


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

WOODS & WETLANDS News



W&W elections

The W&W Executive Committee (ExCom) is made up of five members who serve two-year terms. They decide political endorsements, plan programs, interact with the Illinois Chapter and National Sierra Club, and choose projects and issues for W&W Group involvement. Two of the five positions are up now for election. Your ballots are 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 ballots, and send them in.

Edith Sieg led the successful opposition to an inappropriate housing development in Libertyville. Her efforts earned her inclusion in the Lake County Conservation Alliance (LCCA) Hall of Fame. In Antioch she contributed her expertise to help prevent an undesirable annexation. As a member of the W&W Executive Committee, Edith will continue to share her expertise to help members be more effective stewards of the environment in their communities.

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.

John Chambers is a frequent user of Lake County open spaces, working at the local level to conserve open space, wetlands, and the air and water resources of Lake County, and Libertyville, where he resides. "Sustainable development, efficient transportation alternatives, and conservation of resources are essential to maintain the quality of life in Lake County," he writes. "I may not be able to change the world, but I think I can, with the cooperation of like-minded people, help to maintain the quality of life in Lake County."

How to vote:

- ✗ Each W&W Sierra Club member may send one ballot.
- ✗ Make a ballot by writing the names of up to two candidates of your choice on a piece of paper.
- ✗ Do not identify yourself on your ballot.
- ✗ Place the ballots of up to three family members in an envelope.
- ✗ Put your return address on the envelope. (Use the same address that appears on your Sierra magazine.)
- ✗ On the outside of the envelope, identify each member who has included a ballot.
- ✗ Seal, stamp and send the envelope to: W&W Elections, PO Box 5012, Vernon Hills, IL 60061. The envelope must be postmarked by January 18.

Your editor dedicates this issue of W & W to Phil Smith, our good friend who died last year. Though he was gravely ill, Phil did the proofreading on the last issue, turning it into a work of which even our high school English teachers would approve. Issue after issue, his goal was to help us put out the best possible newsletter with the least possible pain for all involved—and he succeeded. Phil was a kind and good person. We'll miss his gentle inspiration.

Join our free e-mail lists!

Join the W&W group's e-mail lists! The **ALERTS** list sends infrequent timely posts from the Group Chair (only), primarily on local issues. If you subscribe you will learn about them in time to help. The **ISSUES** list allows you to share in a discussion with other W&Wers.

To sign up, go to lists.sierra-club.org/archives, click on IL-WWG-ALERTS and IL-WWG-ISSUES, and then Join the list.

We do not share e-mail address lists, and you can remove yourself from either list at any time.

Fremont Open Space gets our support

Fremont Township is rich with wetlands and open space, ringed by municipalities whose planning districts overlap into its center. Its western municipalities are budding, the eastern ones are expanding, and sprawl is ramping up. A new open space district there will save threatened wildlife habitat, and also create strategic boundaries to limit sprawl.

There are other excellent reasons for a new township open space district. **Probably the most popular reason is that it saves money.**

New development means more residents, and more expensive schools, roads, sewers, and other facilities that will rapidly exceed the \$10M sought for open space. **These costs are not covered by developers or new residents; they fall on existing residents.**

An enthusiastic bunch of Fremont Township volunteers have already been hard at work writing an open space plan, and getting **TWO questions placed on the spring ballot to create and fund a NEW open space district.**

The first question will create the district, giving it the authority to raise money and buy land from willing sellers. The second question will authorize bonds to generate \$10,000,000. These funds will be leveraged to preserve as much as 1,000 acres of those identified in the plan. Both questions need the support of Fremont voters for this to happen.

The Fremont Open Space Committee, lead by Raine Ray (whose farm recently became a new Lake County Forest Preserve acquisition!), asked W&W for support. Besides asking our own members for your vote, we need to convince enough of the township's 14,000 voters that the plan is crucial to protect the beauty and character of the region. Mailings to these voters are expensive, and the Fremont For Open Space campaign will need to do several to make sure that the message gets through.

Your W&W Executive Committee voted to endorse the campaign, and contribute \$1,000 from our limited funds to support one informational mailing to Fremont residents. We then sent our delegate to the IL Chapter Executive Committee with a request for matching grants from both the Land Acquisition and Sprawl Campaigns. This is an unusually large request, but the Committee recognized the significance of starting a new open space district, and came through! We now have \$3,000, and that should cover the cost of our mailing. In addition, our editor has gallantly offered to donate her talent to do the layout.

A few of the people working on the Fremont For Open Space Campaign are Sierra Club members, and there is room for more who want to help, from simple things like sending your neighbors postcards and giving money, to making phone calls, distributing literature, leading rallies, hosting a presentation, and putting out signs. We're calling our members to ask for support, but don't wait. Call or e-mail to volunteer, or send a check to Fremont For Open Space, P.O. Box 711, Mundelein, Illinois 60060.

