

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

WOODS & WETLANDS News



Lake County 2000 Endorsements

The stunning victory of all eight W&W-endorsed Lake County Board candidates in 1998 has had a profound effect on the board. Success at the polls of our six veteran and two new candidates swelled the ranks of environmentally concerned board members to a marginal majority. As a result, environmental-protection policies and resolutions passed with unanimous support of not only our well-known advocates, but also the established pro-development bunch.

A short list of the new board's achievements includes:

- ✓ victory of the 1999 Lake County Forest Preserve referendum;
- ✓ passage of a much-improved Wetlands Development Ordinance;
- ✓ newfound opposition to construction in flood plains;
- ✓ active pursuit of state policies to protect ground-water resources from new power plants; and
- ✓ a request for authority to help end sprawl through regional planning.

However, several of the most important objectives explored in 1998, and again in the 2000 questionnaires, remain unaddressed. Revoking or reversing their standing endorsement of the disastrous extension of Rt. 53 through the heart of Lake County's wetlands was never voted upon, and hardly discussed. (Even the Tollway's own LCTIP campaign has taken a neutral position on Route 53, and revealed five alternative transportation improvement plans without 53.) The much anticipated Unified

Candidate	District	Send Contributions to	Phone
Suzi Schmidt Republican	3	Suzi Schmidt Campaign 38532 N. Ardmore Ln Lake Villa, IL 60046	356-3173
George Bell, Jr. Republican	13	George Bell, Jr. for County Board c/o Tom Kreuser P. O. Box 7405 Libertyville, IL 60048-7405	680-9648
Michael Talbett Republican	19	Michael S. Talbett for County Board 1245 Stratford Ct. Lake Zurich, IL 60047	550-9411
Woods & Wetlands		Sierra Club Illinois PAC P. O. Box 5012 Vernon Hills, IL 60061	680-6437

Development Ordinance lacks bold or visionary approaches to containing sprawl here in one of the nation's 10 worst sprawl regions. Threats to existing Forest Preserve lands from proposed roads, airports, and ball fields are still on the books.

Considering our previous successes and disappointments, we challenged our Endorsement Committee to find new candidates to preserve our spectacular natural heritage and quality of life in this region. We asked for candidates we can count on not only to end previous policies of environmental destruction, but to forge a new era of advocacy and leadership.

Our endorsement process included: evaluating responses to our seven-point questionnaire, appraising electability, checking previous voting performance on environmental issues, phone interviews, recommendations from credible sources, and approval

of the Sierra Club Chapter Executive Committee. We included questions on:

1. Prior Environmental Activism
2. Peaker Power Plants
3. Extension of Rt. 53
4. Sprawl
5. Threatened & Endangered Species
6. Development and Flooding
7. Swapping Forest Preserve Land

Now it's your turn: **Take this Newsletter with you to the polls on March 21, and ask for the ballot for your candidate's party.**

Once again, our candidates are likely to be outspent 10 to 1, hurting their ability to reach crucial ranks of voters. We should not let this happen: **Please write a check for \$10, \$25, or \$100 to the candidates, or to W & W.** Then call a phone number in the table and ask how you can help!

See next page for the candidates' answers to the above questions.

The candidates speak



Suzie Schmidt

Prior Environmental Leadership

Many over years of service on the County Board. Preservation of wetlands & thousands of acres of Forest Preserve land. Monitoring lakes. Fighting zoning changes, extension of Yorkhouse Road, gravel transfer stations. Appointments to County Committees that will also work for us.

Peaker Power Plants

There are so many questions concerning these plants that we must move very slowly until they have been answered. Besides the problem with air quality, what about the supply of ground water.

Rt. 53

I have always said that the building of Rt. 53 will have no positive impact on traffic.

Urban Sprawl

Lake County should recycle our older established communities where infrastructure's in place. Instead of always building new, recycle. We also need to enhance our public transportation to be user friendly and available.

Endangered Species

Before the UDO is passed it should have the teeth that we need. Only 10% of development occurs in the unincorporated area, so we need to work with municipalities and have them buy in also.

Flooding

First, stop building where we should not be building. I never have and never will vote for any CUP's for any fill projects. We must preserve more floodplains for open space.

