



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892



Woods & Wetlands News

Serving Lake and Northeastern Cook Counties

Winter

Submitted by Amy Maras

We have slipped in to the darkness of winter
Quietly, peacefully, perhaps without notice
The sun sits low on the horizon
Obeying an unseen gravitational pull

Ancient religions rooted in nature followed the sun
Holding silent vigil for its return
Waiting for the sun to reappear
with a sense of quiet concern and, perhaps, desperation
How powerful that must have been
as the solstice returned the sun

We are so far removed from the rhythms of nature
and have strayed so far from our earth centered realities
Let this be a time we reconnect to those rhythms,
wonder at the magic of winter,
and honor the sun's return
Winter has always been a time of quiet reflection, stillness and peace for me
I hope you will honor this as your own personal time of reflection.
Let go of what worries you
Find peace in your heart
Embrace the growth you have made over the past year
Trust Mother Earth will bring you exactly what you need and
continue to honor your commitment to help her heal

And, celebrate.
Light a candle to honor the sun's return
Watch a sunset with its fiery glow
reflected on the snow, turning it a pinkish orange
Walk in the falling snow
in the quiet of the night, listening to the crunch under your feet
Enjoy a glass of rich, red wine by a roaring fire
Make a toast to your favorite Sun God
Snuggle with your partner
under flannel sheets
Call in sick and enjoy your own personal snow day –
stay in your pj's and drink hot chocolate
Enjoy the birds at your feeder
Simmer a hearty vegetable soup on the stove
Lick an icicle
Catch a snowflake on your mitten and wonder
at the patterns contained within each flake
Make a snow angel
Be alive
Be aware
Enjoy winter
Enjoy all the seasons of your life

And know that fresh seedlings lie just under the surface of the earth
Waiting for the return of the sun. 🌱

Woods and Wetlands Calendar

Thursday, January 15th, 6:30 p.m.
Rt. 120, Waukegan Harbor, Nukes
Special meeting at CLC S. Campus,
1120 S. Milwaukee, Vernon Hills.
Call Mike Wagner for details or email:
ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org

Saturday, January 24th, 6:00 p.m.
Holiday Blues Party
Grayslake
See page W4.

Wednesday, Feb 18th, 6:45 p.m.
General Meeting
TBD
It's our first meeting since November,
so don't miss it! For topic, check
illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet

Wednesday, Mar 25th, 6:45 p.m.
General Meeting
TBD

Wednesday, April 15th, 6:45 p.m.
General Meeting
TBD
Trust us, it's always fascinating!

Conservation Meetings

Conservation meetings are held at
6:15 pm in advance of General Meet-
ings. 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 Li-
brary parking lot. Maps and details
are available at:
illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet

US Mail Slow - Switch to E-Mail

Yeah, it's a work of art, but we never know whether this W&W newsletter will get into the L&P and get to you in time to get involved. Meanwhile, the cost of postage just keeps going up.

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and then include the following commands in the body of the message :

SUBSCRIBE IL-WWG-ALERTS *firstname lastname*

(inserting your first name and last name).

Be sure to follow up with the town where you live, or your membership number.

If things don't improve, we might decide to stop printing and mailing, and rely solely on e-mail and our website to get the news to you. So don't miss out! Subscribe now.

Worried that you might have missed an issue? We post this newsletter on our website too. Bookmark our website:

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

Change For Our Environment

By Evan Craig, Chair

We stand at the threshold of a new society. A global energy spike, the reality of Global Warming, and a global recession have together revealed that the underpinnings of the consumerist economy of the 20th century are unsustainable in the 21st century. The choices we make over the next few months will decide whether we emerge more prepared for sustainable prosperity, or continue to indulge in short term opportunism and excess. Environmentalism, once considered marginal, has become mainstream. Where those before us fought to protect our ubiquitous environment from the carelessness of industry, we now see the human consequences of a destabilized global environment: more violent hurricanes, droughts, floods, and fires, and decimated forests and fisheries. We are no longer simply local guardians of our natural heritage, we are expected to help devise a new global culture.