Here are the Goals and Priorities from the Fremont Open Space Plan:

- ✦ Create an Open Space District within Fremont Township
- ✦ Acquire land and/or development rights from willing sellers
- ✦ Prohibit the use of condemnation as part of the Fremont Township Open Space Plan
- ✦ Complement Comprehensive Plans of the numerous municipalities, Park Districts, and Forest Preserves throughout the Township
- ✦ Preserve the rural character of the Township from impacts of development
- ✦ Create large contiguous open space areas in Fremont Township
- ✦ Facilitate coordinated cooperation

between Fremont Township and the municipalities within the Township for the preservation of open space

- ✦ Connect existing open space using trails and other methods
- ✦ Maintain sensitive areas, including all natural resources
- ✦ Preserve habitat to sustain indigenous flora and fauna
- ✦ Educate the public regarding the importance of open space and the process of acquiring land
- ✦ Allow current use and character of the land to determine the future land use as part of the Fremont Open Space District
- ✦ Preserve the agricultural heritage of Fremont Township
- ✦ Preserve historical properties of Fremont Township
- ✦ Accept conservation easements
- ✦ Purchase development rights
- ✦ Identify and seek funding opportunities
- ✦ Preserve and protect the quality of life and the character of Fremont Township
- ✦ Limit the use of financial resources primarily for land acquisition
- ✦ Create a Township Open Space Advisory and Management Committee

We can't rely solely on the county, which already has several preserves in the township, to favor Fremont over the rest of the county. Preserving open space is also good for existing businesses, because it helps preserve the character and economies of our communities, rather than encouraging more Wal-Marts in corn fields. Finally, it's crucial for wildlife, who rely on the wetlands for homes and food.

CHOOSE IT OR LOSE IT.

Please lend your hand to help this campaign succeed.

Sludge incinerator threatens Lake Michigan and Waukegan

by Group Chair

Nobody wants to think about sludge. Nobody wants to think about what's in it. We want whatever anybody puts down the drain to just disappear. We elect people to make it seem like that's what happens. They look for ways to try to make it disappear, and now they think they've found one.

The North Shore Sanitary District (NSSD) board wants to stop putting sludge in a landfill and start incinerating it. Your Club leaders think this is a big mistake. To be put in a landfill the sludge is stabilized with fly ash, and the toxic materials it contains are buried for another generation to deal with—far from perfect.

When sludge is incinerated, a plume releases persistent toxics into the air we breathe, and poisons the water we drink. The solids that won't burn are melted into glass pellets and sold for construction material, where more toxic metals can leach out into the residential environment. These are problems that will affect this generation as well as the next.

For these reasons, the Club has successfully fought against sludge incineration before, and the W&W ExCom voted to oppose this plant. We believe that there are methods that will remove more of the toxic materials, and return useful rather than toxic material to our environment.

The NSSD is applying to the Illinois Environment Protection Agency (IEPA) for a permit to pollute the air with a Minergy brand sludge melter. The IEPA has drafted a permit indicating their intent to allow its pollution! Then they invited comments from the public and held a hearing.

Sierra Club has brought together the actions of several regional environmental groups working on this threat and writing comments: Illinois Citizen Action, Lake County Conservation Alliance, and the Lake Michigan Federation.

Our member activists have found that the draft permit was very poorly written, and contains insufficient information about what is in the sludge and where it would go. They pointed out that a melter is subject to lower standards than an incinerator, and asked that the permit be rewritten with more accurate information. The IEPA refused to re-title the permit, and edited its requirements without a new public notification. We think this is too important a decision for anyone to be confused by language.

What the draft permit did say was reason enough for alarm. The Lake Michigan Federation, which has been working for years to reduce the amount of mercury already in Lake Michigan, wrote comments objecting to *any* additional mercury in the Lake.

This permit would allow 92 pounds of mercury per year to be released by the plant. Most of it would rain into Lake Michigan.

The North Shore Sanitary District serves businesses and residents in Lake County roughly between Rt. 94 and Lake Michigan, *our primary source of drinking water*. In addition to the mercury, the permit also allows the incinerator to release over a ton of VOCs and 85 tons/year of NO_x, which combine to make ground level ozone and smog. Also in the permit: 33 ton/year of SO_x, which, along with the NO_x, cause acid rain. On top of this are a couple tons each of PM (particulate matter) and CO (carbon monoxide) to irritate and poison the lungs.

We also think that construction of another toxic plant in an economically challenged neighborhood is unfair. One of our members has worked with the Club's Environmental Justice staff and submitted comments on behalf of ICA to defend the local community's rights.

Waukegan has made plans for renewal of the lakefront that we think hold great hope for revitalizing that city, and redirecting sprawl away from Lake County's open spaces.

Take Action!

IEPA Public Hearing

**January 24
7 pm to 10 pm
Waukegan High School
Brett Theater
2325 Brookside Avenue,
Waukegan**

**IEPA Land Permit
Comment Period
ends February 23, midnight
Bill Seltzer, Hearing Officer
Illinois Environmental
Protection Agency
1021 North Grand Ave. East
PO Box 19276
Springfield, Illinois
62794-9276
Telephone: (217) 782-5544
Fax: (217)782-9807
E-mail:
Bill.Seltzer@epa.state.il.us**

NSSD, a regionally elected body, has denied that it is accountable to Waukegan zoning ordinances, a position that Waukegan is presently challenging in a lawsuit.

