

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

WOODS & WETLANDS News



October program:

A visit to Utah's Red Rock Wilderness

Bob Brister, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Escape from the plains for a few minutes at our October meeting as we take a trip to some of the last true wilderness in America's western lands.

Harboring some of the largest and finest desert roadless areas anywhere in the world, undeveloped Utah includes the huge canyon systems of the Colorado, Green, San Juan, and Dolores rivers; the intimate slickrock narrows of the Escalante, Dirty Devil, Paria, and Virgin rivers; the vast tablelands and massive cliff-walls of the Kaiparowits Plateau, the Book Cliffs, and the Grand Staircase; and the isolated mountain ranges and desert riparian areas of Utah's Great Basin country. Over 9 million acres of public land. See this beautiful area and learn about its past and potential future from Bob Brister of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

OCTOBER MEETING

Tuesday, October 20
7:00 pm

Vernon Area Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire

Escape from the plains and enter undeveloped Utah and learn about one of our last, best wilderness areas with Bob Brister of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

September program:

Fly Away Home: Amazing Efforts to Save the Whooping Crane

Joan Garland, International Crane Foundation

News release, December 12, 2004: *Thirteen endangered whooping cranes and their surrogate parents—three ultralight aircraft—reached Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge shortly after 9 a.m. Eastern today after a 64-day, 1,200-mile trek over seven states... These birds are the fourth generation of whooping cranes to make this unique assisted migration from Wisconsin to Florida.*

Whooping cranes were on the verge of extinction in the 1940s, but have risen to about 275 birds in the wild today. As seen in the 1996 movie "Fly Away Home" starring Jeff Daniels and Anna Paquin, devoted people are using exciting methods to save these endangered birds. One of the most important and active groups in this effort is the Baraboo, Wisconsin based International Crane Foundation.

Hatched in Maryland, the young cranes are introduced to ultralight aircraft and raised in isolation from humans. To ensure the cranes remain wild, project biologists and pilots are silent and costumed while near the birds. The birds are moved to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin where the Foundation finally teaches the cranes to fly, and eventually, to follow their historic migratory path. The single pilot ultralight aircraft, painted to look like a whooper, guides the majestic birds from Southern Wisconsin to Florida, with stopovers in the Chicagoland area.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Tuesday, September 27
7:00 pm

Vernon Area Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire

Arrive early to hear this amazing story as told by Joan Garland of ICF, and learn how you can spot a whooper, or even get involved in this tremendous effort.

Directions:

From the East: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west just past Milwaukee Ave (Route 21) to the first stop light (Olde Half Day Rd). Turn right, then quickly left into the library parking lot.

From the West: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) east. Just before you hit Milwaukee Ave (Route 21), turn left at the stop light for Olde Half Day Rd. Turn quickly left into the library parking lot. 🌿

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Yopp Slough... and why it's in danger

Larry Marvet, Conservation Chair

Yopp Slough is a small, pretty wetland between Grass Lake and Petite Lake near Antioch in northern Lake County. One of many wetlands associated with the Fox River, it's not well known to many in our area.

The people who live near the Slough love its wildlife, plant life and sweet sunsets. So when a nearby landowner started trucking-in fill to build a cell phone tower, and then asked to up-zone this property for intensive commercial uses, neighbors Cheryl and Rob Van Duyse went into action.

Calling and writing their neighbors, speaking to the Lake County zoning and zoning appeals boards, connecting with their county commissioners, and working with the Sierra Club Conservation Committee, these two regular citizens put a spotlight on dangerous wetland development flying

below the radar. Suddenly, a sure zoning change and a guerrilla war against our wetlands were exposed.

The zoning change is still under review, and new concerns about hazardous waste have surfaced, but we will keep you posted. 🌿

TAKE ACTION

Call or write the County Board members on the Lake County Planning, Building and Zoning Committee. Tell them to protect Yopp Slough by rejecting up-zoning of the Deimer property near Antioch, land use case #1979.

Main phone: 847-377-2300

**Address: County Board Member _____,
Judy Martini Pamela O. Newton**

**Susan Gravenhorst Larry Leafblad
Steve Mountsier Bob Sabonjian
Randy Whitmore**

18 N. County St., Waukegan, IL 60085

Endgame for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Larry Marvet, Conservation Chair

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) may be nearing its last days. Buried within Congress' budget bill is \$2.4 billion from the sale of drilling rights in our last great wilderness. (ANWR is not specifically named in the bill to give Congressmen and Senators "political cover," which means they can vote for it then tell their constituents that they sort of didn't vote to drill in ANWR.) Its fate will be determined in mid-September when Congress votes on the final version of the budget reconciliation bill. Amazingly, Lake County has a special role in this important vote.

Turns out that our Congressman, Mark Kirk (R-District 10), who frequently speaks in favor of ANWR, and tells his constituents he is pro-ANWR, voted for this bad bill in the first budget round on May 1. The next and final vote will be close, and Kirk is almost certain to send ANWR to its oily grave—unless our voices are heard.

Mark Kirk has been endorsed by Sierra Club twice, and we are confident he'll do the right thing. However, as a Republican trying to shore-up the waning power of GW Bush, he is probably torn on this issue. **He will likely listen to his constituents—since voters keep him in office—so please write or call as soon as you can.** 🌿

TAKE ACTION SOON

Call or write to Mark Kirk SOON. Tell him to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by voting against the bad budget reconciliation bill.

