

Joining Sierra Club members in Lake and Northeastern Cook Counties in Illinois

# WOODS & WETLANDS News



## Holiday party... Potluck and fun!

Don't get depressed by the shorter days and the cool weather sniffles... The Holidays are coming! The W&W Holiday Party is scheduled for Sunday December 14 from noon to 4 pm in Long Grove. Please come! It's potluck. Bring up to 15 slides to show. Contact Evan Craig to find out where it is and what to bring.

## Join our e-mail lists

This issue is jam-packed with important issues, but limited time and money keeps us from printing them very often.

You can stay better informed and involved in local events and issues by joining our free e-mail lists—It's easy to join the ISSUES list, the ALERTS list, and the new OUTINGS list right from the website!

Changed your e-mail address? Remember to resubscribe. Go to <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w>

## Volunteer Survey

Shock and awe, the strategy for invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, has become a familiar experience for those of us watching the attack of the Bush administration on our environmental protection laws. First it was Arsenic in our water. Then drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to distract us from Cheney's private energy policy. Now they want to roll back enforcement of the Clean Air Act while infant asthma cases plague our hospitals.

Who can forget Norton and Bush posing for a redwood photo op while allowing drilling in our National Parks? With fires burning in CA, they push saving our national forests from fire—by clear-cutting them. Now they want to silence public opinion on forest management plans.

Bush reneged on Global Warming CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions, a campaign promise, and then had EPA reports edited to ignore Global Warming. Even modest CAFE standards to decrease fuel consumption were defeated. Now Bush wants to remove protections of the Clean Water Act for lateral streams and wetlands not directly connected to our navigable waters. The assault is unending.

It's also local. Prairies, savannas, woods, and the very soil they grow on continue to be scraped away by roving armies of earthmovers. Mindless sprawling subdivisions obliterate landscapes and create traffic congestion. All inspired by the lust for quick profits and meager tax revenues.

This is clearly a time for those of us who care about the environment, indeed, the future of life on this planet, to become more active and involved. We need to express our opinions at all levels of government: federal, state, and especially local in an organized way that can make a difference.

And we need to come together to enjoy the remaining riches of our natural environment in the company of others who care about it to rejuvenate our spirit.

Join us in our efforts. To do your part, please reply to this questionnaire, by e-mail or mail, so that we can involve you in your areas of interest.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

The local issues I think need attention \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive occasional email notices of meetings and issues: yes no

The W&W local Sierra Club Group has committees on activities, communications, and organization. If you would like to become active with a committee please indicate below.

- |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Outings           | <input type="radio"/> Membership & welcoming | <input type="radio"/> Conservation (environmental campaigns) | <input type="radio"/> Lobbying local officials | <input type="radio"/> Group leadership |
| <input type="radio"/> Public meetings   | <input type="radio"/> Fundraising            | <input type="radio"/> Political endorsements                 | <input type="radio"/> Web site                 | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____     |
| <input type="radio"/> Picnics & parties | <input type="radio"/> Newsletter & mailings  | <input type="radio"/> Publicity                              |  |  |

# The Importance of Being Impervious

by Jim Bland

The past ten years have seen a renewed interest in watershed assessment and research principally fueled by U.S. EPA non-point initiatives.

For a great many years, stream biologists were acutely aware that streams in rural agricultural settings (nutrients, pesticides, and sediment are issues) tended to be less impacted than streams in urban environments. The full dimensions of that relationship however, were not well quantified. As more research became available and as biologists started to compare notes, they found that one variable was a very good predictor of degradation in streams: the percentage of impervious surface.

## Paved surfaces and thin topsoil layers are impervious

Impervious surfaces are the rooftops, parking lots, sidewalks, streets and highways that rapidly convey water during rainstorms. Current development methods call for grading off the topsoil and leaving a thin veneer of sod.

These areas also convey water away rapidly as opposed to letting it infiltrate into the ground. One consequence of impervious surface is that we build large numbers of detention ponds to hold back stormwater that would otherwise cause flooding in downstream communities. A subtler effect however has been the degradation of our urban streams.

The Center for Watershed Protection in Maryland has just published a major monograph summarizing 200 plus stream assessment studies from across the United States (*Impacts of Impervious Cover on Aquatic Systems*, 2003).

