



**SIERRA CLUB**  
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## Woods & Wetlands News

Serving Lake and Northeastern Cook Counties

### More Communities Ban Phosphorus Usage

by John Massman

Following the Village of Antioch's lead, Third Lake, Lindenhurst, Round Lake Park, Round Lake Beach, Vernon Hills and Long Grove have all banned lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. Local leaders generally acknowledge that the effort is a small step in the global push to protect the environment, but have felt compelled to do what they can.

Fertilizers containing phosphorus can be carried by storm water runoff into local lakes and streams, leading to excessive growth of algae and weeds. When it dies off, it takes oxygen out of the water and chokes aquatic life. The Woods and Wetlands Group worked with the Village of Antioch to enact a ban on the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus in the Village to reduce pollution in Lake Marie, one of the Chain O'Lakes. The Village board passed the ban in a unanimous vote

*(Continued on page W2)*

### Back Door Politics Employed for Latest SR-53 Attack

by Larry Marvet

By the time you read this article, the latest attempt to accelerate Lake County development and rip you off will likely have passed silently under your radar. In January, our Lake County Board decided unanimously to place a referendum on the April election ballot asking voters whether the State of Illinois should "...construct the extension of Illinois Route 53 from Lake Cook Road northerly to the existing Illinois Route 120?"

No ballot information discusses the environmental impact, cost, location or anything solid. In fact, even the official website scrupulously avoids discussion of these things. And there is a reason for those exclusions—if they told you, you'd scream! The scale of environmental damage is amazing, from the nearly 70 wetlands that will be bulldozed, to the construction that will last years, if not decades, to the opening of high density development that will turn Lake County into a clone of Cook County, with strip malls on every corner and potholes on every street.

Did I mention cost? This superhighway was estimated a decade ago to cost about \$2 billion and would be way more if built now. This might seem small compared to the economic stimulus program, but the stimulus money is for the whole country, not a single county. Doing the math, the State Road 53 extension would

cost \$2800 for every man, woman and child in our county or \$8100 per household! Many of us could use eight thousand dollars in our current economy.)

Now I'm sure that our elected leaders will have many answers to the \$2 billion expense, like maybe it will be covered by tolls, the federal government or the State of Illinois. Concerning tolls, let's assume that each driver will pay \$1 per trip on the superhighway—2 billion trips will be needed to cover the cost! As to the Feds, it seems unlikely they'll pay, since 53 is far from "shovel ready," and massive deficits after this stimulus will last for decades. Illinois seems even less likely: the latest plan to patch our bleeding budget is to increase the state income tax by 50%, barely covering current expenses and, trust me, not covering a \$2 billion highway to nowhere.

Like many mandates from our politicians, we, in the end, will pay for their excess, through high taxes, lower property values, lost wildlife and wild lands, and the overall reduction in our quality of life. Not to mention the redirection of money from the maintenance of our roads (which badly need maintenance) or the improvement of our nearly nonexistent mass transportation.

So, as a Lake County politician, what do

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### Woods & Wetlands Calendar

**Wednesday, April 15th, 6:45 p.m.**  
General Meeting

#### **Solar Power**

Lisa Albrecht,  
Illinois Solar Energy Association  
Vernon Area Library, See next page.

**Saturday-Sunday, April 25, 1:00-3:00**  
Outing

#### **Ft. Sheridan FPD Ravine Exploration**

Walk through a ravine carved by Lake Michigan at Ft. Sheridan and learn about its natural history. See [illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings)

**Wednesday, May 27th, 6:45 p.m.**  
General Meeting

#### **Electric Cars**

Bruce Wood, President and CEO  
ePower Synergies, Incorporated  
Location: Prairie Crossing's B. C. Barn  
[illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet)  
Our last meeting of the season.

**Saturday, June 13**

Outing

#### **Meet the Hackmatack**

Richmond.  
Paddle the N Nippersink, and learn how to win protection for this new National Wildlife Refuge. See [illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings)

**Friday-Sunday, June 19-21**

Outing

#### **Canoe the Lower Wisconsin**

Muscoda to Boscobel.  
Paddle, swim, camp, learn. See [illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings)

#### **Conservation Meetings**

Come at 6:15 pm, before General Meetings. Members and guests welcome.

#### **Directions**

The Vernon Area Library is at, 300 Olde Half Day Road in Lincolnshire. Between Route 22 and Milwaukee Ave (Rt 21)

## 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.

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

**LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG**

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(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.

