

## Upcoming Events

Regular monthly meetings of the Prairie Group are held at the **Unitarian Universalist Church**, 309 W. Green, in Urbana. Meetings are at 7:30 p.m. the second Wed. of each month. Park in the back (south side) of the church. Come to the north or south entrance and ring the bell. (For last minute breaking news on meetings or other events, sign up for our listserv or check the website at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Prairie>.)

**Wednesday, August 11, 5:30-9 p.m.**

### — Lake of the Woods Park Picnic and Hike

Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, Izaak Walton Cabin An informal potluck/picnic; please bring a dish to pass and come prepared for summer fun!

Directions: Take the Route 50 exit off of I-74 just east of Mahomet (taking you north), then turn left at the next intersection (taking you west) to arrive at the park. Other details to be announced: check our website at [www.illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie](http://www.illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie).

**Wednesday, September 8, 7:30 p.m.**

### — Political Forum on the Environment

Elected state and federal representatives and candidates in the November election will participate in a panel discussion on their views regarding past, current, and future environmental legislation. After opening statements, they will respond to questions from the floor. This is your chance to find out what your elected representatives and their challengers believe are the best approaches to solving environmental problems.

## CHAIR'S CORNER

by Alice Englebretsen

### My Ocala National Service Trip

Last February, I served as a co-leader on the Ocala National Forest Service trip in. It was my first year as a leader (I was a participant in 2002 and a trainee in 2003). If you have never been on a National Sierra Club service trip before, I encourage you to consider going on one. I particularly enjoy service trips, in part because they are inexpensive, but mostly because they are so rewarding.

Ocala National Forest is located in central Florida, northwest of Orlando. It consists of sand pine scrub, palmetto bushes, sand oaks, subtropical vegetation, salt springs, lakes, rivers, slash pine, hardwood hummocks, and cypress. There are lots of trails for hiking, biking, and canoeing. February is a wonderful time to be in Florida.

Outings are a major focus for the Sierra Club and many types of outings are offered throughout the year. I've worked on archeological sites in the southwest: trail maintenance on Isle Royale; three Florida service trips; and on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. In the last year, there's been greater emphasis placed on sponsoring more trips in the Midwest. This fall I will be leading a National Service Trip in the Shawnee National Forest.

Regardless of your activity level or interests, there's a service trip waiting for you! More strenuous trips might involve multi-day backpacking trips or serious sea kayaking. Some are designed for families, including grandparent/grandchild, some are in lodges, and some are international. There is a variety of work, ranging from one type of activity — such as trail maintenance — to a series of jobs a particular agency might want.

In Florida we worked on different tasks for the Ocala National Forest. One was to work with Forest Service employees, using chain saws to clear trees and brush for pileated wood-pecker habitat (they need trees and lots of open space). Another day, we reseeded sinkholes used by ATVs riders in the area. Keeping ATVs in designated areas is important to keeping our forest healthy. It feels good to take part in protecting our public lands.

On our last day, we worked around the campground and recreation area of Alexander Spring, a beautiful clear water spring, great for cooling off on a hot day and for snorkeling to watch wildlife. The group I was in built a footbridge near the entrance. It was so amazing to work with a fun group, each of us chipping in a unique set of skills and knowledge. From a pile of lumber, a rough drawing, and measuring and cutting tools, we figured out how to build it, and enjoyed the experience of it all coming together for a satisfying end to a wonderful, fun week.

Outings are a great way to experience the benefits of the Sierra Club. I hope to re-energize an outings program here in central Illinois. If you have any interest in outings, and would like to participate somehow, please get in touch at [englebre@uiuc.edu](mailto:englebre@uiuc.edu) or 217-367-7344.

## ONE EARTH, ONE CHANCE®

### Environmental Issues in the Bloomington/Normal-McLean County Area

by Angelo Capparella

Those of us in the western portion of the Sierra Club's Prairie Group territory struggle with many of the same issues found in east-central Illinois. We also share some of the same state and federal legislators. More sharing of strategies and ideas for solving our common challenges necessitates more awareness of issues across our territory. Following is a synopsis of some of the biggest issues facing our area.