The draft IEPA permit also fails to require that either the sludge entering the incinerator, or the plume leaving it be monitored for the amount of toxins present—depriving the public from ever exactly knowing the consequences of granting a permit. LCCA commented that the IEPA has failed to measure or model present pollution levels and wind patterns in Waukegan to be able to accurately predict where the emissions of this incinerator will go. And the permit does not restrict NSSD from bringing in sludge from outside its district to this incinerator, which they already want to expand.

With a little knowledge about a class of extremely potent organo-

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Incinerator

continued from previous page

chlorine carcinogens called dioxins, we submitted comments speculating that organics and chlorine in the sludge would likely form dioxins in the incineration process, and that their release should not be allowed. We were uncomfortable with speculation, and we decided to get some help. The Club has a task force working on the problem of sludge disposal, focussing on the hazards from applying raw sludge to farm fields.

The Sierra Club sludge task force referred us to a study of 208 similar cases in California which found dioxins were present in 80% of the cases (along with mercury, arsenic, lead, cadmium and other heavy metals).

We also found that dioxin readily forms from cooling incinerator flue gases, and that waste incineration accounts for 95% of dioxin in the environment. We learned that in November, an incinerator and ten surrounding farms were hastily closed down in France after dioxin was found in their herds at levels 24 times their limit. We also received a Sierra Club document, *Healthy Harbors, Safe Rivers*, about treating polluted sediments, sent to us by the Midwest office. It clearly described the Minergy melter, and warned of the likelihood of dioxin emissions from it.

Dioxin bio-accumulates in the fat of animals we eat: meat and fish. It accumulates in our fat, and is passed on through mothers' placenta and breast milk to babies.

"In humans, dioxins have been shown to cause cancer, weaken the immune system, and interfere with the endocrine system, which is responsible for making hormones needed to regulate bodily functions, including sexual development and fertility."

Because of the economic consequences of eliminating chlorine from use, the EPA report that will justify

this is being delayed (since September of 2000) and politically undermined. In the meantime, the National Institutes of Health listed dioxin as a "Known Human Carcinogen" in January 2001.

The Sierra Club task force has not yet made a recommendation for the proper treatment of sewage sludge. It has challenged another disposal method popular with our municipalities outside the NSSD: land application.

The toxic metals and compounds concentrated from sewage into sludge are persistent, and whether they build up in soil, or are washed into our lakes and streams, they pose an increasing threat to our food, water and communities when sludge is spread on to farms and fields.

"After ocean dumping was banned in 1989, the US faced a formidable problem: what to do with the estimated 10 to 15 million dry metric tons of sewage sludge produced annually. In 1993, the US EPA issued its land application rule, 40 CFR, Part 503: Standards for the Use and Disposal of Sewage Sludge. To make sludge spreading more acceptable, it was called "recycling" and sludge that met the US land application standards was called "biosolids". By identifying sludge as a fertilizer—rather than as a pollutant—it became exempt from several laws governing waste disposal. Current federal regulations have standards for only nine pollutants. These land application regulations are the least protective of any in the industrialized world."

The local groups working on this issue are investigating options that we feel are more promising than the Minergy incineration process. One possibility is a carefully controlled composting incubator sold by the Bedminster Corporation.

Composting alone does not address the problems of heavy metals (mercury, lead, arsenic, cadmium, etc.) and dioxins, so we are interested in their approach to removing these chemicals before the composted material is returned to farms or other

lands. "Although the Sierra Club supports the use of pathogen-free treated human waste as fertilizer, such a practice is only possible by separating the industrial waste stream from human waste. Sewage treatment plants are not designed to separate wastes and to produce fertilizer. They were designed to remove pollutants from the waste water. Many of these pollutants concentrate in the resultant sludges. As a result the exact composition of any sludge is unknown. Urban sludges are a highly complex, unpredictable biologically active mixture of organic material and human pathogens that can contain thousands of industrial waste products, including dozens of carcinogens, hormone disrupting chemicals, toxic metals, dioxins, radionuclides and other persistent bioaccumulative poisons. The Federal Clean Water Act defines sewage sludge as a pollutant."

Overcoming the difficulties of properly treating sludge is likely to remain a challenge, and better approximations will likely cost more money. Perhaps the most attractive approach, which is not even on the table at NSSD, is better source control.

Besides separating industrial from residential waste stream, we need to be more responsible for what we put down the drain (see box page 5).

The trustees of the North Shore Sanitary District approved the plan for an incinerator with insufficient public involvement. Two trustees, Hawn and Washington, reversed their position when they heard the public's concerns at the IEPA air pollution permit hearing. The others, John Paxton, James Swarthout and Joseph Pasquesi, seem determined to follow through. Even in the absence of an IEPA permit, they have ordered the Minergy equipment, and construction materials have begun arriving on the site next to Waukegan Harbor. Mark Hawn, in a letter to the editor, also revealed a back room deal to provide access to a site in Zion in exchange for political support of this incinerator. Without the deal Calpine was unable to build its hotly contested Newport power

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plant. NSSD has also agreed to lease lakeshore land to Kinder Morgan for a new peaker power plant. All of these moves reveal NSSD's intent to return the area to emission-central on the lakeshore.

