

## Iowa Chapter Advocacy and Activities

By Neila Seaman, Chapter Director

Iowa Chapter staff and volunteers stay very busy working to improve the environment. Just when one project is completed, another one demands attention. I was asked to present the chapter's accomplishments at the Annual Gathering and Awards Celebration in October. When you consider the chapter's priorities are water quality, energy, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, and public land protection (i.e., land use in the Loess Hills) our accomplishments are many in the past couple of years. Although setbacks are inevitable and you can't win 'em all, we've fared pretty well. If you are interested in becoming active on any of these issues, please contact me at [neila.seaman@sierraclub.org](mailto:neila.seaman@sierraclub.org) or call the office at 515-277-8868.

### WATER

#### Water Quality Standards

My very first day with Sierra Club in March 2004 included a meeting to discuss whether to sue the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for not requiring Iowa to comply with the Clean Water Act's water quality standards provisions. After diligently working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), water quality standards rule amendments were drafted and approved by the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) and they went into effect in March 2006 when the Administrative Rules Review Committee (ARRC), a legislative oversight committee, chose not to take any action.

The amendments to the rule will:

- Eliminate the exceptions of the design low flow requirement (protected flow).
- Revise the general use classification.
- Designate as Class B(WW-1) Warm Water – Type 1 all of Iowa's perennial rivers and streams and intermittent streams with perennial pools that are not currently designated.
- Designate as Class A1 – Primary Contact Recreational Use all of Iowa's perennial rivers and streams and intermittent streams with perennial pools.

As expected, the Iowa Legislature introduced SF 2363, affectionately referred to as the Dirty Water Bill, in the early weeks of the 2006 session. Chapter volunteers and staff prepared briefing books and we lobbied senators sitting on the Environmental Protection Committee to abandon the unnecessary bill. Our opposition lobbied hard as well and the bill eventually passed, albeit a much different version than what was introduced. Our next move was to lobby the governor to veto the bill. Gov. Vilsack signed the legislation and it went into effect. Although the law is still unnecessary, the water quality standards rules are still in effect. We will continue to monitor progression with implementing the rules.

Antidegradation is another component of the Clean Water Act where Iowa's rules are inconsistent. Although this component has been pushed back due to the time needed to implement the first two priorities (protected flow and general use) of the rules passed last spring, we will continue to work with the DNR to ensure Iowa comes into compliance with the federal rule.

### MERCURY

For two years, I kept hearing that Iowa doesn't have a mercury problem. I never could understand how we would know that for sure because only 30 some fish are tested each year from 20 some sites. Sierra Club Conservation Organizer Tarah Heinzen dedicated much of her time in Iowa to encouraging the DNR to test more fish for mercury and to post fish advisories on the department's website.

Finally, the DNR is posting advisories for mercury. As of October 30, 2006, the DNR is advising that only one meal per week of the fish mentioned due to elevated levels of mercury at five sites. They are:

- Nine Eagles Lake in Decatur County (largemouth bass)
- Black Pit located in Lester Milligan Park in Mason City in Cerro Gordo County (largemouth bass)
- The Cedar River from the Highway 218 bridge at Floyd (Floyd Co.) to the Iowa/Minnesota state line (smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern pike)
- The Upper Iowa River from the Lower Dam in eastern Winnebago County to the County Road W-20 bridge approximately 5.5 miles upriver (northwest) from Decorah (smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern pike)
- The Volga River upstream of the Hwy C2W bridge at Volga in western Clayton County; including the Little Volga River and the North Branch Volga River (smallmouth bass)

As part of the chapter's commitment to environmental justice, we have reached out to the Asian and Latino populations to educate them about the dangers of eating fish that may be contaminated with mercury. Posters printed in Vietnamese, Lao, Cambodian and English were distributed to Asian food stores stating the dangers of eating mercury-tainted fish. Spanish-language brochures were distributed to health care agencies with the same message as the Asian-language posters.

### CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS (CAFOs)

#### Director Discretion Rule

The EPC approved the final version of the Director Discretion Rule (also known as the Clean Water Rule and the Department Authority Rule) at its June 2006 meeting. The rule amends Chapter 65, Animal Feeding Operations.

"The amendments authorize the Director to condition or deny a construction permit, to modify or disapprove a manure management plan, or to prohibit construction of a proposed confinement feeding operation at the proposed location if the Director concludes, after an evaluation by the Department, that the proposed confinement feeding operation or proposed expansion of a confinement feeding operation would reasonably be expected to cause: pollution of a water of the state; violation of state water quality standards; or an unreasonable burden on natural resources or the environment due to the current concentration of confinement feeding operations or associated manure application fields in a specific area. The amendments also authorize the Director, after Department evaluation and conclusion of similar impacts, to deny a construction permit, to disapprove a nutrient management plan, or to prohibit construction of a proposed open feedlot operation or proposed expansion of an existing open feedlot operation."

While the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations enthusiastically supported the rule, the agricultural industry adamantly opposed it. ARRC members heard from both sides of the issue. At their August meeting, on a motion from Rep. Danny Carroll (R-House 75), ARRC members objected to the rule. Sen. Michael Connolly (D-Senate 14) and Rep. Marcella Frevert (D-House 7) opposed the objection. ARRC members approved objection language at their October meeting but the rules became effective in August 2006.

#### Proposed NPDES Rule for CAFOs

In response to the Second Circuit Court's opinion in the Waterkeeper case, the EPA came out with proposed National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit Regulation and Effluent Limitation Guidelines for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations last summer. A group of Sierra Club members attended a public information session facilitated by the EPA in Ames in July. The Chapter, along with Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (ICCI) and the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP) submitted comments about the proposed rules in August. The chapter's position is that the newly proposed rules are not stringent enough. For example, EPA estimates that approximately 25 percent fewer CAFOs will ultimately receive NPDES permits under its proposed rule than under the requirements of the 2003 rule struck down by the Second Circuit Court. But, the DNR has determined that "the most visible threat to maintaining good water quality in Iowa surface waters is the recent expansion of the livestock industry."

### ENERGY

#### Cool Cities Campaign

Sierra Club launched its Cool Cities Campaign so communities across America can respond to the threat of global warming with smart energy solutions. These "Cool Cities" are taking decisive action to reduce heat-trapping emissions, lower energy bills, save taxpayer dollars and protect our environment. Two Iowa mayors – Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie and more recently Dubuque Mayor Roy Buol – have signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, the first step to becoming a Cool City.

#### Des Moines Mayor's Task Force on Energy and Environment

Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie organized his Mayor's Task Force on Energy and the Environment and Chapter Vice Chair Jane Clark and I have been actively participating.

#### LS Power Plant Construction

National Sierra Club hired an organizer to stop LS Power (a coal-fired, merchant power plant) from building a power plant in Cedar Falls. Mark Kresowik's contract expires January 1, 2007, but national is seeking funding to continue the position.

### PUBLIC LAND PROTECTION

#### Loess Hills

A chapter committee organized to work on Loess Hills issues met with DNR Director Jeff Vonk and other DNR staff in November 2005 to discuss the department's plan for the Loess Hills. This is an ongoing project.

#### Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Deborah Williamson of Fairfield, David Bequeath of Davenport and I recently traveled to Washington to meet with members of Iowa's Congressional delegation in support of Alaska Wilderness. We asked for their support to stop the proposed drilling in the Arctic Refuge, eliminate funding for roads to log the Tongass National Forest and to stop gas leases near Lake Teshekpuk. (See article, page 5 Iowa Sierran.)

### OTHER ISSUES

#### Air Quality

I participated as the only representative of the public on DNR's federal Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) and the Clean Air Mercury Rule (CAMR) work group, representing Sierra Club. The Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter, opposed the Clean Air Interstate Rule absent a more stringent timetable because it will not achieve enough reductions to restore clean air in a timely manner. The bulk of the reductions under CAIR do not occur until 2015. The Sierra Club also opposes the Clean Air Mercury Rule because it includes the unprecedented cap and trading of a hazardous air pollutant.