Swapping FPD Lands

Absolutely not. We are not a land bank. We buy land to preserve it not hold it for development or roads or runways.



George Bell

Prior Environmental Leadership

As a Libertyville Township Republican precinct #174 Committeeman I have supported two Lake County Forest Preserve Bond Referendums and two Libertyville Township Open Space Bond Referendums.

Peaker Power Plants

I am concerned about the location, need, and impact on our natural resources and environment. I have been actively opposed to "peakers" in general and the Libertyville site proposal in particular. The County Board should take steps to prevent the building of any "peaker" plants in unincorporated areas of the county until there is a better understanding of the need and effect these plants will have on the county.

Rt. 53

The extension of the Route 53 tollway or freeway into Lake County will result in more traffic and development, with more air pollution, water pollution and destruction of existing habitat areas.

Urban Sprawl

The County Board should consider the establishment of a metropolitan committee or commission which would oversee proposed development of unincorporated areas of the County, and proposed annexations of unincorporated areas by local governments. Such a committee or commission would help to keep developers from pitting local governments against each other.

Flooding

No development should be allowed on existing wetlands and flood plains.

Swapping FPD Lands

I would oppose swapping forest preserve land for roads and airports.



Mike Talbett

Prior Environmental Leadership

Trustee, Village of Lake Zurich. Currently, I serve as a member of the Technical Advisory Committee for the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission. I was very involved in the discussions of the Watershed Development Ordinance amendments that were promulgated this year. Also, I serve as the Lake Zurich Director for the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County.

Peaker Power Plants

I support the County Board's vote to delay action on permits for peaker power plants until appropriate state guidelines are established. The potential problems involving ground and surface water, noise and air pollution, and safety concerns are important for all counties in Illinois and statewide standards need to be in place to ensure a protected environment.

Rt. 53

A Route 53 extension will serve only to make existing problems worse and gobble-up money that could be spent on needed improvements to existing roads.

Urban Sprawl

The County Board's role is to make the connection between new development and the full price of the environmental impacts from the development and collect that price. The past policy of allowing development in an attempt to raise money to catch up with already created problems from previous development must not be allowed to continue.

Flooding

I endorse the efforts of the Stormwater Management Commission and support its mission to address flood problems. I endorse best management practices, increased wetland development, stream-bank stabilization and similar strategies.

Swapping FPD Lands

Forest Preserve officials would have to demonstrate the environmental benefit of each proposal.

The Truth About Ozone

by Evan Craig

Air in our region was hazardous to your health 18 times last summer due to high levels of ground level ozone, up from seven in '98, and none in '97. You were advised to stay inside, and to avoid driving or mowing. Children were at higher risk. Ironically, by riding my bike to work to avoid adding to the problem, I arrived there dizzy from the noxious air. If you are asthmatic, or decided to breathe deeply, you probably suffered the consequences. If so, you might be surprised to learn that the Environmental Protection Agency allows higher emissions of ozone precursors here than is allowed in the rest of the country.

"Political Chemistry" has been used to pass our entire region through a chemical loophole

"Political Chemistry," a product of the reaction between politics and regulators, has been used to pass our entire region through a chemical loophole. According to the chemistry taught in most colleges, nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOC's) combine in the presence of sunlight to form ozone (O_3), also known as "smog." Accordingly, the EPA tightly regulates the release of NO_x and VOC's. But here, chemists say that most combustion powered machines produce the simplest oxide of nitrogen, NO. They argue that NO tends to react, not only with your mucous membranes, but also with ozone (O_3) to become NO_x , and in the process, converts some toxic ozone back to beneficial oxygen (O_2). Suddenly, because this immediate effect is to eliminate some ozone, combustion is seen not as the cause of ozone, but as the solution to it.

With their political chemistry in hand, the Illinois EPA successfully argued for looser NO_x emission standards, and obtained a paradoxical " NO_x waiver" for our region, on the grounds that we need that NO to help reduce our ozone. Never mind the fact that the NO_x ultimately creates *even more* ground level ozone downstream, forcing parts of Wisconsin and

Michigan to exceed safe ozone levels, and drawing legal challenges from eastern states. Never mind that, although the chemistry is true, the ozone scavenging tends to occur too far downwind to help. Until now...