Barack Obama's inauguration, likely to be an historical event itself, will officially begin a new era in US political leadership. Obama's biography spans the globe, and his presidency will imbue western politics with global awareness, much as the earthrise image has inspired generations of scientists. Unlike Bush, Obama supports global stewardship and a new green economy to preserve our planet's environment. Congress has been battered by the consequences of oil dependency and climate change, but still includes many naysayers. For the first time, the United States might be ready to rise to the challenge of Global Warming. Obama's vision is to

replace industries that cause global warming with those that prevent it, and invest in infrastructure for more efficient communities. Will he be able to convince a Congress raised on the mother's milk of corporate lobbyist donations to make these tough choices?

Obama won the election by creating a breathtaking grassroots constituency willing to contribute and participate (the envy of every environmental club!). Unlike candidates in the past who have won by raising money from industry and the rich and spending it on propaganda during the campaign, Obama can continue to use his huge grassroots network to rally sustained support for his proposals in Congress. So we should expect many of his policies to become law, and for another trillion taxpayer dollars to be spent on financial stimuli intended to shorten the recession and promote a green economy.

At a pivotal moment for our global environment, massive amounts of money that might be spent to redirect our culture onto a new sustainable path will likely be squandered in haste on bad projects that were unaffordable even in a boom economy. The money to recover from this recession will arrive very soon in 2009, and will come with an urgency to have it spent to provide new jobs. New projects that support a more sustainable economy will take longer to get started and, without courageous leadership, will likely be passed over.

In practice, the way the money will be spent will not be micromanaged by Obama. It will be up to our US represen-

tatives, our beleaguered Governor, our Illinois Assembly, our county commissioners, and our local village trustees. Unless we convince them otherwise, we should expect them to continue to support the same kind of inefficient development that we have watched consume our environment for the past three decades. Congress will continue to spend more money on roads than rail; more on oil, GM and big agriculture than on urban renewal and conservation; more on coal and nuclear than wind and solar. Our Governor, if he survives corruption charges, will again fail to approve a new capital budget with new transit and open space funding, and our IL Assembly will fail to pass home energy efficiency standards and CO2 tailpipe emission limits. The same Lake County Board that recently chose to spend all of the new mass transit sales taxes on roads will likely invest in more infrastructure to support more suburban sprawl, rather than new and better commuter rail. And our local governments will continue approving unwalkable development utterly dependent on cars - rather than inviting mixed use local communities; blocking urban density rather than enabling efficient transit; and approving big box houses that rely solely on gas and electricity rather than requiring passive solar designs. The Rt. 120 Bypass commission will remove its sheep's clothing and the Rt. 53 extension will get bundled with the billions promised for highway and bridge repair, much as the Rt. 355 exten-

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Trans Art Café

446 N Lake St.
Mundelein, Illinois
Transartcafe.com
847-566-0883



Trans-Art is an organic café, opened in 1999. We serve all our salads and sandwiches with the idea that everyone needs at least one meal a day with all their essential vitamins and some minerals to sustain a healthy life.

Open January for evening meetings only - call one week ahead.

February we will resume regular hours.

Great place for meeting and eating.

Your Highway Dollars at Work: A \$Billion 120 Bypass!

by Larry Marvet

You have to hand it to the so-called "Route 120 Corridor Planning Council," the pseudo-governmental organization whose apparent goal is to ram a multi lane superhighway through the heart of Lake County: at their latest open house on November 12, they unabashedly published a handout estimating the cost of their plan ("Alternate 5") as \$67.2 million per mile! Over the 14 mile corridor, that would cost taxpayers \$1 BILLION dollars!

Maybe all the billion and trillion dollar bailouts and war costs have dulled our appreciation for large sums of money. To put it in perspective, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service has an annual budget of \$1.2 billion; the total that the Lake County Board spends is only half a billion; and last, perhaps least nowadays, the Lake County Forest Preserves has a budget of \$134 million or only about one-eighth of a 120 Bypass!

Clearly, there are more needy places to put our money, but many will scream that traffic around Grayslake is horrendous. Well, at least during rush hour the traffic is heavy. That is, on certain stretches of roads at rush hour. Is this really in need of a billion dollar expressway?

