

PRAIRIE FLYER

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Prairie Group • East-Central Illinois • April/May/June 2003

Prairie Day Meetings (Free and open to the public!)

Prairie Group meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month, 7:30 p.m. in the Bondurant Room of the Illinois Disciples Foundation, at the corner of Wright and Springfield, Champaign, unless otherwise noted. (Venue and time are different for April and June.)

Wednesday, April 9, 6 p.m. Lincoln Square Mall (Please note different time and location!)

Sprawl Bus Tour

Meet at the south entrance. We'll follow up on our recent sprawl workshops by hopping on a city bus for a tour! The trip will include a discussion of sprawl and smart growth!

Wednesday, May 14, 7:30 p.m.

Central Illinois Water Quality Issues

Mark Miller, Watershed Organizer for Prairie Rivers Network, will talk with us about the many water quality issues facing us in Central Illinois. We also hope to have with us someone from the Salt Fork River Partners group to talk specifically about the threats to this beautiful resource, and what we might do to help them better protect it.

Wednesday, June 11, 6 p.m., Forest Glen Preserve, south of Danville, Illinois (Please note different time and location!)

Potluck Picnic and Evening Hike

Join us for a potluck picnic and evening hike. Rain or shine, come and enjoy one of the prettiest places in east-central Illinois — and meet fellow Sierra Club members and activists from around our region. You can either meet us at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot in Urbana at 5 p.m. to caravan, or go directly to the Pine Knoll pavilion, seven miles west of Westville on County Highway 5.

Please bring your own utensils and a dish to share.

Information on the park can be seen at <http://www.vccd.org/gjforestglen.html>

Eco Calendar

(see articles or contact us for details)

April

1 (Tues)	Vote in local elections
9 (Wed)	Prairie Group meeting – Sprawl bus tour, Urbana-Lincoln Square, 6 p.m.
12 (Sat)	Grand Prairie Friends - Hike to Horseshoe Bottom Nature Preserve, Urbana - Anita Purves, 9 a.m.
19 (Sat)	Grand Prairie Friends - Hike through Middle Fork State Fish and Wildlife Area, Urbana - Anita Purves, 9 a.m.
21 (Mon)	John Muir's Birthday
22 (Tues)	Earth Day
24 (Thur)	Green Illinois presentation at ISU

May

14 (Wed)	Prairie Group meeting – Marc Miller on local water quality, Champaign-IDF 7:30 p.m.
15 (Thur)	Total Lunar Eclipse at 10:40 p.m.
17/18 (Sat/Sun)	Kickapoo Paddle Festival
23 (Fri)	Illinois Legislature plans to adjourn
28 (Wed)	Sierra Club Organized, 1892

June

7 (Sat)	Mackinaw Canoe Club - River cleanup, Pontiac-Humiston Park, 9 a.m.
11 (Wed)	Prairie Group meeting – Forest Glen potluck and hike, Urbana - Anita Purves, 5 p.m.
21 (Sat)	Solstice
20-22 (Fri-Sun)	Midwest Renewable Energy Association's annual fair, Custer, WI

Prairie Group Alerts and Outings E-Mail Lists

Want to know about local environmental alerts, outings, or the latest opportunities to get involved? Sign up today for our moderated alert listserv and our open forum outings listserv by going to <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives> and scrolling down past many Sierra Club listservs to click on "IL-PRAIRIE-ALERTS" and/or "IL-PRAIRIE-OUTINGS-FORUM." On the next screen click on "Join or leave the list" then fill in blanks for "Your e-mail address" and "Your name." Finally, select the listserv settings you want (default is fine for beginners) and click on "Join the list." Any questions, please e-mail George Gore at george_gore@yahoo.com or Mike Corn at mcorn@uiuc.edu.

ONE EARTH, ONE CHANCE®

Prairie Notes

by George Gore, Communications Chair

THANKS FORYOURGENEROUSCONTRIBUTIONS

Your March fund appeal contributions directly help protect the environment, particularly here in east central Illinois!

