



Route 120 Bypass Threatens Almond Marsh Heron Rookery

by Evan Craig, Chair

Taking a page from the notebook of Frank Luntz, the Route 120 Corridor Planning Council is using the less controversial "Route 120 Bypass" name to promote the same old Rt. 53 pave-the-environment agenda. Luntz, infamous architect of mendacious titles like "Clear Skies" and "Healthy Forest Initiative" to sell pollution and clear-cuts, would approve if he'd attended the recent Open House in Hainesville. Nice words don't fix dirty plans.

As previously reported, the Route 120 Bypass study was hastily initiated at a so-called "Transportation Summit" last September. Vowing to keep Rt. 53 off the table, the organizers promised a new effort, without preconceived assumptions, to determine a new plan for a bypass around Grayslake. Politicians

attended and promised to support consensus from the summit. We were alarmed then to see the familiar E-W segment of the failed Rt. 53 extension displayed in the presentation, but were assured that a kinder, gentler alignment with local character would be sought.

Our concerns were confirmed at an early public meeting of the Committee. Marty Buehler, Director of the Lake County Department of Transportation, pronounced that the plan would have to be prepared for the construction of the environmentally ruinous N-S leg of the supposedly "dead" Rt. 53 extension. When we objected, he said that the Rt. 53 extension is still in the Regional Transportation Plan, and that the Lake County Board has adopted a neutral position on the Rt. 53 extension. To get money from our federal government for this project, he said the plan would have to include fictional Rt. 53 traffic. Federal transportation planners, who wisely require comprehensive planning, would be chagrined to see that their regulations prevent us from abandoning bad ideas like the Rt. 53 extension. "Dead" or not, Rt. 53 is still causing trouble.

Once again, the Rt. 53 extension controversy seems poised to torpedo efforts to relieve traffic. Unfortunately, elected mayors and a few state representatives don't have the guts to tell frustrated constituents the truth: The Rt. 53 extension is unaffordable, disastrous, and the biggest impediment to true transportation improvement ever to infect the minds of Lake County drivers. As a result, more public money and volunteer hours are likely to be wasted on the same old controversy in this new forum.

Including the traffic burden from a hypothetical N-S Rt. 53 extension (FAP 342) will presume traffic from two non-existent towns the size of Mundelein that the extension was predicted to invite. As we showed with the Crossroads Study, a new tollway invites more traffic from outside our region too. If the same assumptions are used for this new plan, why should we expect a different outcome? The result will be a bloated Rt. 120 Bypass proposal, virtually identical to the failed proposal

for an E-W leg of the Rt. 53 extension.

In a ridiculous gesture to address our concerns, the committee seems determined to plan the new bypass "with or without" the Rt. 53 extension. Since any one plan that addresses either traffic load will be sized for the larger load, this really amounts to a plan "with and without," and that degenerates to simply "with" the imaginary Rt. 53 extension. Obviously, any new road that pretends to address real traffic, but which is sized to accept additional fictional traffic from an unbuilt super-highway, will be oversized.

The Committee has also refused so far to consider a new alignment for the proposed bypass that avoids the Almond Marsh Forest Preserve heron rookery. When asked why the maps at the Open House displayed the E-W Rt. 53 extension alignment through those wetlands, Buehler immediately switched stories. Instead of insisting on traffic from the Rt. 53 extension, he pretended that it never included an E-W segment, and that

the familiar alignment shown on huge maps around the room was supposedly entirely new and uncertain. But Buehler rejected the idea of replacing the exact line on the map with a wide band within which a new alignment might be placed. Apparently the alignment is fixed, but we're supposed to think the process is open. What Buehler failed to mention with others listening is that IDOT has been buying land for the Rt. 53 extension for years, including parcels that encroach on the heron rookery. In a perverse feat of bifurcated thinking, he denied that the 120 corridor is the Rt. 53 corridor, but then worried about the cost of the 120 Bypass if the land bought for the Rt. 53 alignment is not used. Other ADID wetlands located at the Northbrook Sports Complex are similarly threatened if the old Rt. 53 E-W alignment is re-used.

The environmental assessment maps displayed at the open house included many designations, and rated them for their environmental sensitivity. In a part of the county with more and more frequent

shortages of well water, absence of ground water recharge zones on the map is a concern. A recent report from the US Geological Survey finds that surface contamination is reaching shallow aquifers, and with existing aquifers overdrawn, run-off from new roads like this Bypass should not be allowed to foul this important public resource.

With so much resting on the conclusions of this committee, we need our representatives to honor their word, and the staff that they appoint to provide clear and honest information.

Woods & Wetlands Calendar of Events

General Membership Meetings

July and August: Summer Break, no meetings. Get outside and play!

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM MEETING

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 6:45 p.m. —

Zion/Mojave Wilderness

Clayton Daughenbath, with the Southern Wilderness Alliance.

Learn about efforts to lop off half of the proposed Red Rock Wilderness for development. Even for those who've never visited the wilderness of Zion country, the names are evocative—even pungent. Red Mountain, Beartrap Canyon, Canaan Mountain, The Watchman, Black Ridge and Docis Pass. For those who have seen them, the names conjure magical red rock sculpture equal to anything on the Colorado Plateau. Come learn about our beautiful federal lands.

