



Woods & Wetlands News

Serving Lake and Northeastern Cook Counties

Rt. 120 Corridor Land Use Visioning Workshop

A "Development Opportunity"?

By Larry Marvet, Vice-Chair

We recently participated in the Route 120 Bypass "Corridor Land Use Visioning Workshop." Also called Belvidere Road, this east-west street occasionally has heavy traffic west of Grayslake, where it narrows to one lane each direction. Though many roads in the Chicagoland area see traffic congestion during some hours, including 8 laned I-94, traffic congestion in Grayslake is presented to the public as so horrendous that a new super-highway must be built from the Almond Marsh Forest Preserve just east of Grayslake to Singing Hills Forest Preserve near Volo.



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I've written for some time that this road building proposal is little more than an attempt to push Cook County sprawl into less developed Lake County. Take a look at the road map of Cook County suburbs and you'll see it crisscrossed with high speed roads—I-94, 294 and SR53 north-south; I-90, 290, 88 and 55 east-west. Compare that to Lake County, home to more endangered species and greater biodiversity than any Illinois county: only I-94 slices through our region.

So who is pushing for a Cook County-style east-west 120 highway? From the publicity, you'd think it was outraged commuters tired of congestion. In fact, it's the development community: this Route 120 workshop

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Workshop Opens Eyes

By Evan Craig, Chair

In addition to the philosophical implications, the Route 120 Bypass "Corridor Land Use Visioning Workshop" revealed some very real but unspoken misconceptions. It showed many of the changes the Rt. 120 Bypass portends for central Lake County that could happen if the citizens of Lake County let developers decide this for us.

When shown maps of the future that the new Bypass would bring, most saw it as far worse than what they have now. Some attended this workshop hoping for a quicker commute from their low cost country living to their Deerfield employment. Local town leaders there began to see changing local establishments to relieve the constriction in the present Rt. 120 arterial as a smaller sacrifice. Previously unthinkable, that change was mild in comparison to plans that would make their present communities unrecognizable. Many in the Hainesville area seemed to be seeing their zoning plans and the plans of their neighbor villages on the same map for the first time. The presenters repeatedly questioned whether the area could really support that much retail. Amid their chants for "no more residential," several local leaders voiced a need for zoning reform and "a smaller bite of the apple." And there was near consensus to preserve the Northbrook Gun Club's wetlands and Big Sag wetland bank area north of Campbell Airfield. Even though this Rt. 120 Bypass is its severed appendage, no one even mentioned the plainly visible undead corpse of the N-S Rt. 53 extension on the maps.

Widening Rt. 120 around Grays Lake, thought impossible by most, was revealed to impact directly only a handful of houses and a couple of businesses. The presenters showed that intersection improvements and road widening there are real options. But they focused more

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Woods and Wetlands Calendar

Wednesday, April 30th, 6:45 p.m.

General Meeting

Protecting the Peruvian Rainforest

David Meyer, President
Rainforest Conservation Fund
See next page.

Wednesday, May 28th, 6:45 p.m.

General Meeting

TBD

It's our last meeting before September, so don't miss it! Check illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet in April.

Conservation Meetings

Conservation meetings are held at 6:00 pm in advance of General Meetings. Members and guests welcome.

Directions

General Meetings are held at Vernon Area Library, 300 Olde Half Day Road in Lincolnshire. Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west from Milwaukee Ave (Rt 21), turn north (right) at the first stop light, then left into the Library parking lot. Maps and details are available at: illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet

June 13th-15th,

Outing

Canoe the Wisconsin River

Water levels permitting, we'll canoe through a Wildlife Area on the lower Wisconsin River and camp on a sandbar between Sauk City and Spring Green. We'll swim, and learn about the wildlife and water ecology.

Leader Evan Craig

847-680-6437

See

illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings/

Sierra Club Meetings

by Larry Marvet

Protecting the Peruvian Rainforest

David Meyer, President
Rainforest Conservation Fund
Wednesday, April 30, 2007, 6:45pm
Vernon Area Library, Lincolnshire

The Rainforest Conservation Fund (RCF) is an all volunteer organization founded by a small group of Chicagoland residents concerned about rainforest destruction. Since it's beginning in 1988, they've focused their efforts on Peru's one million acre Reserva Comunal Tamshiyacu Tahuayo (RCTT), home to the most diverse assembly of primate species on any protected land in the world.