Thanks for faxes sent on ISCAN (IL Sierra Club Activist Network) to legislators. Without public officials hearing your voice on environmental issues, we could never succeed.

ILLINOIS ACTION ALERTS — FREE AND EASY

The most important thing you can do for the environment is ensure your legislators know you want them to protect it! Sign up today to send free e-mail-to-fax action alerts on Illinois' most important environmental issues! The next two months are when your help is needed most to ensure good environmental bills get through the legislature so the governor can sign them into law. With thousands of bills to consider, legislators rarely hear about a bill from anyone except lobbyists. Even just a few neighbors sending a personalized fax will get attention! If you don't have time for personal visits, letters, phone calls, or letters to the editor, you can still help by joining ISCAN at www.illinois.sierraclub.org/iscan.

EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS ACTION ALERTS

Wonder what's happening to the local environment in between issues of Prairie Flyer? Get local alerts from our groups IL-PRAIRIE-ALERTS e-mail listserv. The list is moderated, so e-mail traffic is limited. Please stop reading and contact me (george_gore@yahoo.com) right now if you'd like to help protect east central Illinois' environment!

ILLINOIS LEGISLATION

Check out the most useful website for tracking legislation in Springfield at www.legis.state.il.us. Priority bills include: HB 422 (wetlands), SB 1060 (water permit fees), and SB 1379 (environmental law enforcement). The Environmental Law & Policy Center in Chicago is leading SB 25 and HB 2200 (renewable energy). Rep. Karen May (D-60) is the lead sponsor of the wetlands bill and sent a letter asking for us to call or write our Illinois Representatives and Senators to voice our support for protecting isolated wetlands from bulldozers.

ELECTION INFORMATION

The most useful website for tracking Illinois candidate donations is www.elections.state.il.us

LOBBYING ILLINOIS

How can you make a difference in public policy? A new book from the Institute for Legislative Studies at the University of Illinois in Springfield has the answers! Years of professional experience were compiled and reviewed to create this outstanding resource. For example, regular in-district visits with legislators are most effective, followed by personal letters, phone calls, faxes and, finally, e-mail. Whether for classroom or personal use, the book gives practical examples of what to do to be an effective advocate for any issue!

ALMANAC OF ILLINOIS POLITICS — 2002

Looking for more information about your state legislators? Want to see how redistricting changed legislative districts? Need demographic data on districts? How about campaign donations to legislators? Recent election results? Votes on key bills? More background and data on state government? The Almanac is published by the Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Illinois, Springfield. For details, visit: <http://ipapublications.uiu.edu/>.

ILLINOIS ISSUES

Want to follow the big trends in Springfield? The leading magazine for public affairs in Illinois is published by the same people as the Almanac above. Check your local library for a copy or visit <http://ipa.uiu.edu>.

ILLINOIS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

With the new legislature, some committee rearrangements took place. Unfortunately, the Land and Conservation committee in the House was disbanded and merged into the Agriculture and Conservation Committee, which is often dominated by agricultural interests. The other main committee for our issues, Energy and Environment, often includes coal and nuclear interests, but has created numerous subcommittees, which may help environmental bills reach the House floor for a vote. Another significant committee, Transportation, created numerous subcommittees and has several friendly legislators. See our "Legislators in Prairie Group" list for important environmental assignments of your legislators.

VOTE APRIL 1

Protect the environment by voting in local elections for city councils, forest preserves, park districts, school boards, etc. Check your County Clerk's website for candidates and contact information and local papers and websites of government bodies and candidates for more information. Call candidates to ask for their views on local environmental issues. If you learn something interesting, please e-mail our chair or political chair, so we can get the word out. Even better, write a letter to the editor about good, bad or dirty candidates in your town.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S ENVIRONMENT

Bush's billion dollar proposal to jump start the hydrogen economy is taking away funding from energy efficiency and renewables and redirecting some to help research manufacturing hydrogen from nuclear power plants. Part of the recent tax cut package, purchasing vehicles over 6,000 pounds (SUVs) garners instant tax deductions up to \$75,000 for businesses. The limit was \$18,000, vehicles depreciated over several years, and size didn't matter.