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

## Become a Stormwater Ranger

by Barbara Bell

Woods & Wetlands is looking for a few stormwater rangers to help us monitor construction sites in Lake County.

Recently, three members of Woods & Wetlands Ex-Com, Evan Craig, Barbara Bell and John Massman, as well as member Jim Bland, attended a workshop on how to determine whether a construction site is complying with stormwater ordinances and the Clean Water Act.

OK, if you're still reading, you're probably asking yourself, "Why would anybody want to monitor a construction site and why is a construction site's impact on stormwater regulated?" The reason for regulation is that stormwater runoff from a construction site can carry pollutants into our streams.

Sedimentation from construction sites that ends up in streams clouds the wa-

ter and kills the plants and other organisms, including fish. On top of that, sedimentation in the water makes it harder for water treatment plants to make drinking water safe, and that pushes up the cost of water treatment. Also, up to 200 tons of topsoil is literally blown away from construction sites every a year. So it's important for disturbance of the soils to be minimized, and for the soils to be stabilized again as soon as possible.

Stormwater Rangers are needed because the government simply doesn't have enough resources to monitor construction sites. The Illinois Department of Environmental Protection only has one person assigned to monitoring construction sites for the entire state. Local government, which also monitors construction sites, also has a limited staff. Volunteers can help fill this gap.

In a nutshell, a Stormwater Ranger

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## Economic Recovery

by Evan Craig

As more jobs are lost and the recession deepens, I've been hearing more news reports about the need to get people spending again, and escalating government infusions of cash necessary to rescue "the economy." But when I listen to the indices that are being used to judge whether that is happening, they are the


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*(Continued from page W1, Phosphorus)*

in October of 2007, becoming the first community in Illinois to pass a phosphorus ban. Listen on our website to what the trustees had to say before they voted.

A handful of local and state leaders across the country have pushed for stronger regulations regarding phosphorus. In Twin Lakes, Wis., officials banned fertilizer containing phosphorus in 2002. And in 2005, the state of Minnesota prohibited such fertilizer except in areas where the soil lacks it. Although they understand the desire for a lush green lawn, any expert will tell you that phosphorus does not make grass greener, nitrogen does. Phosphorus helps establish hardy roots. In addition, most soil in the area contains enough phosphorus to grow a healthy lawn without additional phosphorus from fertilizer.

Antioch officials have prohibited residents and commercial lawn-care companies from using fertilizers that contain phosphorus. The ban does not apply to land lacking sufficient phosphorus or lands used for farming and agricultural businesses. The ordinance requires businesses that sell fertilizer to post signs notifying customers about the ban.

The Woods and Wetlands group hopes that more villages will follow these four, and that Lake County will follow suit and pass a county-wide ordinance banning the use of fertilizer containing phosphorus. 

## Sierra Club Spring Meetings Bloom!


### A Personal Look at Solar Energy

Lisa Albrecht,  
Illinois Solar Energy Association

Wednesday, April 15, 2009  
6:45pm


Vernon Area Library, Lincolnshire

Until recently, solar energy has been relegated to a few calculators and some experimental cars. Global warming has changed things, driving a demand for clean energy that makes solar a nearly perfect option.

Our speaker, Lisa Albrecht, is on the board of directors for Illinois Solar Energy Association and works for the pioneering firm, Solar Service, founded in 1977, long before solar was cool. She will speak to us about the role of solar energy nationally and world wide as we tackle climate change. Additionally, Ms. Albrecht will describe ways we can use solar energy in our homes. 

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you do when the facts are against you? First, talk about how a nice, new road will reduce your commute time. Second, avoid any specifics, especially cost, taxes or environmental impact. Third, quietly put a softly worded, non-binding "advisory referendum" into an off year, spring election where less than 30% will vote. Finally, take the ballot victory as an overwhelming mandate to build the road and announce it at every opportunity.

That's where we may stand today. Fortunately, it doesn't change the facts. An extension of State Road 53 would be a disaster, both for the environment and for our wallets. 

## Rt. 53 Extension Still Horrible Idea

By Evan Craig, Chair

Don't be fooled. Extending Rt. 53 into Lake County would be an environmental disaster. Sierra Club is often eager to advise our members about how to vote for the environment, but the April 7 ballot referendum question is so frivolous that we refused to even take a position on it. A valid question would have at least attempted to portray the fiscal and environmental costs that a voter would accept by voting yes, but this question lacked any accountability. It was little more than a political stunt, and will do nothing to relieve Lake County's congestion, regardless of the outcome.