I forgot to mention that the "Council" recently eliminated the low cost widening alternative. So what is really going on here?

The reality is that development interests are drooling over the less developed

and undeveloped parts of our county, itching to bulldoze trees and wetlands to build strip shopping centers and high density housing. With a fast east-west road in the center of the county, square miles of area become viable for White Hen, Wal-Mart and Exxon. This 120 bypass would connect most of the county's central area with north-south highway I-95. Eventually, they hope to extend State Road 53 north from the County line, effectively crisscrossing the County with high speed asphalt so almost everywhere could be built upon.

If you think that this would, maybe, be a good idea, perhaps taking some time off your commute, take a look at Cook County's road system. The sprawling overdevelopment is due to north-south highways SR53/I-355, I-294 and I-95; east-west I-90, I-290 and I-55. With Cook County fully crisscrossed, no home or business is far from a superhighway and developers can justify almost any business or subdivision on any piece of land. (It's also worth noting, that even 8 lane I-94 has massive traffic jams every day at rush hour, so more lanes and superhighways don't really work anyway.)

Besides the more important needs for this billion dollars, this road proposal highlights the fragile beauty of Lake County. 120 Bypass construction would decimate the heron rookery at Almond Marsh Forest Preserve, drain hundreds of wetlands acres at Big Sag Wetlands Bank, pave untold smaller natural areas and draw ticky-tack strip malls to every corner.

Lake County has the most biodiversity in Illinois. Building the 120 Bypass would end that, and extend Cook County sprawl into our county. ↗

SMC's Failed Certified Community Program

by Eric Roe and John Massman

What would your spouse say if you were only 65% faithful? What if you only paid 65% of your mortgage? As Ann Maine pointed out, 65% in school is failing.

On October 3rd members of the Woods and Wetlands Executive Committee attended an SMC Public Hearing for the Certification Status of the Village of Antioch. ExCom member and Antioch resident Eric Roe presented a video account of past Designated Erosion Control Inspector (DECI) reports spanning March to May of 2008. These reports document violations in the construction of Osmond Sports Park in Antioch. It was clear from the reports that the Village and Township were not responsive to the problems identified in the DECI reports in a timely manner, or in some cases, at all. The DECI report called for rip-rap as a means to dissipate flow but this was not in place for 3 months. Another violation that Eric noted in his presentation was a silt fence that was not trenched into the ground and was used in a concentrated flow area as a device to dissipate flow rather than its intended purpose of sediment control. Chief Engineer for SMC, Tony Wolff, argued that the silt fence must have worked as it withheld the flow enough to overtop the fence. But again that is not the intended use of a silt fence and was not what was called for by the DECI.

In defending Antioch, SMC staff revealed that Lake County's compliance record county-wide is only 65% at any given time. We found this appalling, as did Commissioner Ann Maine, and believe that if this is the best performance SMC and their certified community program can accomplish, then no DECI report will ever prevent illicit discharges in the public waters because the SMC lacks the ways and the will to enforce its own WDO. ↗



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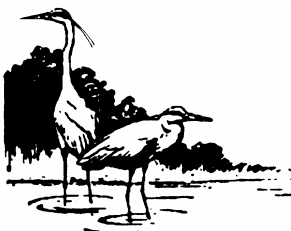
sion was bundled with the last tollway repairs and I-PASS. Instead of a lasting recovery, we'll get more of the same inefficient sprawl. Is that what we want?

Global warming now threatens to cause millions of human environmental refugees within the next several decades, while driving over a quarter of the Earth's species into extinction. Our responsibility to choose a different future is indisputable. Now more than ever, we need to think globally and act locally.