The DNR has just recently completed a weeklong process improvement on construction permit applications. I was again the only public representative. The DNR and industry wanted to totally eliminate waivers of stack testing and public comments. We will have to develop a plan to be sure the public gets to comment on the air quality permits. There are already 25 ethanol permits issued with 14 or more in the hopper.

#### Website

Web surfers are checking out our Chapter website. In September 2006, the site logged 11,111 hits (358 per day) while in May 2006 there were 12,552 hits (404 per day). Page views were also down a bit between September and May from 12,474 to 11,070 respectively. However, readers hailed from 41 different countries in September and 38 in May up from December 2004 when readers from 23 different countries viewed the site.

#### Endorsements

This fall was political season and the chapter sent out questionnaires to candidates for their responses to their positions on the environment. As a result, the chapter endorsed 47 candidates (one for governor, two for Congress, one for Iowa Agriculture Secretary, 10 Iowa Senate and 33 Iowa House). The list of endorsements is available at <http://iowa.sierraclub.org>.

#### Local Sierra Group Development

A chapter priority is to provide support to the various Sierra Groups across the state. Thanks to Organizer Mark Kresowik, the Cedar Prairie Group near Cedar Falls/Waterloo is in the process of reorganizing. The LS Power Project and having an organizer in the area gave impetus to a revitalization of the group.

Staff and volunteers met with members in Spencer in May to discuss organizing a Prairie Lakes Group in northern Iowa. Since then, members have elected officers and submitted bylaws for certification. Once national approves the Group's bylaws, the Prairie Lakes Group will bring Iowa's Group total to nine.

A group of members began meeting in the Mason City area in 2005. Enthusiasm waned and in 2007 the chapter will plan to revisit the area and help to rekindle that enthusiasm.

## ••• Chapter Election Ballot Inside •••

Sierra Club Iowa Chapter  
3839 Merle Hay Road, Suite 280  
Des Moines, IA 50310

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Permit No. 1611  
Des Moines, IA

## Iowa Chapter Executive Committee Election Ballot and Statements

The Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Iowa Chapter of Sierra Club is made up of eleven members elected by the chapter membership in December. Members elected begin their term at the first meeting in January and serve a three-year term. The ExCom meets six or more times a year at locations throughout the state. Offices of chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, and committee chairs are selected from the ExCom. The following candidates are submitted for your consideration for election to the Iowa Chapter of Sierra Club Executive Committee. Write-in candidates may also be submitted on the ballot below.

### Phyllis Mains Van Wert

I enthusiastically submit my name for nomination to the ExCom of the Iowa Chapter of Sierra Club. The best I have to offer is my passion to protect the environment and preserve wilderness. While more local and federal pro-environmental candidates were elected in Iowa this year, we still face serious challenges. My husband and I live in rural, southern Iowa, west of Van Wert.

I bring to the table some experience as a Sierra Club leader in Western Washington State:

- Reorganized and served as Chair of the Snohomish Group;
  - Served on Cascade Chapter committees (Political & Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal) and met monthly with the Cascade Chapter;
  - Served on a Steering Committee that was awarded an EPEC grant resulting in the Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal now before Congress;
  - Organized volunteer opportunities in Snohomish County and worked on federal, state & local political campaigns;
  - Testified at federal, state and local hearings on environmental issues.
  - Worked with coalitions of environmental groups such as Audubon, The Mountaineers, Friends of Washington, Alaska Coalition, etc. and know the value and strength of uniting on common causes;
- \*Received Sierra Club training in Political and Grassroots Organizing.

In Iowa I have worked passionately to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by organizing phone banks and a protest against Exxon/Mobil. Issues in Iowa that most arouse my passions are factory farming, with its negative impact on air and water, and working for pro-environmental political candidates. I am humbled and impressed by the work of Iowa Sierrans.