PLEASE THANK SENATOR FITZGERALD

Senator Fitzgerald signed a letter with five other moderate

Republicans asking the Senate Republican leadership to abandon a backdoor effort to reverse the current ban on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The letter, opposing including Arctic drilling revenues in the budget reconciliation resolution, was delivered to Don Nickles (R-OK), budget committee chairman, on Jan. 30. Other signers were John McCain (R-AZ), Susan Collins (R-ME), Susan Snowe (R-ME), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), and Mike DeWine (R-OH). Reportedly, retaliation against the signers was planned. Phone Senator Fitzgerald so he knows the environmental community appreciates his stand.

2004 U.S. SENATE RACE

The hottest Senate seat for the 2004 elections may be in Illinois. Environmentally, the race looks pretty good. Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R-IL) earned a 52% environmental voting record from the League of Conservation Voters during the last session of Congress. His score was fourth highest for Republican Senators, after Snowe (ME-72%), Chafee (RI-68%), and Collins (ME-64%). Illinois Senator Barack Obama (D-13), who earned Sierra Club endorsement from our Illinois Chapter in 2002, is anticipated to join the 2004 Senate race. For more about congressional members, visit www.lcv.org

NOVEMBER OPEN LANDS VICTORY

In a pleasant surprise at the end of Illinois' fall veto session, Senator Stan Weaver (R-Champaign) finished his long career by helping restore full funding from property taxes on real estate transfers for the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Fund and the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund. Last year, during the spring legislative session, the money was reallocated to the Illinois General Fund. Thanks also to Gov. Ryan, Senators Patrick Welch (D-LaSalle) and Kathleen Parker (R-Northfield), and Representatives Julie Hamos (D-Evanston), Karen May (D-Deerfield), Dave Winters (R-Rockford), Ricca Stone (D-Peoria) and Elizabeth Coulson (R-Glenview).

WIND FARM APPROVED BY BUREAU COUNTY BOARD

Illinois' first wind farm was approved on January 14, 2003. The \$60 million Crescent Ridge project brings 32 windmills mounted on 256-foot towers with turbine blades reaching up to 381 feet. The elevated ridge is 3.5 miles southwest of Tiskilwa in southern Bureau County. Twelve landowners get \$5,000 annually per turbine during a 20-year lease agreement. ComEd will purchase 51 megawatts of turbine electricity, enough to power 20,000 homes. Construction should be complete before 2004.

IDNR MAPPING TOOL

Here's a neat way to see Illinois from a difference perspective: overlay a wide variety of maps, including natural resources, transportation, landfills, crops, flood zones, etc. The Resource Management Mapping Service is found at: <http://space1.itsc.uiuc.edu/website/mms>

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY CONSERVATION (CCC)

The Champaign County Board recently appointed a Blue Ribbon Environmental Advisory Panel to report next year on the state of the environment in Champaign, along with recommendations. Panel members are Hal Barnhart, Dwain Berggren, Jeff Courson (chair), William Goran, Cynthia Hoyle, Gary Jackson, John McMahon, Marc Miller, Richard Rayburn, and Ruth Wene. CCC, a network of environmental groups in Champaign County, is helping identify opportunities to create a better environmental vision for Champaign.

KICKAPOO FESTIVAL: CELEBRATE THE MIDDLE FORK

IDNR and the Illinois Conservation Foundation are hosting a celebration May 17 (9 a.m.-6 p.m.) and May 18 (9 a.m.-4 p.m.) at Kickapoo S.P. near Danville. The festival highlights paddling opportunities throughout Illinois, spotlighting Illinois' only National Scenic River, the Middle Fork of the Vermillion. Canoe and kayak clinics, canoe races, live music, speakers, educational programs, information tables, retailer booths, and more both days.

GREEN ILLINOIS

Annette McCarthy of IEPA (and a Green Government Coordinating Council member), speaks on April 24, at 7 p.m. in the Circus Room of ISU's Bone Student Center. Green Illinois is an environmental program designed to encourage community environmental planning, make state government a model for environmental stewardship, and help schools become more environmentally friendly.