We are happy that Paxton will be challenged in the spring primary by one of our own environmental activists, Verena Owen. She has worked diligently to improve emissions standards for new power plants and has regularly attended air pollution permit hearings to defend our air and water.

In a strange but welcome turn of events, the IEPA has requested NSSD apply for a land pollution permit in order to maintain its air permit application. We have grown accustomed to having the IEPA ignore our comments, and issue permit after permit for polluting peaker power plants. We are unsure whether our comments made a difference in this case, or if so, which ones. The land application will address delivery and onsite storage of sludge from other NSSD facilities, re-examine vitrification of dried sludge, and limit the uses of the glass pellets.

We will release an e-mail alert when we know more facts. If you are not yet on our e-mail list, please see the box on the front page of this issue.



What you can do today

Chlorine in bleach, dishwashing detergent, bleached toilet paper and other household products can be avoided—read the ingredients. Broken thermometers and mercury thermostats are the greatest sources of residential mercury in sludge. These should be turned in at an EPA or SWALCO sponsored collection day in the spring or fall, and replaced with electronic equivalents. SWALCO is building a permanent collection facility in Gurnee for solvents, oils, paints, pesticides (and mercury!) which should never be dumped down the drain.

Sun Lake Forest Preserve restoration attractions

by Mike Quinn, Volunteer Co-Chair for the Sun Lake Restoration Committee

Your Woods and Wetlands Group is now offering a **free, one year subscription** to the beautiful and informative *Chicago Wilderness Magazine* to the next 10 volunteers to help out at a Sun Lake Forest Preserve Restoration Day. The magazine is the publication for an alliance of 136 public and private organizations working together for the benefit of our local environment.

On March 9 from 9 am to noon, we will have a Buckthorn Bonfire! Bring a buckthorn branch from your neighborhood to add to the pyre! See Outings in this newsletter.

Want to help out from home? Adopt a bur oak tree! Your \$25 will be used to hire helpers to liberate your tree from invasive buckthorn. We'll document our progress with pictures of your adopted tree, and place your initials on our Sun Lake Stewardship website next to them. We'll use GPS to locate each tree (so no marks will be made on the trees) and we'll send you your tree's coordinates in an e-mail. Write your check to Sierra Club, note "SLRC Oaks" and your e-mail address on it, and send it to POB 5012, Vernon Hills, 60061. Our yearly goal is 100 adoptions.

Our **volunteer stewardship days** are on the second Saturday of each month, 9 am - noon—January 12, February 9, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8, etc.

Your W&W Group's outings and planning activities are fulfilling our Forest Preserve Partnership for Sun Lake Forest Preserve in northern Lake County.

Bring work gloves, hat, saw or branch clippers if you have any, as we are currently clearing invasive buckthorn from the perimeter of pristine Sun Lake and from the majestic oak savannas. Future plans include planting of wildflowers and native grasses, restoration of the natural hydrology, including wetland recreation. Local bird and animal populations will greatly benefit from this work and, of course, so will the people of Lake County. Please join in.

Directions to Sun Lake: N. on Deep Lake Rd. from 132; W. on Painted Lake Rd.; L. on Spring Farm Rd.; R. on Longwood Drive. Park in cul de sac and look for a friendly, scruffy group of wonderful people. For information, or to tell the group you're coming, please call Mike at 847/367-1267, or e-mail drngo11@aol.com.

W&W News On-line!

This newsletter and more information on each of the topics is on the web at illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/wwnews.html—*Tell your friends that's where you found out about sludge!*

Acorns, bogs & books

by Evan Craig

This fall, Alice Claypool of Lake Forest called the Hot-Line to report bushels of acorns dropping from her half acre of oak trees. She didn't want them to go to waste; could Sierra Club use them? We weren't ready to begin planting trees at Sun Lake FPD, so I suggested that she call Tom Smith, who runs the FPD volunteer stewardship program.

A few weeks later, I was invited by a new friend to attend the Volo Bog book club: **Of Bogs & Books**. The book for the December meeting was *The Trees In My Forest* by Bernd Heinrich. In the chapter he titled "Seeds and Seedlings" (surprisingly, not in the one he titled Acorns) was this paragraph that described what Alice had witnessed. Heinrich writes from the point of view of a tree trying to compete for a spot in a mature forest:

One problem with loading up the seeds with a large food store is that it invites predators to eat them. Another is that mobility can be low. To some extent, the seed predators have been exploited by oaks and beech trees to counteract the second problem. Blue jays and squirrels eat nuts, carrying off and planting the surplus they can't immediately eat. Most other seed predators are not so helpful. To have a surplus of seeds that will not be eaten, the tree generally produces no seeds for a few years — until all of its seed predators have starved or left. Then the tree suddenly puts out a giant crop that hopefully won't be completely devoured.

Heinrich goes on to document years when trees in his forest produced heavy nut crops. All the oaks seemed to act together. Is that what happened here this year?