## Impervious surfaces in our area bring on stream degradation

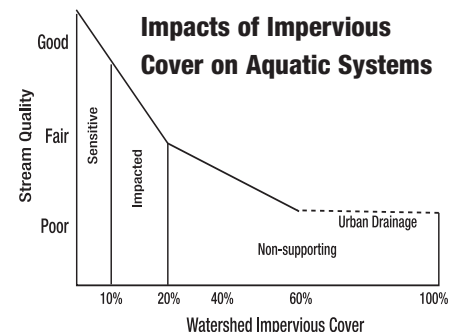
In our own area the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission also did an analysis of impervious cover, population numbers and measures of stream biotic integrity. Despite the widely varying geographic localities, researchers found that streams started

to seriously degrade as the impervious cover of the watershed approached 10%, were seriously impacted between 10 and 25%, and were graded as “non-supporting” above 25%.

Degradation takes the form of a reduction in stream diversity (for both fishes and invertebrates), a retrogression to opportunistic species (we lose the rainbow darters and get green sunfish and carp), a reduction in mean size of fish, and a lowering of biological metrics which are designed to measure biotic integrity.

## But situations can be improved

It's important to point out that the imperviousness of urban/suburban land can be improved. Sustainable or environmentally sensitive development



will look to maximize the infiltration of water through known development and landscape practices.

Impervious surface is one of the measures discussed in comments we submitted for the high quality Sequoit Creek Watershed Management Plan. Sequoit Creek is arguably the highest quality watershed in our territory. See our comments, and help us protect it at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Water/sequoit.html>

## Downwind Report—November 2003

by Harold J. Rafson

In 2002 there were many spills of sewage which entered Lake Michigan from North Shore Sanitary District pumping stations during electrical power outages. State Senator Susan Garrett convened a constructive meeting, one result of which was financing (by NSSD) of a study to seek the source of fecal contamination that was closing our beaches. The results were available in the spring of this year. It was a good study as far as it went, but the water samples had been drawn when there was low contamination, and the beaches were open. So the study didn't answer the question of what were the sources of contamination that were closing the beaches. Nevertheless, press releases were issued which tied sea gull droppings to beach closings — an improper reading of the test results.

Senator Susan Garrett then, to get this straight, had to raise money to do an independent study to seek the answer to beach closings. The results are not in yet. Stay tuned.

But the sewage spills had the result of making public that the NSSD did not have back-up power generators at several pumping stations. NSSD, correctly, agreed to install a generator at Lake Bluff. Once again in 2003 there were several sewage spills. While last year the Lake Bluff station spilled for 9 hours, this year it spilled for 3 hours. This is an improvement, and the NSSD is going forward to improve. There is still work to be done. But finally, after years of evading the issue, or claiming that monies were needed for other projects, the NSSD has agreed to install all necessary back-up generators at several stations. We wish them success in solving this long-term problem.

Concerning the NSSD sludge dryer/burner: After having lost the battle to install the sludge dryer/burner at Waukegan, the NSSD is now going forward to build it in Zion. The NSSD has filed for permit applications with the IEPA. The NSSD and the proposed industrial park on the former landfill site, are going forth making plans, preparations, and seeking approvals for the work to be done. Be alert to developments.

# **Club speaks out on Lake County Draft Framework Plan**

According to Illinois law, counties are supposed to write a Framework Plan describing their vision for the next decade, and then spend the next decade living up to the plan. Thanks to poor leadership during Lake County's pro-development years, changes to the ordinances laid skid marks across the plan, and grew as hard to navigate as a sprawling subdivision. The pro-development zoning frenzy from the 80's persists as a get-rich scheme for developers, underwritten by the costs of sprawl: traffic congestion, crowded schools, rising taxes, frequent flooding, vanishing open space, and polluted air and water.

## **Addressing the costs of sprawl: The legacy of pro-development era continues to ravage the county**

The new "Slow-growth" leadership came to the rescue in the late 90's and began the thankless job of trying to clean up the ordinances by "unifying" them. Careful not to infringe on the zoning entitlements bestowed by the previous leadership, the county showed residents how the Unified Development Ordinances would generally leave land owners' development privileges unfettered. The sense of property rights entitlement became cast in this concrete and, without a new Framework Plan for a bold recovery, the costs of sprawl weren't addressed. This legacy of the pro-development era, in which the expense of infrastructure is extracted from the public with little commitment from developers to address the costs of sprawl, continues to ravage the county. Municipalities, set in an insane development revenue competition with each other by the state, have been all too willing to make the problem worse. They continue to hand out zoning increases and PUDs while abdicating their responsibility for creating a community for humans, or preserving one for wildlife.