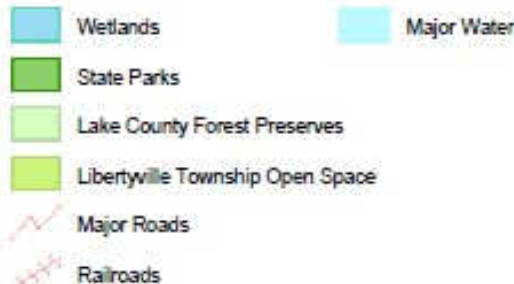
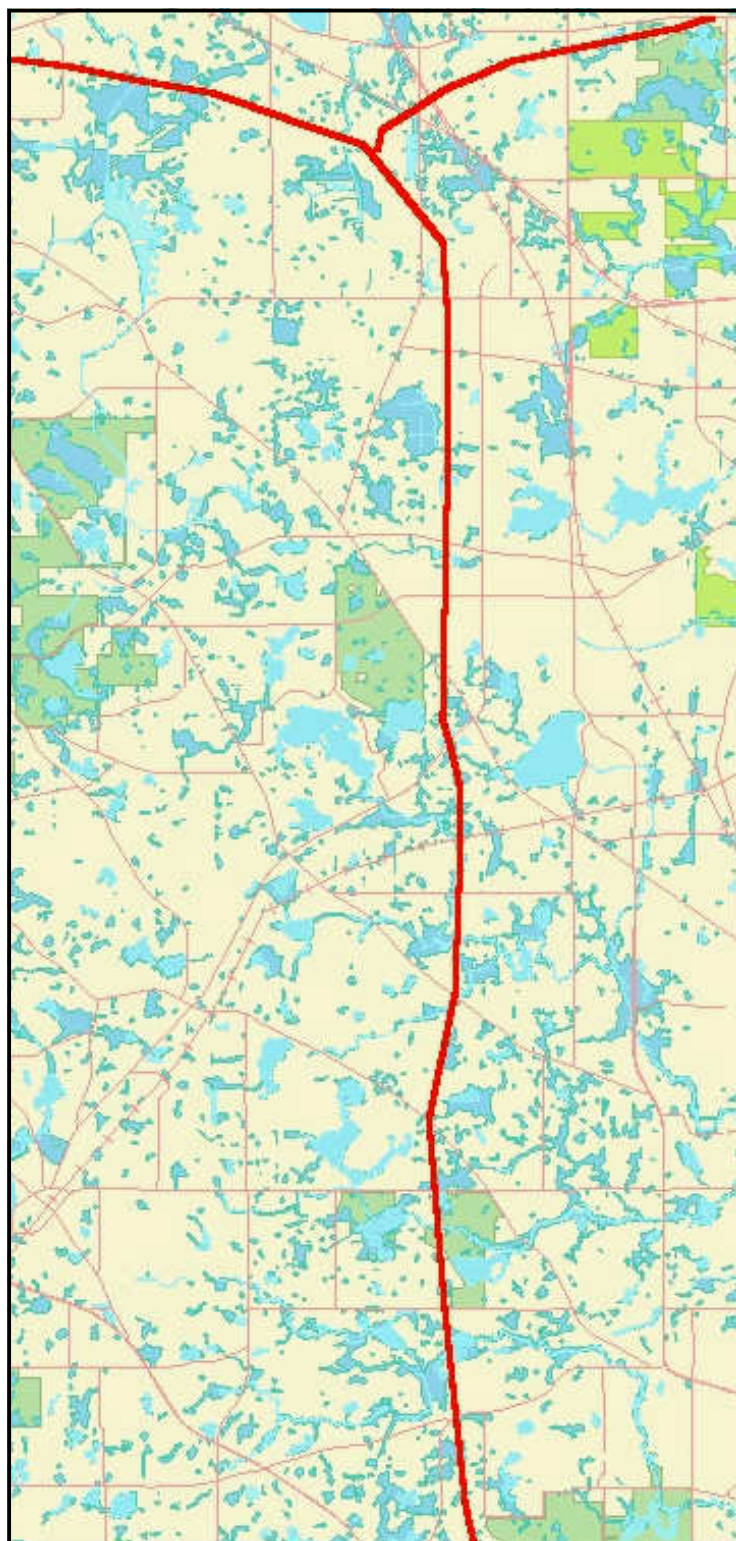
The idea to extend Rt. 53 remains unchanged since we reported in 2001 on the so-called "Lake County Transportation Improvement Project." LCTIP was a carefully planned PR campaign conceived to support the extension of Rt. 53. It was heavily biased, and generated a very misleading and unfinished Draft Environmental Impact Statement to dismiss the very real concerns about the environmental consequences of such an extension. No surprise, it supports its pre-decided conclusion. That's illegal, but now it is being trotted out by desperate politicians as if it were factual. The fact is that federal law requires a legal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be complete before making a decision about major new highways, and an EIS has not been completed for the Rt. 53 extension. Considering the obvious environmental consequences, one likely never will be.