PRAIRIE GROUP EXCOM ELECTION RESULTS

Congrats to our new ExCom Members: Jim Beauchamp, Karen Beauchamp, Jack Kuehn, and Kirstin Replogle.

EARTH DAY

E-mail us Earth Day activities; we'll spread the word!

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Want to get published and reach an audience of over 1,000 environmentalists in our Prairie Group? Send an article for publication right here!

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Would you like to get more involved in protecting your backyard? Contact us and we'll help you make a difference while having fun! Available positions include: Programs, Secretary, Newsletter Editor Co-Chair, Publicity Co-Chair, Environmental Education, Fund Raising, or Membership Co-Chair.

Our mailing address is: Sierra Club Prairie Group, P.O. Box 131, Urbana, IL 61803.

Chair's Corner

by Alice Englebretsen, Chair

Are you concerned about our environment? If so, this is a good time to get educated about the issues and to get involved. Right here in central Illinois we have a number of very informed and active groups with one goal in mind — preserving our earth. It's also a good time to get involved as we have a sympathetic majority in Springfield for the first time in many years.

The Prairie Group of the Sierra Club is gaining new enthusiasm for tackling the many environmental solutions we need to face. This year we are focusing on clean water, urban sprawl, and preserving the Shawnee National Forest. These are in keeping with the Illinois Chapter's areas of concern, so we have lots of people pulling in the same direction.

Locally, the Prairie Group is working with several other environmental organizations such as the newly formed Champaign Conservation Committee, or CCC, which harkens back to the New Deal days. This group recently started meeting every few months and, working together, we will build a strong coalition and give a stronger voice in the future development of our communities.

Clean water issues, which have benefited from a unified approach, include discovering leakage from the Urbana land fill and getting the City of Urbana, IEPA, and other agencies active in solving the problem. Much attention was raised on the ammonia spill into the Saline Branch this past summer. The watchful eye of local environmentalists was instrumental in getting governments and agencies to address the problem and help prevent future accidents. See the article by Marc Miller of the Prairie River's Network on the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) fees bill now being discussed in Springfield, for an example of how to help.

The Prairie Group has a history of focusing on urban sprawl issues. In March, together with our Illinois Chapter and the Illinois Student Environmental Network, we co-sponsored two workshops featuring Ellen Shubart, Campaign for Sensible Growth, who described how planning is conducted in our governmental entities; and Laura Huth, Urbana City Council Representation and Executive Director of the "Illinois Student Environment Network," who designed a session on how to take action to solve urban sprawl issues.

Other speakers were Rob Kowalski, Lindsay Robinson, Bruce Knight, Mary DeBacker, and Parson Brinckenhoff. To continue the focus of sprawl issues in this area, our April meeting is a bus tour of Champaign-Urbana area to see first hand the "good and bad" in urban planning. Please see our meetings announcements for details.

The Champaign County Board is also showing interest in planning for the future with environmental issues in mind by establishing a County Board Blue Ribbon Environmental Panel in which input is solicited from concerned and knowledgeable citizens. This is a great time for citizens and activists to get familiar with the issues and build a sound plan towards smart growth.

Another major focus of the Sierra Club is to sponsor outings, which are a good way to introduce people to the natural world, by helping them learn to appreciate the treasures we have in our wild places. This year, Prairie Group outings are keeping in mind the focus areas of clean water, urban sprawl, and Shawnee National Forest. Last fall, Jack Kuehn, our Outings Chair, led a backpacking trip to Hutchins Creek in Shawnee N.F. with the notion that the Prairie Group might adopt this area. Look for more fun trips to the Shawnee to continue this effort. What we really need are interested participants. To keep in touch with the latest on local outings, sign up for the outings listserv at: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Prairie/OUTINGS.html>

This is a great time to get involved. The community has many promising activities to help us build a quality, sustainable lifestyle. The Prairie Group of the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club is in an excellent position to have a positive impact in east-central Illinois. Come join us at one of our meetings or outings, and enjoy the experience of making a difference.