Of Bogs & Books meets in the Volo Bog Natural Area Visitor Center on W. Brandenburg Rd. in Ingleside on the first Thursday of the month from 7 pm - 8:30 pm. For February, we're reading John Muir's *Travels in Alaska*. Call Stacy Miller at 815-344-1294 to let her know you're coming.

Route 53 Environmental Impact Statement misleading

by Group Chair

The Environmental Impact Statement is required to clearly present the environmental costs and social benefits and compare the extension of Rt. 53 with the no build alternative. IDOT and the Tollway have released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) through LCTIP, their Rt. 53 promotional campaign. Our reading reveals that they have failed to meet the requirement, and instead grossly misguided the project and the public. A legal review by ELPC (summarized in the right column) reveals that they have so distorted the facts that several sections will be *illegal* if not substantially amended for the final EIS.

It's important to understand the serious errors in the DEIS, but it's even more important to recognize that LCTIP is using it to mislead the public. Here's how the news reports summarized its conclusions:

Rt. 53 would damage a few more wetlands and a lot fewer homes and business; both 53 and the alternative would provide the same benefit.

If based on a legal EIS study they would have read:

Transportation needs support improved arterials and mass transit; low N-S travel demand do not merit huge environmental impacts of an unaffordable new highway in central Lake County.

To arrive at the wrong conclusion, LCTIP has:

- ✂ distorted public opinion data;
- ✂ miscalculated and deferred major environmental impact evaluations;

- ✂ omitted bus and rail from their iterative models;
- ✂ biased the outcome by using the Rt. 53 scenario as the benchmark;
- ✂ selected a DOA (St. Mary's Rd.) alternative for comparison;
- ✂ ignored E-W trips;
- ✂ ignored whether 53 is a freeway or tollway;
- ✂ grossly understated the cost of Rt. 53 beyond common sense;
- ✂ artificially limited its consideration of environmental impacts to the footprint of each alternative;
- ✂ included the baseline plan in both alternatives, and then made misleading impact comparisons of the alternatives with the baseline;
- ✂ ignored the quality of existing areas, grossly miscalculating the growth impacts caused by Rt. 53,
- ✂ used a simplistic, inadequate and misleading water quality impact analysis;
- ✂ failed to compare air pollution impacts, especially ozone;
- ✂ not demonstrated any special legally required effort to avoid impacting parks and recreation lands;
- ✂ omitted significant areas and natural resources impacted by Rt. 53 from their calculations of cumulative and secondary effects; and
- ✂ conducted Open Houses that do not satisfy the Public Hearing requirement.

ELPCs complete comments can be found at www.sierraclub.org/chapters/il/w&w; our comment letter appears on the next page.

Regarding the Rt. 53 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS):

The Woods & Wetlands Group of the Sierra Club represents the environmental concerns of 2300 members in NE Cook and Lake County. The DEIS is our chance to assess the damage that the Rt. 53 extension would cause, scrutinize whether it would provide the benefits promised, and weigh these against the baseline and alternative plans. We are concerned that serious flaws in this DEIS prevent us from doing so.

In releasing the DEIS, you (IDOT and the Toll Highway Authority) have presented baseline and transit improvements as insufficient, and asked us to choose between the Rt. 53 sprawl invitation, and to consider a plan that includes a ludicrous St. Mary's Road expansion as an alternative. We find this contemptuous. You show how this poor alternative impacts more homes and businesses than Rt. 53, and present Rt. 53's higher wetlands and agricultural impacts as a reasonable tradeoff. We find this misleading and unreasonable. You indicate that 53 would not relieve as much local traffic congestion. We find this an understatement.

We raise these specific problems with the DEIS:

- It assumes predominant N-S traffic patterns, ignores data calling for NW-SE improvements to access employment, and recommends wrong remedies to the wrong problem. The maps you present confirm the dense employment areas in the SE corner of the area. The Rt. 53 plan does not provide improved access to those jobs. This incorrect assumption invalidates the DEIS conclusions.
- It grossly understates the impacts of Rt. 53 to remote wetland systems by ignoring contiguous wetlands beyond the narrow corridor; and, by focusing on impacts to flowing streams, ignores the impact of runoff on sensitive isolated wetland and headwater ecosystems. Your questionable expectations that poor municipal stewardship of our region's wetlands will overshadow impacts from Rt. 53 should not relieve you from considering its impacts beyond the corridor.
- Inclusion of St. Mary's road in the "alternative" makes the detailed distinctions between impacted pristine wetland acres and degraded acres—which seem to favor 53—ridiculous. More ambitious transit proposals seem more appropriate to move commuters from more densely populated areas around this river and wetland-rich area to employment centers to the SE.
- The DEIS ignores and dismisses the future impacts of new highway sprawl, tallying land use impacts only within a half mile of the 53 corridor, and blaming "reasons other than transportation" for an expected loss of more than 90% (5,500 acres) of the open space presently there. The Rt. 53 extension has been an imaginary threat for decades. It is unreasonable to expect municipalities not to modify their zoning ordinances to reflect the actual presence of a new 6 lane limited access highway inside their boundaries, should that unlikely event actually occur.
- It dismisses long-term groundwater impacts without accounting for a significant fraction of the salt and other roadway pollutants, defers noise abatement issues until after approval, and is tragically incomplete in its evaluation of air pollution in a corridor that encroaches on homes and schools. These impacts likely contribute to findings that highway corridors can create cancer corridors.
- The baseline improvements are limited, unimaginative, overdue, and underrated, and additional transit improvements are only included in package deals with the poor road "choices." With such slow progress being made toward baseline improvements, we challenge whether it is realistic, and point out the irony—to call it the "No Build" scenario. For instance, dozens of simple intersection improvements could quickly and economically augment the baseline, but only two are indicated. Expanded use of our existing rail network could access additional areas, but only double tracking the WI Central is included. Badly needed RR overpasses are totally missing. There are many common sense remedies to our traffic problems that have been overlooked amid this grandiose and expensive tollway justification exercise.