It's not hard to see the results. A half hour road trip in any direction will cross over several channelized, eroded and polluted streams; pass

dozens of cattail choked detention ponds; and discover at least one desecrated farm field where an army of earthmovers have scraped the world's richest topsoil off of land that once was prairie, the world's most endangered ecosystem. In its place, municipalities have approved sprawling housing developments, strip malls, executive parks, big box stores and malls with nothing in common but the clogged road you're driving on. The County Forest Preserve District alone has the impossible job of rescuing our ecosystems by penning them up on reservations comprising less than 15% of the land, and a few of those along the way serve as reminders of what is being lost.

## **An opportunity to set a different course**

The County Framework Plan is our chance to set a different course for the future, to envision what we want the county to look like in 10 years, and set policies that support that vision. The Regional Planning Committee has been hard at work crafting chapters that address everything from Economic Development, to Transportation, to Environment. Your ExCom cares about protecting our environment and has scrutinized a few of these chapters to see whether they can accommodate, or even help promote our vision. Here's what we've found.

## **An intent to preserve the environment—but is it enough?**

We first looked at *Chapter 4: Environmental Resources, Open Space, and Farmland*. The present draft chapter expresses a clear intent to preserve the environment, but is undermined by pejorative language, contrary perspective, and misleading data. The resulting draft goals and policies are thus poorly founded and insufficient to achieve the intent. We wrote line-by-line comments instructing the county how to write environmental respect and accountability into the chapter, and sent it with an executive summary to the Board. The points we raise reflect the environmental perspective, and are a good lesson for all members. Read them at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&cw/lcfp.html>

## **Undue tollway influence on county planning: neglecting severe environmental impacts of transportation plans**

We turned our attention next to *Chapter 7: Transportation*. We are concerned that this draft chapter reflects undue influence by the Tollway's LCTIP (Rt.53 extension promotion, so-called Lake County Transportation Improvement Project). Other than the reference to the notoriously flawed draft EIS in the LCTIP, the chapter neglects the severe environmental impacts of its transportation plans. The resulting draft goals and policies lack concrete measures to achieve balanced transportation choices for Lake County's maturing communities. Read our suggestions for improvement at the same webpage.

## **Tell your county board member you support the Club's comments**

If you care about the county's future, you can make a difference by telling your Lake County Board member that you support the Sierra Club comments on the draft chapters. Ultimately, the future of the County depends on whether the municipalities, who control development decisions, share the vision of a protected environment in their plans. A good County Framework Plan can help influence your municipality to be responsible members of our regional ecology.

The other chapters need our input as well. For instance, the chapter on Sewer could have a profound impact on our lakes and streams. There is a link on our web page to the count's website where the draft and revised chapters can be found. Please volunteer to join our Framework Plan Committee to help influence the Plan, and educate our members about the future of our environment.

Make a difference. Contact the Group's Conservation Chairs as listed on the back page.

# Waukegan Lakefront Values

by Melissa Baker and Evan Craig

Wetland 191 spans much of the Waukegan lakefront from the north edge of the entrance to the harbor to the south side of the jetty at Greenwood Avenue. Other wetlands spot the 1400 acres that stretch from Illinois Beach State Park past the harbor, and from the bluff to the lake, but lovely wetland 191 is distinguished as an ADID wetland for providing critical habitat to endangered species.

## Contaminated soils

Sadly, wetland 191 is surrounded by terrible contamination sites, as well as heavy industries that continue to pollute. Many of the contamination sites have been discovered by the EPA, and where the responsible parties are unwilling or unable to clean them up, have been classified as "Superfund" sites. Until this year, the "Superfund" was funded by industries that pollute our air, water and land. But the administration and Congress has shifted that burden to the shoulders of taxpayers, and the money has dried up. The EPA has ordained a "Citizen's Advisory Group" (CAG) to help determine how to clean up the "Area of Concern" (AoC) containing the multiple contamination sites, and Sierra Club has a seat at the table.

## Biological inventories discover rich wildlife

One of the best actions of the CAG has been to commission several studies of the wildlife on the AoC. These are referred to as "biological inventories," and below is what they found. Together they indicate that the wildlife at the site is more diverse and profound than any other natural area in our region; more than Illinois Beach State Park, better than any Forest Preserve!