Instead, our Let's Get Moving! campaign focuses on improving our transportation system in ways that would preserve our rich environment. We recommend improving intersections, improving our existing arterial road network, and increasing mass transit opportunities for business commuters, who cause most of the congestion. Many of those improvements were delayed for a decade by the controversy over Rt. 53. By agreeing to stop fighting for Rt. 53, some of those improvements have been made and are making a real difference, some are about to make a difference, and many more remain possibilities. It's tragic that the Rt. 53 referendum stunt might once again frustrate very doable transportation improvements by competing with them for attention and funding.

Our bona fide environmental concerns are best understood by looking at the map (thanks to Lake County GIS) of the wetlands and Forest Preserves in the area that this extension would affect. (The red line is the approximate alignment from Buffalo Grove to Grayslake.) Literally dozens of wetlands would be directly impacted, and pollution from the road would impact many more connected wetland complexes and streams (including ADID wetlands not shown). Because of the mass grading necessary to build a multi-lane divided highway, groundwater recharge and quality would also be affected.

The impact to wildlife in Lake County can be estimated by considering the fact that Lake County enjoys 135 threatened and endangered species, more than any other county in Illinois. Yet Lake County trails Cook County in the percentage of land protected as Forest Preserves. The reason many of these species persist here in Lake County is our wetlands, and the land in the right of way for Rt. 53, owned by IDOT, which represents an additional 10,000 acres of open space. The Rt. 53 corridor is our undeclared hidden wildlife preserve.

In addition to the land and water impacts, we are also very concerned about the additional air pollution that would arise



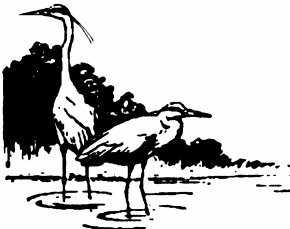
(Continued on page W4)

(Continued from Rt. 53 Still Horrible page W3)  
 when the proposed extension filled to capacity. A review of 24 scientific studies has revealed that highway corridors become cancer corridors. See [www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/report04\\_highwayhealth](http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/report04_highwayhealth). More traffic on new highways is wrong for our health, especially our children's health.

There are better solutions, and here in Lake County, rail improvements should be given a chance to perform. As freight is shifted onto the EJ&E, more passenger trains will be possible on the Wisconsin Central to better serve central Lake County. In addition, passenger service on the EJ&E itself, a neglected component of the Lake County Framework Plan, should be aggressively pursued to provide a much needed E-W transportation option, and connect the area to Abbott and Waukegan, while promoting more sustainable and compact development patterns.

Lake County is also investing heavily in an Intelligent Traffic System. Its initial job is to coordinate traffic controls to reduce congestion. As I learned from LCDOT's Transportation Management Center Director, Tony Khawaja, "Lake County is in the process of working with the PACE suburban bus division of the RTA on a pilot project to implement a transit signal priority system on Washington Street, Lewis Avenue and Grand Avenue, all in the City of Waukegan. We will look closely at the results of this pilot, and if successful we will be in a better position to implement transit signal priority systems at other locations in Lake County." ITS should also be improved to help us plan, schedule and share our trips to reduce congestion. Tony adds, "Providing real time traffic data to travelers via cell phones or web-enabled mobile devices is recognized as an important next step..." We stopped letting planes take off without a flight plan and landing slot decades ago, and we should reward drivers that plan ahead too.

