratifying organizing experience ever. These people were amazing: doing research in local libraries or on the internet, calling various sources around the only similar plant in the country, contacting media, making flyers and getting 250 people to a public hearing. Linda Borowiak made her own press kit with important information she had learned, including political contributions

to former Gov. Blagojevich and a number of elected officials who are supporting the plant. Even IEPA was amazed at the turnout. One of them told me it was the most lop-sided public hearing the official had ever attended."

Before the hearing started, a press conference was held by the local Blissville Township neighbors together with Sierra Club, including statements by Verena Owen, advisor to the National Beyond Coal Campaign, and Becki Clayborn, the campaign's Midwest organizer. Both had traveled from Chicago along with Sierra Club Intern Mike Starr to attend the hearing. Several of the neighbors spoke, while others, including many of the children who would live within a half-mile of the plant, held posters they had made at a pre-hearing meeting.

"My chickens need fresh air to lay fresh eggs," said a poster made by Rachel Spotanski, whose family farm is adjacent to the proposed Power Holdings site. Rachel had an important question for IEPA and Power Holdings, one that she was too shy to ask publicly. "How far away do I have to stand to be safe if there is an explosion?"

Comments can be sent until April 2 to Illinois EPA, Rachel Doctors Hearing Officer, re Power Holdings, 1021 N. Grand Ave. E, PO Box 19276, Springfield, IL 62794-9276 or by E-mail to rachel.doctors@illinois.gov. Please ask IEPA to include CO2 limits in the permit.

Cool Cities training to be offered in Belleville

A Cool Cities Training session is planned for June 13 in Belleville. This is a great opportunity to learn more about Cool Cities along with discuss ideas on how to motivate local governments to sign on. The session will likely start in the morning and go through lunch - snack and lunch will be provided free of charge.

You do not have to be a Sierra Club member to participate. It's open to anyone who would like to see local government take measures to reduce their carbon footprint.

If you would like to participate in this training, please call Amy Funk at 215-2011 or E-Mail amymkfunk@yahoo.com. Additional details will follow on the website and E-mail.