#### EAST-SIDE CORRIDOR

The East-Side Corridor or Bypass is a proposal to build a connection around the east side of Bloomington-Normal to connect I-74 around Downs to I-55 around Towanda. Various iterations have been proposed, including a southern spur from I-74 to Hwy. 51. This bypass would slam right through the Kickapoo Creek watershed, which is already listed as an impaired stream by the IEPA. It would eat up prime farmland, and pull development eastward. At the same time, the Village of Downs is moving towards getting a sewage treatment plant that will cause explosive development along Hwy. 150 and surrounding areas. Ironically, although a sewage plant would remove the fecal coliform impact on Kickapoo Creek, it would probably bring in so much development that the Creek would be more impaired in other ways. A new watershed protection group, the Friends of Kickapoo Creek, needs activists to join them as they pursue strategies to buffer these impacts: contact Jan Holder at [kholder@ilstu.edu](mailto:kholder@ilstu.edu).

#### SECOND CLINTON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Clinton area has been targeted as one of three sites nationally for revitalizing the nuclear power industry. It was selected, in part, because the industry felt the area was unlikely to protest and was in dire need of economic development. Although this is south of Bloomington-Normal, all of the waste that may end up going to Yucca Mountain or any other offsite storage facility would pass right through the

twin cities on the interstate system. Given the high rate of hazardous waste spillage in Illinois, this is a concern. Also, studies by members of No New Nukes (NNN) have revealed elevated rates of infant mortality and other health concerns in counties downwind from the current power plant, which includes Champaign and Coles counties. (Editor's note: see related article below.)

#### YARD SMART CAMPAIGN

We live in a sea of chemical lawns that overuse water, pollute the air and water, and supplant native wildlife habitat, but three groups in Bloomington-Normal (Ecology Action Center, JWP Audubon Society, Living Upstream) are trying to change that. They are raising awareness about alternatives and are launching a three-option yard certification project (chemical-free, easy-on-the-earth, wildlife habitat yard), complete with demonstration yards. They are also encouraging the Town of Normal to pursue alternative strategies on their properties. For more information, including certification applications, call the Ecology Action Center in Normal at 309-454-3169.

#### ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Our area has done a surprisingly good job of preserving prairie and oak-savanna remnants thanks to the ParkLands Foundation, which owns land along the Mackinaw River north of the twin cities, and the Funks Grove Cemetery Association (Sugar Grove Nature Center), which owns land just south of the twin cities. These groups are also restoring land adjacent to these remnants and dealing with the invasive species and other factors that are degrading the good-quality remnants. As always, they need volunteers to participate on ecological restoration workdays. Persons interested should check out the ParkLands Foundation website ([www.parklands.org](http://www.parklands.org)) or call Don Schmidt at Illinois State University (309-438-3800) regarding Funks Grove.

### Steps Toward Another Nuclear Reactor in Clinton: Plans and Protest

by Sandra Lindberg

The Bush administration's efforts to resurrect the ailing nuclear industry are reaching into central Illinois. Exelon Corporation, current owner of the nuclear reactor just east of Clinton, has already received \$4.4 million from the federal government to offset the costs of preparing an Early Site Permit Application for its proposed Clinton Reactor #2, an application that Exelon filed in the fall of 2003. Now the various companies of the nuclear industry have formed two consortiums that are asking for an additional \$400 million to defray the costs of preparing the reactor licensing applications. U.S. taxpayers will be paying the bills for all of this if citizens and elected representatives fail to dismantle this initiative.

Meanwhile, the nuclear industry's greatest supporter, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), has ruled that upcoming hearings regarding the three new proposed reactor sites (in Clinton, IL; Grand Gulf, MS; and North Anna, VA) do not need to be held in their home states. Instead, the NRC proposes to lump all three sites' hearings into one event, to be held in Rockville, MD in late June. A coalition of

anti-nuclear activist groups comprised of No New Nukes in central Illinois; grassroots groups in Virginia and Mississippi; Public Citizen; the Nuclear Energy Information Resource Service; the Nuclear Energy Information Service; Blue Ridge Activist Group, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center have filed motions to protest this NRC decision. The coalition's efforts need your support. Please call or write the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and your Illinois representatives and ask them to demand local hearings regarding the proposed reactor.