The Rt. 53 extension would be onerously expensive (\$1.86 billion reported to the Governor), take huge toll or tax hikes to fund, and wouldn't be available for at least 10 years. There are better, cheaper, quicker solutions. Let's stop waiting for Rt. 53. Let's Get Moving!

Evan Craig
Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands Group Chair

Senate energy bill first priority in new year

First out of the chute this year, the U.S. Senate will be turning its attention to America's energy needs, with a critical vote on a Senate energy bill expected in mid-February.

The Senate energy debate will swirl around the bill introduced in December by Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) and chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.). The National Energy Security Bill, S. 1766, is a huge improvement over the plan proposed by President Bush and the bill passed by the House in August.

The Daschle bill is on the right track because it recognizes that our energy policy must protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other special places, plus help curb global warming and reduce America's oil dependence. The bill creates a strong framework to accomplish these key things, and move us to a cleaner, safer, more secure energy future.

However, some key elements have been left blank, to be filled in later. For example, the bill calls for improvements in automobile fuel economy, but doesn't say how much of an improvement should be made.

We need to make sure that there is a loud chorus of support for a Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard of 40 mpg for cars, light trucks and SUVs by 2010.

Another fill-in-the-blank deals with tax subsidies for new energy technologies. The bill doesn't say yet how much or which technologies and industries will benefit.

We need to make sure our tax dollars support clean, renewable technologies like solar and wind power, and don't subsidize nuclear power or so-called "clean coal," which is anything but.

The Senate bill calls for 10 percent of our electricity to be provided by new renewable energy sources by 2020, but studies by the Union of Concerned Scientists show that we can achieve 20 percent.

Sample letter

Support Cleaner, Safer, More Secure Energy Future

Dear Senator _____

The Senate's energy bill, introduced in December by Sens. Daschle and Bingaman, is a significant improvement to the backward-looking bill passed by the House. The Senate bill would increase federal research and development for energy efficiency to more than \$1 billion per year by 2006, and mandate higher efficiency for appliances. It also recognizes that a sound energy policy must protect special places like the Arctic Refuge and help curb global warming.

This bill is a strong framework. However, more is needed. The Senate bill requires that 10 percent of our electricity be provided by clean, renewable energy by 2020, but studies show that we can achieve 20 percent. It also calls for improved fuel economy and tax benefits for energy technologies, but does not yet specify how much. The Senate should require a CAFE standard of 40 mpg for cars, light trucks and SUVs by 2010, and should support clean renewable energy, not nuclear power or fossil fuels.

And please reject any amendments to drill the Arctic Refuge.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Or go to the Club's new Take Action Web site at <http://whistler.sierraclub.org/action/actionindex.jsp> and send an e-mail or fax alert to your senators.

The Perfect Gift ANY time of year! A Sierra Club Membership

Give the gift of Sierra Club Gift Membership. It's a wonderful way to let someone know you care, about them and the environment.
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Name _____

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Gift Recipient's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club

Mastercard Visa Exp Date ____/____

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
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Contributions, gifts and 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.

Mail to: 
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 52968, Boulder,
CO 80322-2968

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Invite a friend to join Sierra Club today

When you or your friend join Sierra Club, it helps make the Club stronger. When you do it using a W&W form, more of your membership contribution goes to W&W for local action. Give this invitation to your friends.

Dear Friend:

I belong to the Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands because it helps me understand, enjoy, and protect our environment. The Woods & Wetlands Group organizes members from Lake and NE Cook counties for local events, outings and actions. Membership includes the benefits of the national Club: Outings, Sierra magazine, and involvement with national issues. Visit their websites: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/> and you'll see what I mean. I hope you'll consider helping to protect our environment and become a member.

Outings

Join the Outings Committee

Join the committee to learn to lead outings, or just join the participant list. Enjoyment of our environment is one of our goals. The next meeting is January 26 at the Lake County Forest Preserve Museum, at Lakewood FPD on Fairfield and 176. We'll ski or hike, and then retreat to the museum to plan an outings calendar. Wilderness First Aid training available for leaders. Call Evan Craig at 847-680-6437.

Join an outing

Contact the leader listed with each outing to reserve a spot. Unless stated, no show 'n go's. We set limits on the number of participants and deadlines. Unless stated, fees cover only outing costs. Fees for day outings are collected at the trailhead, but reservations must be made by cut-off date. Fees for overnight outings are collected in advance, with at least 50% due with reservation. Cancellations after cut-off date can result in loss of deposit, to cover trip costs.