Future Sierra Club Outings Survey

In planning for outings, we thought chapter members would be the best source for ideas on where to visit. A preliminary list of 76 popular Illinois spots, sorted by distance from Champaign-Urbana, is on the chapter website at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie/OUTINGS.html>. It also includes an URL to some information about (almost) each site. Take a moment to scan the list and e-mail us those spots you'd like to visit — ideally choose a few at various distances from our area. Please e-mail choices to mcorn@uiuc.edu or join the e-mail discussion list below and send choices to it. Feel free to e-mail Mike (mcorn@uiuc.edu) or Jack (j-kuehn@uiuc.edu) ideas or suggestions for outings or additions to the list.

Fees for Water Pollution Permits

by Marc Miller, Watershed Organizer, Prairie Rivers Network

With budget problems looming over the 2003 state legislative session, this year may offer the best chance in four years to pass the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) fees bill.

NPDES permits are required under the Clean Water Act and administered by Illinois EPA. Illinois is one of very few states that indirectly subsidize water pollution by issuing NPDES permits to industry, developers, or municipal sewage treatment plants free of charge, while Illinois taxpayers pay millions of dollars each year to process, issue, and monitor compliance with these permits. The result is that Illinois taxpayers subsidize the degradation of their rivers and lakes.

The fees bill was proposed in each of the past four years by Prairie Rivers Network and other conservation organizations, but unfortunately failed. However, the need for additional revenues in 2003 could further justify the passage of the fees bill by reluctant lawmakers.

Last year's legislation proposed a fair fee structure to address the size of the discharge, the source for the dis-

charge (including large construction sites), and the specific kinds of pollutants that would be released. The legislation would create the Illinois Clean Water Fund to administer the NPDES permit program and possibly fund beneficial projects and additional monitoring.

It costs less to pollute a stream than to go fishing or paddle a kayak in Illinois!

At a time when Illinois is facing enormous budget shortfalls, and when needs for water quality and river conservation are so great, it makes sense to stop subsidizing water pollution and charge fees for these permits.

Additionally, the current subsidization seems unfair to Illinois citizens because we are charged license fees to fish or paddle our streams. It costs less today to pollute a stream than to go fishing or paddle a canoe in Illinois!

Prairie Rivers Network will track the progress of the proposed legislation and let you know when to take action for Illinois' rivers, lakes, and streams. Stay tuned!

Legislators in Prairie Group

(*Sierra Club Endorsed)

U.S. Congressional	District	Phone	Fax	Key Committees
*Sen. Dick Durbin	D-IL, Springfield Chicago	217.492.4062 312.353.4952	217.492.4382 312.353.0150	Appropriations
	Washington DC	202.224.2152	202.228.0450	
Sen. Peter Fitzgerald	R-IL, Inverness (Springfield) Chicago	217.492.5089 312.886.3506	217.492.5099 312.886.3514	Forestry Transportation
	Washington DC	202.224.2854	202.228.1372	
Rep. Jerry Weller	R-11, Morris (Joliet) Washington DC	815.740.2028 202.225.3635	815.740.2037 202.225.3521	Ways & Means
*Rep. Tim Johnson	R-15, Sidney (Champaign) Bloomington	217.403.4690 309.663.7049	217.403.4691 309.663.9880	Transportation
	Pontiac	815.844.7660	815.844.3473	
	Danville	217.431.8230	217.431.5338	
	Washington DC	202.225.2371	202.226.0791	
IL Senator	District	Phone	Fax	Key-Committee
*Patrick Welch	D-38, LaSalle	815.223.3747	815.223.8446	Environment
*Debbie Halvorson	D-40, Crete	708.756.0882	708.756.0885	Conservation
Bill Brady	R-44, Bloomington Forsyth	309.664.4440 217.876.9407	309.664.8575 na	Conservation
Rick Winkel	R-52, Urbana Danville	217.328.0400 217.446.2638	217.328.1202 217.446.2494	Judiciary
Dan Rutherford	R-53, Pontiac	815.842.3632	815.842.2875	Environment
Dale Righter	R-55, Mattoon	888.235.6033	217.235.6052	Transportation
IL Representative	District	Phone	Fax	Key-Committee
Mary K O'Brien	D-75, Coal City	815.634.3096	815.634.3137	Conservation
John "Phil" Novak	D-79, Kankakee	815.939.1983	815.939.0081	Environment
Bill Mitchell	R-87, Forsyth	217.876.1968	217.876.1973	na
Dan Brady	R-88, Bloomington	309.827.8303	309.827.8263	na
*Naomi Jakobsson	D-103, Champaign	217.373.5000	217.373.8679	na
William "Bill" Black	R-104, Danville	217.431.1986	217.431.2088	Transportation
Shane Cultra	R-105, Onarga	815.268.4090	815.268.4091	Conservation
Keith Sommer	R-106, Morton	309.263.9242	309.263.8187	na
Keir Eddy	R-109, Hutsonville	618.563.4128	618.563.4129	Conservation
Chapin Rose	R-110, Charleston	217.348.7673	217.348.7677	Judiciary