### Ginger Soelberg Johnston

In placing my name on the ballot as a candidate for the Sierra Club Iowa Chapter ExCom, I'm seeking to continue my work with other environmentalists to help protect our natural resources. My involvement with Sierra has grown from my love of the outdoors and a desire to do my part to protect the few remaining natural areas in Iowa. I am active locally in the Central Iowa Sierra Group, working on environmental concerns and conservation issues including clean air, clean water and land use. I also serve as Treasurer and Fundraising Chair for the Central Iowa Group. I am a water quality monitor and work with Beaver Creek and Raccoon River watershed groups. I have been on the State Excom the past three years, serving as Secretary for the Chapter. Before moving to the Des Moines area, I grew up and lived in the Sioux City area, which helps me have a statewide perspective. The Missouri River and Loess Hills issues are especially important to me, and I am on the Loess Hills Committee for the Chapter. I feel I can listen, communicate, and work as a team with the other ExCom members in making a difference for the environment.

### Steve Veysey Ames

Born and raised in eastern Canada, I've lived in Ames and worked at Iowa State University for over 25 years, currently as the manager of the Chemical Instrumentation Facility. I have been active in the Sierra Club of Iowa for the past eight years, and for several years with the Iowa Environmental Council, IOWATER, and other conservation organizations. I also currently serve as the Fisheries and Environment Protection Coordinator for the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association (HFFA).

My primary environmental interest is water quality. In the past I represented HFFA on the state Technical Advisory Committee for Water Quality Standards and have been active in challenging bad policies, bad procedures, and bad permits. Last year I was an active member of the coalition that finally forced DNR to adopt the "fishable / swimmable" presumption of water quality rules required by the federal Clean Water Act, only to have the legislature castrate the rules with their "Dirty Water Bill". Obviously we still have a lot of work to do.

I have received numerous conservation awards from HFFA, and in 2002 I received the Iowa Sierra Club distinguished service award for efforts related to French Creek and other water quality issues. In 2003 I served on the point-source work group as part of the Governor's Water Quality Summit initiative.

## From the Chair

By Pam Mackey-Taylor

By now most of you are well aware that the Iowa House has switched from Republican-controlled to Democrat-controlled. The Iowa Senate has changed from joint control to Democrat-controlled. The Democrats retained control of the Governor's seat while the Republicans took control of the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Iowa Chapter endorsed Chet Culver in the general election in his race for governor. Mr. Culver responded to our questionnaire about environmental issues. In July Candidate Culver visited our executive committee meeting. The format of that meeting was for several executive committee members to pose questions to Mr. Culver, as well as allowing for some discussion between the executive committee and Mr. Culver. When questioned about what he would tell polluters about water quality, Mr. Culver said "They are welcome to stay in the state if they can follow environmental protection. Some big operators are more committed than others." Mr. Culver also indicated that he intends to follow through with Governor Vilsack's proposal for \$50 million on clean up of Iowa's waters. The executive committee expressed concern about the opportunity for local input in the matrix for confinement operations. Mr. Culver indicated "the matrix does not weigh local input enough". He also said, "we really need to have a commitment to protecting the local watersheds". In addition to these issues we discussed protection of the Loess Hills and having more public lands and recreation areas in Iowa, and about funding for the Wildlife Diversity Program.

The Sierra Club endorsed a number of candidates for the Iowa House and Senate. Most of those candidates won their elections. Every year we keep a scorecard of the house and senate votes related to environmental issues. We monitor the votes made by each representative and senator. In addition we develop a candidate questionnaire concerning environmental issues. Our endorsement process reviews those scorecards as well as the questionnaires.

This year the Iowa Chapter formed a Political Action Committee (PAC). The PAC donated to three Iowa Senate races, four Iowa House races, and to Secretary of Agriculture candidate Denise O'Brien. All of the senate and house candidates that the PAC contributed to won their elections – Senator Daryl Beall, Representative Bob Kressig, Senator Robert Hogg, Representative Ro Foege, Senator Steve Warnstadt, Representative Mark Davitt, and Representative Donovan Olson.

We look forward to working with the Legislature and Governor on environmental issues in the coming year.