Bonfire!

Saturday, March 9, 9 am-noon
Sun Lake Stewardship, Lake Villa
Free!

Contact John Massman, 847-838-9440
or beritz@earthlink.net

Bring buckthorn sticks from your neighborhood to add to the fire, water and eye protection. Dress ruggedly. Loppers, saws, and pruning tools useful.

We'll burn one of the many piles of buckthorn cut by the volunteers in 2001 to celebrate success in our first year as Preservation Partners with the Lake County Forest Preserve District. Come learn and contribute to our vision for Sun Lake Forest Preserve, and participate in our stewardship. Directions: N on Deep Lake Rd from Rt. 132, west on Painted Lakes/Gelden Rd. for 200 ft, left on Spring Farm Rd. right on Longwood Dr. Park in cul de sac. Limited parking: Carpool.

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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.

Wetlands still in jeopardy

Unless we improve our local ordinances, wetlands in Lake County and across Illinois will continue to be lost. After losing 85% of Illinois' wetlands before passage of the Clean Water Act, allowing continuing losses will result in more of the kind of flood damage we saw last summer, and loss of more wildlife species. This must be stopped.

We are proud that our Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) and Lake County Board voted in August to quickly adopt local ordinances to protect "isolated" wetlands. Going forward, SMC will have jurisdiction over "isolated" wetlands, while the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) will continue to have jurisdiction over "navigable" waters. SMC's Joe Hmieleski, whose presentation was canceled last September, will present at our March 12 Public meeting on how this new arrangement is working.

The new ordinances are similar to the previous regulations suspended by the Supreme Court last January. Those regulations enforced by the USACOE were found by a National Academy of Sciences report last summer to be insufficient, resulting in a net loss of thousands of wetland acres since 1993. The new SMC ordinances will likely be insufficient as well.

This spring the Illinois Assembly Wetlands task force, headed by our trusted representative Karen May, will introduce legislation to protect isolated wetlands. This is especially important for the totally vulnerable wetlands outside of Lake County. We need to reinforce her effort to restore some protection for isolated wetlands across the state by calling on our own representatives. But we must realize that because we have more high quality wetlands than other Illinois counties, her efforts in Springfield are likely to be less successful than those of our own SMC. Rather than pin our hopes on her effort to improve wetlands protections in our territory, we

need to initiate and improve wetland protection ordinances at our own county and village levels, and make sure that Illinois does not overrule our freedom to do so.

In the new ordinances, SMC made a few improvements to the practices of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE). SMC was more concerned about where the water previously held by a doomed wetland will go. They decided to protect neighboring wetlands from inundation, a problem that continues to destroy wetland habitat in the jurisdiction of the USACOE. They also decided that wetlands to hold the displaced water should be re-created in the same watershed, rather than in a distant location where it cannot prevent the resulting flooding. SMC has also provided more safeguards for larger and higher quality wetlands.

On the whole however, the pro-development members of the SMC board chose to adopt ordinances that repeat the errors made by the USACOE for the past decade: automatic permits, and an unjustified over-reliance on mitigation. Rather than adopting zero or 5,000 square feet as recommended by their Technical Advisory Committee, they chose the USACOE's threshold of 1/4 acre for wetlands that may be filled without even a permit. Rather than respecting the uniqueness of our wetland ecosystems, they chose to continue allowing wetlands to be destroyed in one place, with the promise of a re-created wetland nearby. This is called mitigation, and in spite of significant advances in mitigation science, it is largely unproved and unsuccessful.

Of the 13 types of wetlands found in Lake County, only 3 were considered mitigatable by Gerould Wilhelm, a Morton Arboretum authority, in his 1991 paper on the subject. Isolated wetlands comprise over 5,000 acres, about 15% of those remaining in Lake County. Because of their isolation, they support more varied and unique ecosystems than those connect-

ed to our waterways. The other 10 types of wetlands here are comprised of colonies of species that defy successful relocation or re-creation.

Mitigation has become more successful because of better science, and it has also become more commercial. The wetland restoration companies, like the developers they serve, have their own lobbyists who voiced their support for more reliance on mitigation at the SMC hearings. And the ordinance reflects this. Under USACOE regulations, when a wetland is mitigated, the developer must re-create more wetlands than he fills, at a ratio of of 1.5:1 to 3:1. Although typically unsuccessful and ultimately insufficient, this is intended to compensate for the lost quality of the filled wetlands, as well as the historical and ongoing losses from automatic permits. However, SMC has decided to ignore these reasons, and reward a "certified" mitigation wetland with a 1:1 ratio. The combination of automatic permits and 1:1 mitigation portends a continued decline of wetlands. Instead of accepting USACOE ratios, and reducing them, SMC should set higher ratios, especially for unmitigatable wetland types.