Ultimately, though, the only disincentive to sprawling development, which relies utterly on roads, and demolishes our ecosystems, is the congestion it produces. Unless long distance road commuters pay the full cost of the peak road capacity they want, we will continue to see more of the road and sprawl vicious traffic circle. As Larry points out on page 1, none of those crowing loudest for the extension would volunteer to pay for it themselves. Instead, they should move closer to work, and stop demanding that the rest of us pay for their long commutes.



Considering our need to cut global warming emissions by 80%, we need to choose more efficient modes of transportation to reduce the release of climate-changing CO<sub>2</sub> that is sickening our planet. It's time to invest in greener transportation choices for Lake County, not extend Rt. 53. — Let's Get Moving! ↗

## Lake County Kudos

by Evan Craig

Reading our newsletter, you could easily get the idea that there's nothing good happening in Lake County. Certainly the County Board's willingness to throw Lakewood FP to the Olympic lions last year, and their ridiculous temptation last month to sacrifice our hidden Rt. 53 wildlife refuge would support that. But it's not all they do.

As John hints in this issue, Lake County is contemplating a phosphorus fertilizer ban to mitigate the phosphorus that will be released from its expanding wastewater treatment facilities. Other good things are happening too.

Besides the \$2.5M dedicated for the online Intelligent Transportation Systems, PASSAGE, the county continues to implement better bicycle transportation on our roads. According to commissioner Ann Maine, \$3M was recently allocated for resurfacing Riverwoods Rd. with widened shoulders for bike traffic.

Lake County has also followed LEED guidelines to make the FPD Ryerson Visitor Center and the new LCDOT buildings energy efficient. We think this shows the kind of commitment needed, and hope to help the County become a Cool County by signing on to reduce its emissions to 1990 levels. ↗

(Continued from Economic Recovery page W3)  
 same types of excess that got us into this mess. It's all about housing starts, new car sales and consumer spending. As I explained in the last issue, this reveals the unspoken wish that we could just go back to the Business As Usual of the 1990's. That wasteful path is unsustainable, and rescuing "the economy" that way has no future.

Instead, we need a recovery, and new economic indicators to measure the growth of a new Green Economy. Instead of new houses, we should count how many existing houses are upgraded to cut energy usage by 50%. Instead of new car sales, we should count solar cell and wind turbine sales. As more talent hits the street looking for a "job," we should care more whether they build new green businesses for a new prosperity. ↗

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 picks a local construction site to monitor over time. The Ranger makes sure that the developer of a site greater than one acre has a stormwater discharge permit from the IEPA. The developer is required to write a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP - pronounced "swip") that includes best management practices (BMPs). The plan is supposed to protect nearby waters where stormwater will drain. Then the Stormwater Ranger visits the site periodically to make sure that the contractor follows the SWPPP, and that sediment leaving the site is minimized. The best times to check are a day before, and then immediately following significant rainfall. If you find problems, take pictures and notes. The IEPA website make it easy to report them if they are not fixed by the developer within seven days.

Despite the weak economy, there are many construction sites in Lake County that need monitoring. Being a Stormwater Ranger is a way to make a positive difference for the environment. It also can be a way to meet people and make new friends.

It's more fun if Stormwater Rangers work together in pairs or groups to monitor one or more construction sites. Afterward, you can go out and talk about what you observed while enjoying a drink or even a meal.

If you want to be a Stormwater Ranger, contact Evan Craig, Chair of Woods & Wetlands. If we have enough interest, we can arrange for volunteers to be trained at a convenient site. The Sierra Club and Prairie Rivers Network provide the training. ↗

### Group Executive Committee

Group Chair	Evan Craig	847-680-6437
Outings	<a href="mailto:ww-chair@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-chair@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Vice Chair	Larry Marvet	847-537-2083
	<a href="mailto:ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Conservation	Mike Wagner	847-526-3195
	<a href="mailto:ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Membership	Jeff Maras	847-223-2555
	<a href="mailto:ww-treas@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-treas@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Treasurer	John Massman	847-838-9440
	<a href="mailto:ww-treas@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-treas@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Fundraising	Barbara Bell	847-367-4253
	<a href="mailto:ww-fund@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-fund@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Secretary	Doug Ower	847-872-8328
	<a href="mailto:ww-secy@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-secy@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
Water Issues	Eric Roe	847-838-2679
	<a href="mailto:ww-water@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-water@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	
News Editor	<a href="mailto:ww-news@illinois.sierraclub.org">ww-news@illinois.sierraclub.org</a>	

P.O. Box 876, Grayslake, Ill 60030