### Floristic inventory

A large number (2/3) of all the plants inventoried were native, not invasive or exotic (weedy) plants. The most important values shown here are the Mean(C) and I values. The Mean(C) value signifies that the

plants are relatively high quality and strongly associated with the plant habitats where they were inventoried.

2001, by Margo Milne  
205 native species  
Sum(C)=830  
Mean(C)=4.05  
 $I=M(C)/\sqrt{N}$ =58  
307 total species

The I value signifies that the area inventoried is sizeable with a large number of high quality native plants.

Many of these plants depend on vanishing, biologically diverse ecosystems which are very important to preserve.

### Avian inventory

Wetland 191 and the other wetlands provide an important, unique migrant stopover and nesting habitat for these birds. Some examples of birds and their nesting sites observed during the inventory were: Black Crested Night Herons, Great Blue Heron rookery, and Common Terns. The beach, dune, wetland, and woodland attract songbirds (passerines) which is vital habitat for these sensitive species.

2000, by Joel Greenberg  
114 species

### Herp/Amphibian inventory

This report sites the importance of the linkage of beach, dune, wetland, wood and bluff, and recognizes the AoC as especially rich in these water dependent species.

The contamination sites include:

### North Shore Gas/OMC

A plume of carcinogenic solvent is migrating toward the lake. A plan is in place, and we are told that measures are being prepared to stop it.

- Coal tar
- Creosote
- Chlorinated VOC's
- TCE
- Vinyl chloride

### Waukegan Harbor

PCBs in the harbor sediments were reduced to 50 ppm in early 1990s. The plan now is to reduce them to less than 1 ppm. To do so will require removal of 350,000 yd<sup>3</sup> of material. The question is what to do with that much low level PCB contaminated sediment.

PCBs

### Yeoman Creek

Another nearby Waukegan superfund beyond the AoC, this toxic landfill would have been capped with an impervious layer of plastic and clay by now. But it has been held up because it has been recognized as an ideal place to put the harbor sediments. The decision needs to be made by December. Unfortunately, Waukegan has voted against this solution. But the city has made an alternative proposal.

## Waukegan's vision

Studies of the Economic Value of Cleanup to Waukegan suggest that the area will gain \$250M in value for cleanup of the entire AoC, but only \$46M for cleanup of just the Harbor (partial). Harbor cleanup will cost around \$10-\$15M. The total Regional benefit is estimated at \$6.4B for full AoC cleanup.

Waukegan proposes a processing center to be located on the AoC to handle all the contaminated soils. They describe a non-incinerator treatment facility on the former OMC North Plant property, on the lakefront. There are currently unresolved questions about the cost and applied remediation methods of this center, but the city earns high marks for opposing a sludge incinerator, and for vision for an attractive, restored lakefront.

Waukegan's vision includes the "SOM plan" (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill), which includes restoration of the Waukegan Moorlands, "celebrated by naturalists of the early twentieth century." Our job is to encourage Waukegan to pursue protection for the precious ecological diversity that has survived beside the contamination insults. The plan should set aside a refuge and make it more easily appreciated by the residents of the city, and the county.

Implementing a vision of pedestrian access to mixed development and a natural lakefront environment can transform Waukegan from its 20th Century decline to a shining 21st Century recovery.

Give this to a Friend!!

## Join Sierra Club today

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed     Mastercard     Visa

Cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Categories:    Individual    Joint



Introductory	\$25	--
Regular	\$40	\$50
Supporting	\$75	\$100
Contributing	\$150	\$175
Life	\$1000	\$1250
Senior	\$24	\$32
Student	\$24	\$32
Limited Income	\$24	\$32

Enclose check and mail to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box

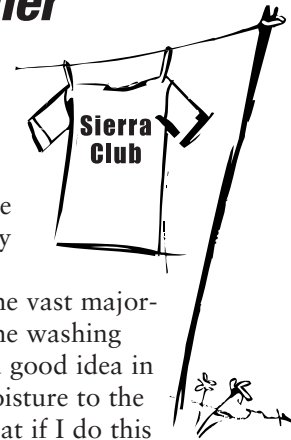
52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968

PROTECT AMERICA'S ENVIRONMENT.  
*For our families, for our future.*

Contributions, gifts or dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

## Conservation Corner

by Mike Quinn



Sometimes members pass along to me small suggestions on how they conserve our natural resources. Not all ideas have to be momentous to have an impact. Try NOT using your dryer at home—opting rather to simply hang up the vast majority of your laundry right out of the washing machine and let them “air dry”—a good idea in the winter months as this adds moisture to the dry air. I have personally found that if I do this in the evening, the clothes are dry by morning. I have found this process takes NO more time than using the dryer and folding. In the summer, hang them up outside and enjoy the fresh smell — an old idea but still effective. I like to think of the electricity NOT used (or paid for) and believe I will NEVER have to purchase a second dryer to end up in a landfill.