The SMC ordinances set tougher requirements that developers should avoid higher quality wetlands, and they set a mitigation ratio (3:1) for filling them. But the quality criteria for earning even this protection is unrealistically high, and ignores mitigatability. Wetland quality is determined by cataloging a sample of plants in a wetland, and calculating an aggregate score of the quality of all the species found. Some species exist only in highly specialized conditions to which they have uniquely evolved, and these are given high floristic quality ratings. Other species are non-native or invasive, and are given low ratings. SMC has set floristic quality/mean-C indices, indicative of regional note worthiness, of 20/3.5 as

continued next page

Wetlands

continued from previous page

the criteria. These criteria should be lowered for non mitigatable wetlands. In addition, the buffers required in the ordinance to protect and enhance the recovery of these wetlands where they remain should no longer be allowed to contain detention ponds with no or low quality plants.

SMC and their Technical Advisory Board both meet regularly to consider improvements to the existing ordinances, and with state legislation approaching, now is an important time to express our resolve for these improvements. In addition, just as SMC seized the opportunity to adopt improved wetland ordinances, they have invited municipalities to adopt further improved local wetland ordinances. Perhaps the easiest way to do this is for a village or city to stipulate higher mitigation ratios and lower quality criteria to be used by in conjunction with an SMC wetland fill application.

W&W asked a few municipalities to adopt the resolution shown at right. At least one did, and forwarded it to the SMC. Take it to your trustees in this election season, and ask them to support it.

For more information, go to:

NAS:
<http://www.nap.edu/books/0309074320/html/>

USACOE:
http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/hot_topics/nrchottopic.htm

SMC:
<http://www.co.lake.il.us/smc/>

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS:

- Most wetlands across Lake County have already been drained or degraded, and;
- Wetlands provide recognized values, including
 - Critical habitat for many threatened and endangered species,
 - Cleansing of surface runoff water to protect our lakes and streams,
 - Groundwater recharge,
 - Flood prevention, and;
- Wetlands that have been lost need to be recovered for these inherent values; and
- Isolated wetlands that were protected by federal law until 2001
 - account for 5,000 acres, and 15% of Lake County's remaining wetlands, and
 - are now insufficiently protected by SMC, and;
- Past policies of "No Net Loss" and wetland mitigation is insufficient to protect high quality wetlands and restore more lost wetlands, and;
- Lake County Stormwater Management Commission is continually reviewing improvements to our isolated wetlands ordinances;

THEREFORE, we resolve that:

That Lake County Stormwater Management Commission and this municipality adopt more aggressive policies for protecting isolated wetlands and recovering lost wetlands, including;

- for non mitigatable isolated wetlands, a policy of "No Loss," or a minimum mitigation ratio of 6-to-1, and;
- for high quality isolated wetlands, a policy of "No Loss," or a minimum mitigation ratio of 4-to-1, and;
- for other isolated wetlands, a policy of "No Loss," or a minimum mitigation ratio of 2-to-1, and;
- any wetland with floristic indices of at least 15/3.0 to be considered high quality, and
- buffers areas to protect wetlands to be constructed free of detention ponds, with complimentary native plant species.

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

Group Meetings

Images, Sounds and Music of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

**Wednesday, February 6 7 pm Palatine High School
1111 N. Rohlwing Road, Palatine
Hosted by the NW Cook group**

This multimedia slide presentation, with photography by award winner Ken Madsen and music by Matthew Lien and Wildlands, tells the story of a 100 day, 1000 mile journey through the Arctic home of the Porcupine Caribou Herd to the Gwich'in village of Old Crow. A native of Old Crow will tell about their experiences living with the caribou, and why drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would devastate the Gwich'in way of life.

Alaskan Tongass and Chugach National Rain Forests

Tuesday, February 12 7:15 - 9:30 pm Vernon Hills

Most Americans have never heard of the Alaskan Rainforests. Sierra Club sent Linda Sullivan there last July to see their beauty, and if you've read her story, you know they stole her heart. Linda will show us her 21 day journey of discovery she spent boating, kayaking and hiking with native conservationists. She writes, "Alaskans are begging for your help and mine to pass the Alaska Rainforest Conservation Act and save these national treasures."

Wetlands Tuesday, March 12 7:15 - 9:30 pm Vernon Hills

On January 9, 2001 the Supreme Court forfeited the authority of federal agencies to protect isolated wetlands, jeopardizing over 5000 acres of Lake County wetlands. Joe Hmieleski, Wetland Specialist for Lake County's Stormwater Management Commission, will describe how their recently adopted ordinance restores protection for these wetlands. We will also discuss improvements for this new ordinance.

TBA Tuesday, April 9 7:15 - 9:30 pm Vernon Hills

Where Group Meetings are held

Vernon Hills Village Hall, 290 Evergreen Drive; (847)367-3700. From Libertyville, go south on Butterfield to end; left on Rt. 45; right on Evergreen (first light); left into golf course parking lot. Cross street to Village Hall. See website for map to meeting.

For meetings and outing updates see www.sierraclub.org/chapters/il/w&w

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Monthly Planning Meetings

All members are invited to the Group's Planning Meetings, now held at 6:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Caribou Coffee House, 725 N. Milwaukee Ave., Libertyville, 573-8271; near METRA station on Milwaukee Ave. (not the Vernon Hills Village Hall), in Libertyville.

Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands Group

www.sierraclub.org/chapters/il/w&w

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