Local efforts to educate and motivate central Illinois citizens about this issue are being conducted by No New Nukes, with the support of the Sierra Club Prairie Group; the Ecology Action Center in Normal, IL; the Nuclear Energy Information Service in Evanston, IL, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago, IL. If you are interested in working on this issue, please contact Sandra Lindberg at 309-664-0403, [slindber@titan.iwu.edu](mailto:slindber@titan.iwu.edu), or c/o No New Nukes, P.O. Box 361, Clinton, IL 61727. All help will be greatly appreciated.

### Champaign-Urbana Freecycling: Online Give-and-Take

What is Freecycling? It means that you are about to throw something away, but instead you give it away. It reduces waste, saves money, and is a chance to meet like-minded people. The Champaign-Urbana chapter is growing! Browse their messages and/or join the chapter at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/freecycle-Champaign-Urbana/>. For more general information on Freecycling, see: [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org).

## Tongass Tax Protest

Kim Novick of the Alaska Coalition of Illinois in Chicago asked if some people from Prairie Group could volunteer to protest paying taxes to subsidize logging in Alaska's Tongass rain forest.

Five of us congregated at the Champaign main Post Office on April 15th. Unfortunately, Post Office personnel wouldn't let us position ourselves close to the door, so we had to stand on the other side of the parking lot.

We did get an interview with Channel 3, however.



From left to right: Clark Bullard, Kim Novick, Jim Beauchamp, and a grizzly bear (Jory Johnson). As you can tell from Kim's hair, it was an extremely windy day. John Gilpin was also there, but he took the picture.

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

## Report on 2004 Planning Institute on Innovative Community Planning

by Rubina Khan and Peg Flynn

The 2004 Planning Institute, sponsored by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning's Professional Education and Outreach Program at the University of Illinois, was held March 4-5 at the Illini Union. This seminar was incredibly valuable as planners and relevant decision-makers from across the state gathered to network, make presentations, and discuss the latest in planning. We are grateful to the Prairie Group for its financial support of our conference registration fees.

A broad spectrum of issues was presented, ranging from Traffic Calming to Community Art and Culture. The sessions we attended were intriguing: each offered a plethora of resources and contacts. Here are just some of the topics we learned about for the first time or gained more knowledge on:

- Case studies on community visioning
- Innovative planning laws — ordinances that create great communities
- Using renewable energies in planning — clean energy, solar energy, alternative fuels
- Sustainable design by way of landscape architecture — implementation and economic recapture
- New directions in planning for the 21st century — the Transect method of planning, New Urbanism zoning ordinances, green construction as recently implemented in Normal's downtown
- Best practices in county-level bicycle/pedestrian trail development
- Establishing farmland preservation programs in Illinois

- New approaches to visitability design in public institutions and private homes.

The Institute concluded with a presentation by none other than Richard Florida, author of the influential planning vision *The Creative Class*, who advised the community to beware of "squelchers:" individuals or groups who are afraid to think outside of the box where the community is concerned. He touched upon various neighborhood sustainability practices and motivated the audience to go out into the community, get creative, and make a difference.

The information and contacts gathered at this meeting will help a great deal in helping guide the Prairie Group's anti-sprawl group (Planning Advocates of Champaign County). We plan to use most of the resources gathered from the Institute to help the group achieve its goals. PACC meets on the first Monday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Community Design Center, 112 W. Main, downtown Urbana. If you'd like to be added to the PACC e-mail list, which publicizes local planning-related events and issues, please contact Peg Flynn at [mjflynn@insightbb.com](mailto:mjflynn@insightbb.com).