Mr. Meyer will tell us how RCF works with the adjacent communities to limit destructive activities through alternative methods and industries. By protecting the Reserva, the Rainforest Conservation Fund is protecting numerous unique and endangered animals, including jaguar, pink river dolphin, harpy eagle, red uakari monkey, giant otter, and the giant anteater. 🐼

(Opportunity?, from page W1)
was chock full of maps labeled "development opportunities"--high density subdivisions, strip malls, big-box shopping centers and parking lots, wall-to-wall along the entire length of the new highway. Atlantic Coast Developers recently presented plans to Grayslake to build 80 acres of strip shopping on the 120 Bypass corridor--in advance of road approval!

Adding to these dishonest efforts to gain our approval and tax dollars (estimate about \$10 million per mile of superhighway, probably 10 miles long) are some sad facts. First, the highway and its construction will destroy the big heron rookery at the northern end of Almond Marsh Forest Preserve. Rt. 120 currently narrowly misses the rookery. (Next time you drive on 120 near Grayslake, you should be sure to look to your south and see these big birds flying back and forth from their nests to feed their chicks.)

Heading west from Almond Marsh, the highway would pierce the center of a 300 acre wetlands complex (including the Big Sag Wetlands Bank) just north of Campbell Airport. Many in the Hainseville area consider this beautiful land the natural jewel of their region, but the 120 Bypass will bisect and destroy most of it. Less obvious casualties, but perhaps more important, are the smaller natural areas, open vistas, two high quality streams, drinking water recharge soils and bird and animal communities that this road will pave over.

Beware of the pitch that the 120 Bypass will solve traffic congestion in our county. Understand that the real goal is "development opportunities" to turn Lake County into a clone of Cook County, interlaced with superhighways, filled with strip shopping centers, and still clogged with traffic. The best way to preserve the Lake County we love is by opposing new high speed roads like the proposed 120 Bypass. 🐼

New Ways to Protect Your Local Lake

by Evan Craig, Chair

There are two types of lakes and streams in our area: those already degraded by poor development practices, and those that will be unless we act soon. Luckily, part of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA), the Water Quality Act of 1987 (1987 WQA) is finally being rolled out this year, 2008, to help protect our lakes, and the streams that feed them.

Familiar rivers in our area, the Des Plaines, Fox and Chicago are formally classified as impaired waters, unsuitable for either fishing or swimming, as are most of our lakes (as we reported in issue #54). Many of our smaller streams are also degraded. Sadly, the native species that once lived in them were lost years ago, and without changes to existing drainage of their watersheds and upgraded sewage treatment plants, will likely never recover.

Some local lakes still support beautifully biodiverse native plant and fish communities, notably: Cedar, Cross, Deep, East and West Loon, Little Silver, Bangs, Sullivan, Wooster, Lilly, and Turner lakes. Native species in them can be protected, restored, or even introduced, as they were at Sanctuary Pond, if we improve their water quality. The streams that feed them are threatened, and need restoration and better protection. These include segments of Sequoit, Squaw, Mill, and the North branch of Nippersink Creek.

Our other lakes and streams can also be improved by reducing the load of pollutants that they regularly receive.

Of course, Lake Michigan also deserves a special mention. While its ecosystem has been severely altered, the importance of its water quality for drinking, swimming and fishing is overwhelmingly obvious. Yet the outdated stormwater systems of communities in its watershed east of Green Bay Rd. dump pollutants with every rain. Most of it is delivered directly through pipes and ditches. Kellogg Creek, the Dead River, Yeoman, Pettibone and Crosley Creeks, as well as the ravines (see Fort Sheridan in issue #51), receive storm water, and flow into Lake Michigan.

The CWA passed in 1972 includes standards to protect water quality, and requires polluters to use the best available technology to clean up our wastewater. These have been effective so far to reduce "point sources," and we have recently won major victories, in Wauconda for all of Illinois, and then in Antioch, to reduce the pollution coming from these sources. Unfortunately, these improvements alone are not enough to clean up the polluted waters they impact.

The 1987 WQA was passed because "non-point sources," like runoff from roads and lawns, was shown to cause significant water quality impairment. In a permit program called "MS4" (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems), it requires municipalities with storm sewer systems to follow six steps to reduce the

non-point pollution reaching our waters:

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Participation / Involvement
3. Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Control
5. Post-Construction Runoff Control
6. Pollution Prevention/ Good House-keeping.

I received a mailing from Mundelein, where I work, with a Citizen's Guide published by the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) describing the importance of Best Management Plans (BMPs) in protecting water quality. It said I should get the BMP for our property from the village, and make sure it was being followed. When I called, they said they didn't have them, and to call SMC. SMC didn't have them either. So I submitted a FOIA request to Mundelein to find out where the buck stops. The MS4 documents they provided revealed that most of their plans to comply with this program consisted of "Continue to comply with the countywide WDO (Watershed Development Ordinance)."