Outdoor Gear

by Mike Corn, Outings Co-Chair

After 25 years, I finally decided it was time to buy a new tent. Not that there was anything wrong with the old one — I really enjoyed the companionship it brought with it. Camping alone was out of the question since it required a Sherpa to carry all the ties and stakes it needed. Of course, it was so nice to have those friendly guys from the Army Corp of Engineers along to help with the set-up. Not to mention the huge calves and thighs I developed carrying it. And let's not overlook the intimacy one develops sharing the expanse of 30 square millimeters of floor space the tent provided.

Therefore, when I started looking for a new tent I had two primary goals: easy set up and weight. Ideally I wanted a tent large enough for two (you never know when you'll meet a super model camping in the outback), but not so large as to echo when camping alone. Finally, it had to be cool enough to earn me a few bragging rights.

Unfortunately, it turns out that everyone I know is sleeping in tents whose primary support material is duct tape, so I turned to the web and backpacking magazines for direction. I finally ended up settling on a Bibler i-tent. The i-tent met my primary goals easily.

Set up: Raising an i-tent consists of unrolling the tent and snapping the two self-assembling aluminum poles together. The i-tent doesn't use a sleeve for the poles, instead you go into the tent, place one end of the pole into a metal grommet and bend the pole along a roof seam, placing the other end into another grommet in the diagonally opposite corner. After practicing a few times in my living room, I was able to reduce my set-up time to no more than two minutes.

And as for weight? Fully packed with the included ultralight weight stakes, the i-tent weighs in at a Cliff bar more than four pounds.

I read that some early i-tent owners complained that the tent poles put undue pressure on the metal pole grommets, but on my i-tent they were strongly reinforced. The tent is beautifully constructed with most of the seams taped (a tube of seam sealer is included and Bibler recommends sealing all seams be force use). Small vents near the peak of the ceiling, together with the Gore-Tex like fabric Bibler uses (called 'ToddTex' after Todd Bibler), prevent any buildup of condensation. Since getting my i-tent, it has been field tested in some fairly wet conditions with nary a leak or damp moment.

Now the bad news: the list price of the i-tent (without vestibule) is \$539. You'd think Todd would be shipped along with the tent to help carry the gear. But wait! There is good news, as well. I was able to pick up my i-tent as a cosmetic second, saving around \$200. Bibler sometimes offers cosmetic seconds on their web site, and if you check with the major outdoor retailers, you can typically find someone with a second or two. All in all, I'm very satisfied with my i-tent — it may not be the best buy in man and super model (er, two man) tents, but if you're looking for a reasonably light, easy to set up tent with construction values guaranteed to last a long time, look no further.

Dimensions for the standard one door i-tent: length 82," width 48," height 42" at peak, 4 lbs 2.5 oz, list price: \$539. http://www.bibler tents.com/2002/itent_eldo.html

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* elected or appointed to ExCom for 2003-2004
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