Congressman Mark Kirk
102 Wilmot Road, Suite 200
Deerfield, IL 60015
Phone: 847-940-0202

Costco victory!

Larry Marvet, Conservation Chair

On June 23, we won a great battle, as the Lake Forest Plan Commission voted against building a Costco over important wetlands and adjacent to the Middlefork Savanna Forest Preserve. Though Costco developer Marshall Field Partners portrayed clearcutting, wetlands draining, 15 acres of asphalt paving and 16 gas filling pumps as environmental improvements, it would seem that the vast majority of Lake Forest residents and regulatory agencies strongly disagreed.

Experts at Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, Lake County Forest Preserves District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and Friends of the Chicago River all believe that the Costco would injure the adjacent forest preserve and potentially harm a number of endangered plants and animals. Sierra Club, Lake Forest homeowners, nearby businesses and schools all railed against this bad proposal. Virtually all the public comments asked to reject Costco.

Discussion and some parliamentary maneuvering later, the vote was taken—Costco was defeated on every item! We all celebrated for a short time, but the Plan Committee is advisory only, so the war will be won or lost in the City Council, whose special Costco meeting was set for August 18, 7:30pm, Lake Forest City Hall. By the time you read this we should know the outcome, and if you don't read it in the paper, we'll give you the details at our next General Meeting on Tuesday, September 27. 🌿

BREAKING STORY: The war was WON at the August 18 meeting! Costco has withdrawn its plans and a large portion of the site will be added to the Middlefork Savanna Forest Preserve. More news later...

Sewervivors

By Evan Craig, Group Chair

The challenge to rescue the aquatic health of our local rivers and streams relies on our willingness to imagine them painted in their original hues and to help them recover their earlier palettes. The brushes and paints needed to retouch these scenes are provided by the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and the county Watershed Development Ordinance (WDO).

As reviewed in our last issue, the Illinois EPA has been derelict in its CWA duty to engage polluters in avoiding degradation of our streams, and eliminating existing discharges of pollutants into our waters. Likewise, SMC has been reluctant to protect our water quality by ending the widespread elimination of natural water percolation into existing top soils.

As sprawling development finds abused downstream reaches for its drinking water sources and recreational areas, as occurred for Wauconda with Fiddle Creek, the new residents demand improved methods. Sierra Club Illinois staff members and volunteers have been eager to help guide decision makers and pressure regulators to protect our waters, and it appears that our efforts are having an effect. IEPA has begun to expect lower pollution levels in permit applications, and more support from dischargers for improving the quality of the receiving waters.

This month we were invited to review the progress and plans of two local villages whose prior over-development has recently exceeded the capacity of their sewage treatment plants (STP). As explained last issue, Wauconda suffered through a lengthy and expensive legal battle before adopting plans to restrict their burden on the Fiddle Creek wetlands. Now Antioch is working with us early-on with hopes of a better outcome. We wonder which will claim the title of best Sewervivor when their upgrades are complete? We ask you to be the judge.

Lake Barrington called us to announce early indications that they've secured the money from

Springfield to improve Wauconda's STP to remove nitrites. If it comes this fall as expected, Wauconda will construct an extra chemical operation to reduce the polluting of Fiddle Creek by this nutrient. In the meantime, plans to drill test wells to detect pollutants in the discharge before they reach the local aquifer are in process. The next goal in our agreement is to pursue funding for restoration of the wetlands from the years of prior STP abuse, and we are seeking input from members as we help put together a plan.

Antioch is built on Sequoit Creek, whose watershed is the first adopted by W&W for volunteer water quality monitoring. The Creek connects many of the highest quality lakes in Lake County, and we hope to protect and improve the quality of the Creek so that it provides better habitat for wildlife, and a public amenity.

Antioch's STP is presently less than a mile upstream of the outlet at Lake Marie, and there are wetlands along its course between the STP and the lake that need protection and improvement. As shown (outlined in white) in the aerial photo around Tiffany and Hillside, the creek meanders through the lower wetlands to the west, and there it plays a recognized role in removing pollutants. The

upper wetlands in the center of the photo are downstream from the STP (in the black rectangle) and are channeled and degraded. Both are owned by the Village. Antioch showed us several STP expansion options, highlighting the one they presently favor for an improved and expanded STP onsite. It would rely more on biological methods and less on dangerous chemical treatment. (Many will recall the fish-kill caused by a FeCl spill at the plant a few years ago. A release of chlorine gas, also presently used, would likely be worse.) New plants like the one planned often exceed their performance requirements. So we reminded them that the CWA calls for elimination of discharges altogether, and encouraged them to commit to pollutant quantities below their present levels for their new larger plant as their best effort. The CWA also requires that discharges not degrade their receiving waters, and we suggested that more could be done to improve both the cleansing ability and the wildlife quality of the wetlands. Initial estimates indicate that these measures would affect the project cost by less than 2%, and that they would provide more attractive wetlands along the bike path.

Either village could turn its back and resist improving their creek. It's up to you to let them know whether it's worth the extra effort.