They've pointed the finger at forest preserves which release VOC's from rotting leaves

Political chemistry has been particularly attractive recently to the Indeck peaker power plant company staff. They have been able to apply for and get "minor source" construction permits from the IEPA to release higher NO_x , even during the summer ozone months, thanks to the waiver (250 ton/year vs. 25 ton/year). Without the waiver, they would be required to secure reductions from other NO_x sources. They have also asserted that VOC's are the only problem (a statement also to be heard from tollway officials). They've even pointed the finger at forest preserves, which release VOC's from rotting leaves. Less than half true. Even if VOC's were the entire problem, they give misleading testimony about their own VOC emissions, and neglect to point out that digging up topsoil and prairies for power plants (and roads) releases VOC's from the soil.

This year the federal EPA, charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Clean Air Act, has insisted that IEPA get serious about reducing ozone. They are threatening to withhold federal funding for roads. IEPA says that they have a plan to be in compliance, but not until 2007. Meanwhile, the waiver remains in place, permits for power plants continue to be approved — at public expense, traffic grows, and higher polluting SUV's continue to rise in

popularity. To make matters worse, a chemical crutch to reduce VOC emissions, the gas additive MTBE, has recently been exposed as a potent ground water contaminant.

It might seem that the IEPA is to blame for our air pollution, but that would be less than half true. The IEPA is only the technical advisory and enforcement agency for our state government. This is the same state government that voted overwhelmingly to do nothing to address Global Warming in spite of the 1995 heat wave. A survey conducted by US Representative John Porter revealed that 85% of respondents think we should be taking action to stop Global Warming. The Illinois General Assembly also voted to pass deregulation of the electricity economy without strengthening environmental regulations on the siting of new plants, and still refuse to "get involved."

Your state legislator needs to hear from you!

Your state legislator needs to hear that it's time to put away their political chemistry sets, and reign in sources of air pollution. You can also ask your village government to place additional requirements on polluters to protect your local environment, and IEPA Director Tom Skinner recently encouraged this at a Lake County board meeting. With the passage of electricity deregulation, a much greater burden has been placed on municipalities, and even when the IEPA grants a pollution permit, your town can still take additional measures. Contact W&W for help with model ordinances to take to your village board.



Ask your State Senator to support Tollway Fair Share Legislation HB4525...

This requires new tollways to defray at least 75% of their cost through 25 years of their tolls!

Power plants threaten our environment

The Libertyville proposal is only one of many, and not the largest threatening our air, water, and open space. There were proposals from 30 companies for new power plants with a total of 100 turbines, totaling over 16,000 MW (the Zion nukes were 2,000 MW) of new generating capacity as of December 1, 1999 in Illinois. As of January 11, 2000 there are 40 companies. We are working against the clock to get the legislature to address the need for regional planning and siting. We need you to call your Governor and your legislator and ask for Illinois EPA to play a greater role. We think that:

- proposed operation of these plants should not be permitted to overdraw or deplete our water resources (see Groundwater Protection on page 7).
- permitting agencies should consider the total multiple impacts of many plants, not just one at a time, and should require a full EIS in cooperation with IDNR.
- the conservation and efficiency programs we've won are potent and should be given a chance before we surrender our open space and our communities to new power plants. This should be a primary consideration in regional energy planning, and should be addressed by a Public Service Committee appointed by the Governor.
- construction of these plants should not destroy or degrade habitat for rare, threatened or endangered species.
- these plants should not be sited near preserved natural areas where the noise, light, and air pollution they generate will disturb the wildlife, or the human visitors. If built at all, new power plants should be located in urban brown-fields and existing industrial areas, close to the areas where the electricity would be used.
- new plants should be required to make available the waste heat they generate (otherwise accounting for more than 50% of the energy they use) for companion industries and space heating, in order to reach high efficiency standards.
- these plants should not be permitted without an established local need. Connection to the electric power line "grid" will allow energy generated here to be transmitted beyond Illinois. Because our power lines are relatively new, our region could become an electricity generation center.
- all power plants should be placed on a schedule to comply with modern standards of the Clean Air Act, especially the coal plants grandfathered when the Act became law.