As presently written, the WDO manages stormwater *quantity*, not *quality*, and many on the SMC Board favor weakening it. As described on p. W3, the consequences of their laxness are real. We deserve much more from our villages, SMC, and IEPA.

So call up your village and SMC (847-918-5260), and ask for the BMP for your property. Then contact us. Let's not miss this opportunity to help our waters. 🐼

Lake County's Broken Water Protection System, Part 2

An Interview with Eric Roe, by Larry Marvet

... continued from issue #58 ...

See illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/wwnews

Lake County has the best remaining lakes, rivers, and streams in Illinois, and many of us live here because of this natural beauty. So protection of our waters should be a high priority, right? Maybe not. In Part 2 of our recent interview with volunteer activist Eric Roe, I learned that a straightforward municipal construction project flushed tons of debris into one of our most pristine lake systems. Part 1 explained how Antioch construction projects had caused pollution problems for many years and how, in the case of the Osmond Park construction there, Mr. Roe had notified authorities of a number of construction problems in November 2006. After months of stonewalling, it seemed like Lake County regulators would step in...

LM: So you notified Antioch in November 2006, then in February, Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) people visit the construction site for Osmond Sports Park and find the same problems you had notified them of?

ER: Yes, and this seemed to spur Antioch's mayor to write the SMC, promising to take all the proper precautions by the end of March.

LM: And did anyone ever take any action?

ER: We probably wouldn't be talking about this if they had done anything, but no, the promised activities never occurred, so in early April I followed procedures and filed a formal complaint with James Keim, Antioch's Certified Community Enforcement Officer (CCEO)—the person that Lake County delegates enforcement authority to—listing the screw-ups: no watershed development permit, no soil erosion and sediment control plan, no wetland submittal requirements, no storm water pollution prevention plan, no conditional approval / earth change approval, road built through wetlands, dredge and construction spoils stored on site.

LM: Did they, finally, take fast action?

ER: Again, no. And this time the CCEO immediately replied to my complaint saying, strangely, that there was no construction and to quit bothering him! His letter said, 1. construction for the project had not started yet, 2. the pro-

ject won't start until all required plans are in place, 3. there is no road through wetlands, and 4. there is a silt fence around any fill that might or might not be in the non-construction area. I should note that by this time they had put in a silt fence—but it was in the wrong place so couldn't stop water from flowing off the dirt and into the Creek.

LM: Let's fast-forward to this past August of 2007, a rainy month here. What



Osmond Sports Park looking north-east from discharge. Very turbid waters. 12:15PM 8/7/2007

happened to Sequoit Creek and why?

ER: During a few of the heavy rains, spoil and other soil material eroded from the site and washed through a high-quality wetlands then directly into Sequoit Creek, which feeds into Lake Marie and the chain of lakes. Millions if not billions of gallons of sediment-saturated water turned the Creek a chocolate color from the Osmond Park all the way to Lake Marie.

US Mail Slow, Switch to E-Mail

by Evan Craig

It's gotten so bad, it's on the evening news. We just can't count on having this newsletter delivered, and it regularly takes weeks. Meanwhile, the cost of postage just keeps going up.

Our solution? Sign up to get your newsletter by e-mail. It's fast, and it's free! We'll send you these same great stories and events, with better pictures and richer content - in time to respond and participate! To sign up, address an e-mail message to

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The reason for this massive pollution is that Antioch failed to use modern construction practices and to build the proper safeguards into this simple construction project. Lack of proper monitoring and the missing silt fence were probably the most flagrant errors. Moreover, officials had been warned many times by various people and organizations, that the site was a disaster waiting to happen. And it did.

LM: We see the photo, but can you describe the damage?

ER: The sediment clouds and discolor the waters limiting recreational uses. It also adversely impacts aquatic environments by accelerating plant growth, which depletes dissolved oxygen levels and stresses fish populations. If there are dangerous chemicals in the spoil (this project is adjacent to a Superfund site and some of the material may have been dredged from a contaminated stream) then the damage to the water and ecosystem can be magnified greatly.

LM: How is the City and County correcting this damage?

ER: Since the disaster in August, there has been improved management of the site, including silt fencing and better oversight of the construction practices at Osmond park. Adjacent wetlands received a tremendous amount of sediment-laden runoff, which has no doubt had a negative impact. Once the layer of sediment dries it will become like concrete and the wetlands will no longer be able to soak up and retain stormwater. This will lead to the potential for more flooding and less fil-

(Continued on page W4)

(Workshop Opens Eyes, from page W1) on a new Bypass. There were no good ways to place a new expressway within a mile of the existing Rt. 120 regional arterial, and connect or bridge it over the present road network. Ironically, the intersection improvements that we have sought for years are now delayed by this Rt. 120 Bypass development conquest. Let's Get Moving!