### Monthly Planning Meetings

Planning Meetings are open to all members, and are now held at 6:30 p.m. on 1st Thursdays at either a member's home in Libertyville, or at the Caribou Coffee House, 725 N Milwaukee Ave., Libertyville, 573-8271 (Near METRA station on Milwaukee Ave.) Phone the Group Chair at 847-680-6437 for details.

### Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands Group

<http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/contact.html>

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## Generous tree-hugger sought

**Wanted: generous tree lover to help underwrite the additional paper cost of printing this newsletter on totally tree-free kenaf.**

Contact Jill Koch at 223-1825 if you can help.

## W&W News On-line!

This newsletter and more information on these and other topics can be found on the web at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/wwnews.html>—please **stop by to surf!**



**Sierra Club  
Woods & Wetlands Group  
200 N. Michigan Avenue  
Suite 505  
Chicago, IL 60601**

### **The candidates—in their words**

**GEORGE ETU**, a Sierra Club member since 1978, has always been involved in leadership roles, including serving several years as Group Chair. A vital source of information about Sierra Club procedures and know-how, he is currently the Vice Chair and Illinois Chapter Representative for our Group. George wishes to continue strengthening and improving the Group as an effective environmental organization.

**DENNIS MURPHY** has been a resident of Lake County for over 14 years. He is a long time member of the Sierra Club. He is a Past President of the Chicago Herpetological Society and spent many very active years in that organization. He served as a Village of Third Lake Trustee for 7 years and is a former Board Member of the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO), where he worked for responsible waste management. Dennis is a dedicated supporter of environmental and habitat protection issues, he is knowledgeable and well informed, and will work to strengthen the W&W as an effective grassroots activist organization. Dennis has been Treasurer of the Woods and Wetlands Group for the past year and would very much like to serve the Club as a member of the ExCom.

**JAY J. GLENN** believes environmental advocacy must be: factual, relevant, strategic, aggressive, effective and fun. Stewardship is a community responsibility, we must pass on to those who follow: clean water, clean air, healthy rivers and wetlands. The

Sierra Club must commit sufficient resources to build community support. Our challenge is to identify and embrace development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need (sustainability). In 2003, Jay assisted in organizing two stakeholder groups. A group of adjoining residents was organized to oppose a planned sprawl development. The group first retained competent counsel and planning experts. Then using a recent Illinois Supreme Court decision, the group forced a full

re-hearing. The second group was initially neighbors and adjacent homeowner associations within the Slocum Sub-Watershed to the Fox River. That group is in opposition to a Proposed Modified NPDES Permit for the Village of Wauconda. The petitioned their elected officials and now a large coalition of downstream Municipal Governments, Cuba Township, the Lake County Forest Preserve and a large number of environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, have joined the residents and objected to the Permit.

## **Woods & Wetlands Sierra Club Ballot**

Two of the five positions on the W&W Executive Committee are up now for election. The Committee decides political endorsements, plan programs, interact with the Illinois Chapter and National Sierra Club, and choose projects and issues for W&W Group involvement. Your ballot is important not only in influencing the direction of the Group, but also as a show of support for these committed activists. Please consider their statements, fill out your ballot, and send it in.

- ✗ Each W&W Sierra Club member may send one ballot.
- ✗ Each member may either use this ballot or make one.
- ✗ On the ballot write the names of up to two candidates you choose.
- ✗ Do not identify yourself on your ballot.
- ✗ You may place the ballots of up to three family members in one envelope. Mail to Sierra Club W&W Elections, P. O. Box 5012, Vernon Hills, IL 60061
- ✗ On the outside of the envelope, identify each member who has included a ballot and your RETURN MAILING ADDRESS. Postmark by January 5, 2004.

**Candidate one:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Candidate two:** \_\_\_\_\_