Contact Governor George Ryan:
207 Statehouse, Springfield, IL 62706
Phone: 217-782-0244 Fax: 217-524-4049

Electricity generation accounts for half of the air pollution in Illinois, and most of it is unnecessary. Coal fired plants, with their grandfathered exemptions to the Clean Air Act, are still polluting nearly three decades later, and are the major culprits. But even if they continue to flout our environmental laws, there is much we can do to reduce the pollution they generate. We waste much of the energy generated, and upgrading our major appliances (air conditioners, refrigerators, lights etc.) could cut our electric bills, and the associated pollution, by at least 25%. Since electric utilities deregulated in Illinois, we've helped fight for and win programs to encourage and fund conservation and efficiency (including \$250M from ComEd in 1999!). Efficiency measures alone could easily erase the "need" cited by the companies proposing to build new power plants in our region. You can do it yourself, right away, and it will save you money. Discover which local retailers are participating in EPA's Energy Star program, and how the program even provides attractive financing for heating and cooling systems by calling 1-888-STAR-YES, or visiting the W&W website.

Everything you wanted to know about the Libertyville Peaker Plant, but Indeck was afraid to tell you

There will be serious public health and ecological consequences if they built this plant. Here are the details:

Health and Pollution Issues

☞ This plant will release more than 300 tons of regulated pollutants into the air we breath. This includes 173 tons of smog-forming NOx (nitrous oxides), 105 tons of poisonous CO (carbon monoxide), 20 tons of choking PM10 (particulate matter), and 10 tons of acid SO2 (sulfur dioxide). Indeck has not provided any sort of study on what these pollutants will do to the health of the hundreds of thousands of people downwind from the plant during the most smog-intensive days of summer.

☞ Indeck also failed to study the "cumulative effect" on public health of existing air-pollution levels combined with the plant's higher releases of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. And what about the combined emissions from a nearby landfill and auto exhaust on the heavily traveled Routes 45, 137 and 83? There was also a question whether the 70-foot-tall Waste Management landfill would trap pollutants from the peaker plant in a "downwash effect." Indeck has provided no answers to these questions.

☞ This type of "peaker" power plant uses huge turbines and operates them daily throughout the summer—up to 2,000 hours. The noise will be a dull roar within a quarter mile, and audible within three miles.

Ecology Issues

☞ Eighty percent of the plants presently on the site are native — 10 percent of them trees, 35 percent perennial forbs, and 14 percent perennial sedges. Will these flora survive? Indeck intends to excavate the site.

✎ An invaluable “carbon sink” that takes greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere will be lost. Here in the Prairie State, less than 1 percent of prairies survive. Considering the fact that prairies are the only ecosystem in our region capable of sequestering CO₂ and that the proposed plant will release 100,000 tons of global warming CO₂ into the air per 2,000 hours of operation, what percentage of the existing prairie will be preserved? We don’t know. Indeck hasn’t provided the answer.

✎ Of the 57 native species inventoried on the site, several are threatened or have conservative value. According to Indeck’s wetlands-destruction permit application, the company intends both to destroy the wetlands and to jeopardize these plants by attempting to relocate them.

Energy Issues

✎ Indeck did not say what the principal sources of new energy demand are, nor do they take into account major new programs that will significantly reduce that demand.

✎ Indeck failed to provide any information on what impact specific energy-conservation measures would have in reducing demand. For example, consumers can save money by upgrading their air conditioners to units that use 30 percent less electricity. A \$250 million Efficiency Trust Fund will be available later in 2000 to help make it happen.

✎ What would happen if Lake County energy consumers were simply able to buy their energy “off the grid” from places outside of Lake County, which will be possible during deregulation? Indeck was unclear on this issue, even stating that their energy would not go outside Lake County, which is highly disputed by electrical engineers.

Secret Lake Zurich school plans to disrupt watershed

Thirty years ago, a developer started to build homes on a marsh. He dug a 15 ft. deep pond and lined it with clay. He then built a system of drain tiles between wetlands until it reached a large wetland and stream about two miles from the site. After this damage to the environment was done, no one was interested and the project went bankrupt.