General meetings are held at the Vernon Area Library, 300 Olde Half Day Road in Lincolnshire. Take Route 22 (Half Day Road) west from Milwaukee Avenue (Route 21), turn north (right) at the first stop light, then quickly left into the Library parking lot.

OCTOBER PROGRAM MEETING

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 6:45 p.m. —

Dragonflies

by Cathy White, Wauconda Environmental Quality Coordinator (rescheduled from April)

Learn about these fragile, beautiful, delicate — and little known — insects, some of whom are threatened by I-355 highway construction.

Their scientific name is Odonates, but we see them flitting from place to place in our gardens and know them as dragonflies and damselflies. Delicate, beautiful, fragile, (and deadly to other bugs), these insects have suddenly made the headlines as the State of Illinois has accelerated plans to extend U. S. Highway 355 — directly through the Hines Emerald Dragonfly habitat.

The Hines Emerald is the only federally endangered dragonfly in the United States. So far it is known to exist in only three locales: Door County, Wisconsin, the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and in a few isolated places near the Des Plaines River in northern Illinois.

With highways targeting their habitat, there is no better time to learn about these striking insects, and few understand their lives better than our Wednesday, April 19 speaker, Cathy White, Environmental Quality Coordinator for the Village of Wauconda. Before joining Wauconda's Environmental Quality Office, White received a Master's Degree in biology, worked in Naperville and Addison, and has helped to protect dragonflies in the Midwest. Come to our April meeting to appreciate the hidden lives — and dangers to — damselflies and dragonflies.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM MEETING

Thursday, Nov. 16, 6:45 p.m. —

Speaker To Be Announced

For maps and details, please visit <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet>



Photo by E.D. Cashatt, Illinois State Museum



Positions Open for Good Volunteers

Your local group is run entirely by local volunteers. Please commit some of your time and talent to help promote protection and enjoyment of our local environment. To volunteer, or find out more, contact one of the group leaders listed in the masthead on this page.

Position	Description
W&W Conservation Committee	Gain in-depth knowledge on an environmental issue and use Group resources to lead successful campaign. Contact our Conservation Chair.
Outings Committee	Learn to assist or lead outings through our Outing Leader Program, or just register on our participants list. Check out past and future outings at http://illinois.sierraclub.org/W&W/Outings and sign onto our Outings list. Outings Committee meetings are held on the 4th Friday of the month. Leadership and Wilderness First Aid training are available periodically. Contact the Group Outings Chair.
Membership Committee	Welcome new members! Invite them to come on Outings, mix with others and learn about fascinating topics at our Public Meetings, join any of our event committees, or take on an issue on our Conservation Committee. Activating and organizing more of our over 2,300 members to join in our important work is essential to protecting our spectacular natural environment. We presently need a new Membership Chair. Contact the Group Chair.
Summer Party Committee	The W&W Summer Party will be on September 16th at a home on Third Lake. Help plan an activity or the logistics, invite Club members to bring friends and come, and then take part in the grand day!
Public Meeting Committee	Great Public Meeting happens when lots of people come together to learn about fascinating and relevant topics that interest them, and meet others with similar interests. Making this happen relies on members helping to coordinate the place, speakers, publicity, and the event itself. Contact the Group Chair.
W&W Fundraising Committee	Reach out to members who would like to give more support to protection of our local environment. Contact the Fundraising Chair.
Sierra Club Open Space Agent	Help organize Club actions to save open space in your area in coordination with the Group ExCom. Contact the Conservation Chair.
Local Endorsement Committees	Join at least one other member from your community to help us do local endorsements. All politics is local. Help us make a difference! Contact the Political Chair.
Sierra Club County Board Agent	Monitor the County Board, articulate Club positions at daytime meetings and report to the ExCom. Contact Group Chair.
Sierra Club Swampsquad Agent	Review Wetlands Destruction Permit Application notices sent out by the US Army Corps of Engineers, assess significance, inform Club, and promote public comment. Easier than it sounds. Contact the Conservation Chair.
W&W Executive Committee Leader	Seek nomination for 2 year elected term to contribute your ideas for growing our group! Our group elections occur every fall and we are currently seeking candidates for 2007. Drop in on our monthly "ExCom" Meetings to see how much we need your help! Contact the Group Chair.
Sierra Club Sprawl Committee	Coordinate with Club campaign to highlight environmental impact of poorly planned growth and introduce change. Stop Rt. 53 and plan walkable communities. Contact the Group Chair.

Join the Woods & Wetlands Outing Committee

by Evan Craig, Outings Chair

Outings are fun, and we'd like to lead more of them! Our tiny three person Outings Committee has already planned four outings for 2006 (see our website or the *Lake & Prairie* listings), and more members could help us do more.

We have scheduled a party on Saturday, September 16, and we need a few members to help make it a success.

The W&W requirements for becoming an Outings Leader and maintaining safety and leadership skills are demanding. As an Outing Assistant you can make a smaller time commitment and still help us make the arrangements that make each outing a success.

Our next meeting will be an afternoon hike at Dan Wright Forest Preserve (at Everett and St. Mary's) on July 25. Contact Barbara Bell at 847-367-4253 or barbara.bell@illinois.sierraclub.org if you'd like to join us.

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CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS
September 20, October 18 and November 16,
6:00 p.m. —

Conservation Committee Meetings are held at 6 p.m. in advance of the General Membership Meetings at the Vernon Area Library.

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