As part of her 2004 Earth Day Dialogue meeting, State Representative Naomi Jakobsson (D-103) invited the Prairie Group to sponsor an environmental essay competition for high school students. The Prairie Group's Executive Committee was delighted to award \$150 to Nathaniel Gottlieb-Graham, a student at Urbana University High School, for his excellent essay on hydrogen fuel cells.

## Working Today for a Healthy Tomorrow: The Future of Hydrogen Fuel Cells

by Nathaniel Gottlieb-Graham

Hydrogen fuel cells are the future. They produce reliable, efficient power using renewable fuel: hydrogen. In addition, their only waste products are pure water. The possibilities of such devices are staggering: the ability to solve two of the world's most pressing environmental problems at once — dependence on polluting fossil fuels, and lack of clean drinking water — is a chance we short-term tenants of this fragile planet cannot afford to pass up.

Internal combustion engines, coal-fired and nuclear power plants, benzene-injection oil drilling — all of these heavily-polluting means of extracting energy or resources would be made either obsolete or unnecessary by the development of cheap, reliable hydrogen fuel cells. In the case of coal-fired power plants, the industry could be replaced entirely by massive fuel cell arrays generating enormous amounts of power. For their part, internal combustion engines could be replaced by fuel cells to power vehicles. The potential problem of decreased top speed and torque in hydrogen fuel cell-powered cars could be solved by either increasing the efficiency of the reactions in the fuel cells, or by simply putting more fuel cells under the car's hood. One of the most environmentally-destructive methods of extracting natural resources, benzene-injection oil drilling, produces carcinogens that injure workers in addition to damaging the environment. Hydrogen fuel cells would

eliminate the need for oil drilling, as oil would no longer be necessary as a major fuel.

To ensure the steady production of plastics, U.S. farm subsidies could be shifted to farmers who use their crops to produce plants such as soy and corn, whose oils could be used to make plastics. Without heavy U.S. subsidization of exportable grains, Third World farmers would once again be able to compete in regional marketplaces, which would cease to be dominated by cheap U.S. grain. In exchange for their own grain, Third World farmers could buy fuel cell generators to power their farms and villages with cheap electricity. The resulting waste product of pure water could solve the problem of non-potable drinking water that is all too prevalent in Third World countries.

While the shift from an oil- to a hydrogen-based fuel economy would hurt Middle Eastern countries whose economies depend on oil revenues, a controlled shift in their industries could be effected using U.S. aid: In exchange for a promise of no new oil exploration or development, the U.S. could outsource production of hydrogen fuel cell cars to Middle Eastern countries where labor is inexpensive, and profit margins by Middle Eastern businesses might even be larger than could be gained with oil. With more American businesses exporting technology to the Middle East, combined with more gainful employment available for Middle

Eastern workers, the prevalent frustration resulting from lack of opportunity (that helps tremendously in causing terrorism) would also decrease.

In short, hydrogen fuel cell technology represents the best that science can possibly offer our overpopulated and over-polluted planet. Imagine a presidential candidate whose slogan was "Hydrogen fuel cells, not polluting oil wells."

## Get More Involved! Join the Prairie Group Listserv

If you want to keep up with the latest opportunities to get involved, sign up for our listserv (group e-mail system) by going to <http://lists.sierraclub.org/> archives and scroll down past many Sierra Club listservs to click on "IL-PRAIRIE-ALERTS."

On the next screen, click on "Join or leave the list" then fill in blanks for "Your e-mail address" and "Your name." Then select the listserv settings you want (the default should be fine for beginners) and click on the "Join the list" button. You should get an e-mail response to finish confirming your listserv subscription.

If you have any problems signing up, please send an e-mail to George Gore at [geo\\_gore@yahoo.com](mailto:geo_gore@yahoo.com) or to Jim Beauchamp at [jwbeauch@staff.uiuc.edu](mailto:jwbeauch@staff.uiuc.edu).

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### OPEN POSITIONS

Conservation Chair; Outings; Secretary;  
Listserv Chair; Environmental Education;  
Fund Raising; Membership Co-Chair