About 15 years ago several builders took an interest in the site and developed the Lochanora subdivision. Copperfield subdivision was developed on the adjacent land and its wetlands and ponds are part of the original drainage system. Homes were built on 1 to 6 acre lots with 100’s of new trees and landscaping.

Many species of migrating ducks, geese and other waterfowl now fly through and stop at the pond. The land around the pond is home to muskrats, rabbits, ground hogs and numerous wildlife. Each day several great blue and white herons, ducks and the geese visit the pond. The pond has become home to many fish, turtles, frogs and considerable plant and wildlife.

The adjacent farmland quickly rises to a hill which is more than 60 ft above the pond and more than 45 acres of watershed fill the pond. The heavy spring rains quickly run downhill and, eventually as the land becomes saturated, the pond overflows the banks, the water level increases up to 3-ft and its shoreline expands outward up to 60-ft from the pond. The pond water quickly runs through the drain tiles to Copperfield’s wetlands. Other watersheds from the farm also fill Copperfield’s wetlands.

The farmland is zoned for 2-acre home sites and is a poor choice for development with its sloping ground, wetlands and low strength bearing organic soil in the lowlands. However, in November the Lake Zurich School Board purchased the land. Their ini-

tial plan to put school buildings on the hill was acceptable to engineers. The school board did not ask the engineers to consider a possible future high school on the remaining low and wetlands with organic soil 5 to 13 feet deep. But information has leaked that this is their eventual intent. The organic soil would have to be removed and backfilled with compacted soil for building. The compacted soil will not absorb the spring rains and the high school development will cover * of the pond’s watershed.

With only 20 acres of development shown on the 103 acres, the school board could eventually expand their plans to include building the high school, without additional citizen input. The required mass grading will greatly affect the watershed, increased run off, motor oils, road salt and huge quantities of athletic field fertilizer will reach this pond and all the wetlands downstream.

Can the environment heal itself from this new assault or will the board be friendly to the environment?

John Sowizal, a 12 year Lochanora resident

New W&W “ExCom” Member

We are pleased to have John Chambers serving on our Executive Committee. John lives in Libertyville, and will be our new Membership Chair. He is eager to serve in ways that can make a difference, and is helping to organize our campaign for responsible environmental regulation of peaker power plants.

John fills a vacancy left by Jeanne Freed, who was a valuable contributor for programs and outings. We salute her decision to move back closer to her teaching job in Chicago where she was previously commuting.

Density, Good or Bad?

Few of us would look at a woods, a wetland, or prairie, and think, "what a great place for a city." However, many with deep-felt appreciation for the solitude of our natural environment are much more likely to think, "what a wonderful setting for a secluded home."

Unfortunately, trying to preserve the character of open space by building sparsely on it ignores many of the needs of modern residents. Private sanctuaries of tranquillity carved out of the wilderness do not satisfy our needs for goods, services, community, education, and employment. This is even more true of the thousands of single-family homes that continue to spring up in low-density suburban developments to accept tens of thousands of new residents.

These spread-out populations rely on cars and extended infrastructure to reconnect them to the missing elements of a city. The inability of our public infrastructure to support this inefficient and self-defeating style of development is resulting in a crisis which we recognize as *Sprawl*: road congestion, parking lots, air pollution, water restrictions, and dwindling open space.

High density housing can solve Sprawl problems

On the other hand, few of us would look at life in a city as a good way to preserve our access to local wilderness. Becoming trapped in a degraded urban environment is the reality driving much of the exodus to the suburbs. Nevertheless, high-density housing mingled with employment, retail, and public facilities solves many of the problems of Sprawl. Most of the priority needs of residents can be met by walking. Infrastructure demands and environmental impacts are slashed. (See links to studies on W&W website.) Easy access to more riders makes frequent mass transportation schedules economical.

Is there a happy medium?

Is there a happy-medium solution between these two extremes? Under pressure to accept an increasing population, the past decade has spawned new trends in housing development by bold developers that *do* envision "cities" on open space. Some of these developments seek to preserve open land by clustering homes on smaller parts of a larger planned development. Unfortunately, insufficient density, poor proximity of homes to mass transit, and lack of mixed development makes even these developments over-dependent on car transportation. While an improvement, they represent a new type of *Politically Correct Sprawl*.