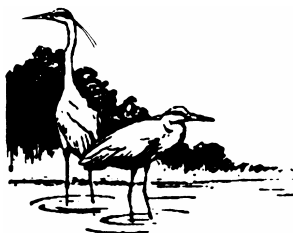
While the maps were illuminating, the presentation still suffered from a lobotomized comparison of the impacts of development vs. the impacts of the Bypass. The new residential, commercial and industrial development they showed carefully avoided wetlands, but they blithely placed a major new road corridor right through big sensitive wetlands and high quality streams – as though there would be no impact!

After listening to an hour and a half of "development opportunities," we asked them to give equal consideration to "preservation opportunities." We were repeatedly told that environmental factors would be fully considered at a later stage. When they urged us to address land use rather than environmental impacts, we reminded everyone that developing more than 10% of the land in a stream's watershed amounts to genocide against the native aquatic residents. The development they showed would ruin two high quality streams, Squaw Creek and Mill Creek, so we asked them to present a road plan based on land use with less than 10% roofs and roads instead.

The presentation also suffered from a contorted approach to transportation. While they mentioned that pedestrian access would be wise between new commercial and residential plans, they also presented merely as barriers the three rail lines that serve the area. Revealing a roads-only mindset that would have made Robert Moses proud, they presented rail, a strategic asset, as a public nuisance. We asked them to reflect on the price of gas and the ability of mass transit to relieve road congestion, and to return with plans to improve community access to commuter rail.

Not surprisingly, the Route 120 Planning Council's Environmental & Stormwater Impact Task Force has already come to the same conclusions that

many of those who attended did. In their Final Draft, they list



seven different land and water concerns that each "represents a feature that can not likely be designed around and may be a 'Potential Barrier' by itself" to the Bypass.

The question now is whether to keep spending the \$2M that Congresswoman Melissa Bean secured (promising a congestion cure-all) for engineering for the Bypass, rather than use our money to make the needed changes to the present Rt. 120 corridor.



(Water, continued from page W3)

tration. The village should clean up the mess they have caused. Unfortunately, so much damage has already been done, and I worry that over time, if we let our guard down, developers will return to dangerous habits and regulators will reduce their supervision.

LM: Do you have any suggestions to fix the system?

ER: When SMC delegates their authority to local municipalities, the local field inspectors can feel pressure to ease the monitoring and maintenance of environmental safeguards which are designed to limit construction-generated pollution. Inspectors need to be more empowered in their work, since they are often employed by towns under the control of politicians who receive considerable campaign contributions from the development community. When developers run into trouble, they go to politicians for help. The public needs assurance that politicians are not pressuring inspectors to ignore environmental violations.

LM: Thanks for telling us this story, Eric. I hope you continue your hard work.

ER: As a final word, Lake county has been blessed with many high-quality wetlands and open-water lakes. Wetlands are essential to countless creatures for their health and survival. In essence these creatures are our brethren on Earth, their health and ours are intertwined. If we are not careful with our natural resources they will soon be gone. Once lost, they will never return and mankind will ultimately suffer as a result. Let us see that this is not our fate.

Antioch Oil Slick

By Evan Craig and Eric Roe

A recent oil spill into the Fox Waterway reveals how vulnerable public waters are to runoff through storm sewers.

On Friday, February 29, a Coca-Cola truck ran into a powerline pole behind Piggly Wiggly and brought six oil-filled power transformers crashing to the ground. They split open releasing 200 of the 264 gallons of oil they contained onto the parking lot. It flowed down a storm grate connecting directly to Sequoit Creek. Efforts to recover it were showy, but ineffective.

We know that "transformer oil" commonly contained dangerous PCBs in the past, so we called the IEPA. They assured us that it was "mineral oil," not PCBs, and that proof of this was in their laboratory report. However, the response to our formal (FOIA) request contains no such laboratory analysis, only a blank checked on a hazmat report. The "mineral oil" used in transformers is not the kind sold at Piggly Wiggly, so a lab analysis is necessary either way to determine the health threat to our public waters. At this point we are convinced that information given by Antioch and the IEPA to assuage public concern was unsupported. The IEPA officer said the news accounts were misleading. Local ice fishermen posted pictures of the slick (shown left) that rose through their holes on Bluff Lake, downstream from Lake Marie.

All villages should stop inviting this kind of disaster by ending the use of unprotected storm grates. Rather than funnel stormwater into storm grates, runoff water should be filtered across lateral buffers planted with deep-rooted vegetation.

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