The causes of this economic recession have been obscured by a blitz of meaningless economic metaphors: "Overheated," "irrational exuberance," "meltdown," and on and on. In reality, as I learned from John Wasik, columnist for Bloomberg, it was invited by the overdependence of our economy on suburban sprawl. It was spurred by federal tax deductions and subsidies for single family and first time home buyers, and federal laissez-faire "oversight" of the financial industry. And it was caused by the grossly irresponsible financial industry, which loaned to those unable to pay on the basis of ever-rising house values. It was triggered by a spike in the price of oil, which was caused at least in part, by the early impacts on the oil industry of global warming: hurricanes, floods and heat waves. Commuters locked into inefficient development patterns were unable to cover increases in the price of oil with their overstretched household budgets. Those barely able to pay the mortgage defaulted as the price of a barrel of oil shot up. The artificial demand for oversized new homes with long commutes evaporated, house values declined, and the banks could not recover their investments through foreclosure. The banks became unable to satisfy their investors, who withdrew. Without investment, they could no longer make loans to support business. Now most of us know someone losing his or her job.

There have been some benefits, and they provide important lessons for how to fix this mess. High gas prices helped reduce traffic congestion, as record numbers learned to use mass transit instead. METRA reached capacity, and as I described in the summer edition, more in our territory might have switched if they had access to transit options. Many of those who made the switch are sticking

with it. Recession has also been good for open space in Lake



County, virtually stopping all new development. Passage of the \$185M Forest Preserve referendum in November will take advantage of lower land prices, and protect some of the spared land forever. Although dropping, the bulldozing of Lake County's open space for housing developments was still consuming four acres a day last Fall. And Governor has finally announced that HOV lanes are coming for the tollway. The lesson is that development that reduces our need for energy enables preservation of more nearby natural resources. Higher quality of life at lower cost.

Washington wishes everything could all just go back to the way it was eight years ago. Our elected officials have responded to the oncoming recession by forcing all taxpayers to invest in the financial industry. They forked over hundreds of billions of our dollars, and our children's dollars, to Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson, who ladled it out to his banking friends with the hope that they would restart the housing boom with more easy loans. It hasn't trickled down, and now Congress is talking about giving our money directly to homeowners to staunch the foreclosure crisis. We see media portrayals of real people who need help to stay in their homes, and prop up the neighborhood. Few would say no to them, but we should say no to the failed American dream entitlement of fake independence bestowed by car dependent suburbia. Low density suburban housing cannot operate without cars, and independence gained at the wheel of a car amounts to addiction to oil. As we bail people out, we should entice them to more efficient living in denser communities.

So far the indications are not encouraging. While Americans were shocked by the cost of filling up their inefficient cars and SUVs as gas rose toward \$4 this summer, the cost of gas has dropped recently. US car companies that relied on the huge profit margins of popular gas guzzlers last year have seen sales for them dry up, but money for the recent bailout of Detroit was taken from the funding approved for more efficient car development. OPEC dropped oil prices, and the Saudis, and other nations whose economy is utterly dependent on oil, are expanding their production capacity, to restore our addiction. The Bush administration and his Congress is leasing our public lands, our outer continental shelf, and now the Red Rock public lands surrounding our national parks to the oil companies. The Canadians are sending dirty tar sands oil to Indiana to be refined. We managed to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Great

Holiday Blues Party

What: A Gathering of Sierra Club members and their environmentally minded friends for food and drinks.

When: Saturday January 24, 2009 - 6:00 PM until close of party

Where: The Maras Loft - Located in downtown Grayslake at 389 Center St. Second Floor - 2 buildings east of railroad tracks, above dental office.

Why: To celebrate the achievements of the Sierra Club in the past year and our survival of another holiday season.

Hosts: Jeff and Amy Maras

Phone: (847) 223-9180
Jeff's cell: (847) 274-0857
Amy's cell: (847) 644-1568
Jeff's e-mail: jeff.maras@illinois.sierraclub.org

Volunteers: Anyone willing to help with set-up please contact Jeff or Amy.

Lakes from drilling, but not much else. Americans want oil independence, but many seem willing to settle for more drilling and more nukes to get it, even though conservation, efficiency and renewables are less expensive options that offer more jobs.

We can no longer afford to consider environmentalism as a hobby or a luxury. As Tom Friedman explains, we live in a world that is Hot, Flat and Crowded. As the consequences of the frontier mentality loom, a healthy, sustainable global environment is becoming as important to planning as money is to the economy. It's time to make real change happen.

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