It remains to be seen whether we will have the wisdom to put an end to this unsustainable pattern. Presently, sprawling development continues unchecked, luring urban refugees, and challenging road builders, school districts, and public utilities try to meet the spiraling demand.

The county's proposed Unified Development Ordinance perpetuates Sprawl

Lake County's proposed Unified Development Ordinance unfortunately perpetuates this tragic mistake, sanctioning low- to medium-density spread out over our remaining open space, while also failing to provide incentives for mixed development,

or proximity of compact development to mass transportation.

The Ahwanee Principles

A recipe for achieving the efficiencies and amenities of city life while preserving rural access can be found in the Ahwanee Principles. In a couple of pages, these principals present community, regional, and implementation ideals to create an alternative to Sprawl. (See this article on the W&W website for a link to the Ahwanee Principals.)

The principals call for compact, high-density mixed development with well-defined edges, such as agricultural greenbelts or wildlife corridors, permanently protected from development. They focus on preserving easy access to intact adjacent open space.

Some ideas

If you are considering a move, ask your realtor for a place where you can walk to the store, your work, and the train, and get to the forest preserves by bike.

If you're fed up with Sprawl, ask your county board member and your village trustees for functional communities that embrace the Ahwanee Principals.

Interested in becoming more involved on this vital issue? We'd like to know what you think. E-mail (auk@interaccess.com) or phone the Group Chair at 680-6437.

Global Warming Activist Training

Global Warming is a worsening problem, and the early warning signs, including the 1995 heat wave, are documented on a new map at <http://www.climatehotmap.org/>

Sierra Club is holding Global Warming activist training in Washington DC on May 5-7, 2000 to help members do something about it. All expenses are paid by the Club. Contact the Group Chair to apply.

Groundwater Legislation

The new power plants threatening our region will use water — lots of it. The plant proposed for Island Lake by KN called for 5 million gallons per day (MGPD) to be drawn from the deep aquifer. Had that plant not been turned down by the village, it would have dropped existing wells by 50 to 180 feet within a 6 mile radius. The aquifer's sustainable capacity is thought to be around 65 MGPD, and usage is presently at 70 MGPD.

A more recent proposal for a plant in Zion, quashed for now by vigilant volunteers, would have placed similar demands there.

The Island Lake plant was defeated thanks to the untiring work of member Bob Wargaski. He gathered as much information as possible about these plants, attracted Sierra Club and other groups to this cause, lobbied his local, county, and state representatives, and supplied information to the media.

Lake County Board member Bonnie Carter has been a strong ally on this issue, and has been instrumental in efforts to propose regional groundwater management legislation.

HB3034, the Groundwater Quantity Management, has been sponsored in the Illinois Assembly by Representative Jack Franks, and the Ryan administration is supporting this effort. It gives power to regulate use of their groundwater to select counties, in coordination with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Residential users are exempted. The Illinois Assembly is in session now.

Please call the Governor (217-782-0244), and your Representative (217-782-2000), and ask for their support this session.

Illustrator needed...
Please call 680-6437!

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Contributions, gifts or dues 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.



Membership Categories

Introductory	\$25	
Regular	\$35	\$43
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**Cast your Vote for the Environment March 21—
See front page for details!**

Woods & Wetlands Calendar

See website for meetings and outing updates:
www.sierraclub.org/chapters/il/w&w

MONTHLY PLANNING MEETINGS are held the 1st Wednesday of every month at the Liberty Restaurant in Libertyville just South of Rtes. 21 and 176. See website for map to meeting. All members are welcome.

MONTHLY PUBLIC MEETINGS are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:15 pm.

DIRECTIONS TO MONTHLY PROGRAM MEETINGS: Vernon Hills Village Hall, 290 Evergreen Dr.; (847)367-3700. From Libertyville, go south on Butterfield to end; left on Rt. 45; right on Evergreen (1st light); left into golf course parking lot. Cross street to Village Hall. See website for map to meeting.

Woods & Wetlands needs your old laptop!