## Ballot Instructions:

1. Leave your address label in place on the back of this ballot. Only ballots with the address label in place will be counted. The address label will be used to separate individual from joint ballots and will be blanked-out before the ballots are counted.

2. Cut ballot from the page and mark your votes. *Vote for no more than three candidates.* Ballots with more than three candidates marked will not be counted. Individual members mark their votes in the left-hand column. For joint memberships, one person must use the left-hand column to vote, the second person must mark his or her votes in the column marked "joint member".

3. Fold ballot so that address label is on outside. Place ballot in an envelope and mail to:

**Sierra Club Iowa Chapter  
ELECTION BALLOT  
3839 Merle Hay Road, Suite 280  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310**

### Sierra Club Iowa Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom)

## Election Ballot

Vote for no more than three (3) candidates.

	Individual Member	Joint Member
Phyllis Mains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ginger Soelberg	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steve Veysey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write-In _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write-In _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write-In _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*BALLOT MUST BE RETURNED BY JAN. 6, 2007



## Sustainable Funding for Iowa's Natural Resources

Iowa's current funding for supporting, improving, and protecting its natural resources is slightly over 1% of the total budget for the State of Iowa. This means approximately one penny of every dollar is directed toward supporting natural resources and soil and water agricultural issues. The 2006 Iowa Legislature contended this is not sufficient to maintain Iowa's natural resources nor to provide the citizens of Iowa with quality services. In addition, the funding is not guaranteed every year. Iowa has been one of the lowest funded states in the nation for natural resource funding.

In the spring of 2006, Iowa legislators passed House File 2797 establishing an advisory committee to study opportunities for sustainable natural resource funding. It was mandated by HF 2797 that the Iowa Department of Natural Resources chair a committee to explore sustainable funding options and present a report to the Legislature in January 2007. These options are intended to assist Iowa's current funding in providing support for natural resources and natural resource related public activities.

The legislation also called for the director of the Department of Natural Resources to chair the committee and provide administrative staffing. A report from the advisory committee is to contain the following components:

- A sustainable funding plan for the conservation of Iowa's natural resources;
- A summary of sustainable funding initiatives implemented in surrounding states;
- The estimated revenue needed to implement the plan and accomplishments that would be achieved if it is implemented; and
- An analysis of Iowans' willingness to pay for identified conservation actions.

The legislation requested organizations to designate an appointee to this committee, including:

- The Secretary of Agriculture
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Ducks Unlimited
- Pheasants Forever
- Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards
- Iowa Farm Bureau
- Iowa Farmers Union
- The Nature Conservancy
- Iowa Environmental Council
- Iowa Renewable Fuels Association
- Sierra Club of Iowa
- Izaak Walton League of Iowa
- State Conservation Districts of Iowa
- Two members of the Iowa Senate and two members of the Iowa House of Representatives

This sustainable funding effort is to identify and pursue financial mechanisms that will help provide money specifically for programs that will support and enhance the quality of our natural resources. Many states in the Midwest have sustainable funding mechanisms in place and have seen great improvement in their natural resources and the public's access and use of them.

The committee is comprised of members from diverse Iowa organizations who are conscious of Iowa's natural resource needs and bring diverse knowledge and a broad perspective to the process. After reviewing materials, hearing presentations, and deliberating, the committee neared the completion of their legislative charge during

the last months of 2006. They have defined and categorized natural resources, for this task, into three groups: 1) fish, wildlife, natural areas, 2) soil and water, and 3) parks and trails. They have also identified a \$150 million need to help support the inadequate funding these natural resources are currently allotted. Possible sustainable funding sources have been identified and are being researched as to their viability.

Because public input has been an important part of this process, you are able to review the progress the committee has made through the meeting summaries posted on the Sustainable Funding website at: <http://www.iowadnr.com/sustainablefunding/index.html>. Comments could be made online through November 17 about the progress and decisions the committee has made (see Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter's comments on this page.) The committee was also interested in determining the desire of the public to support and promote sustainable funding for Iowa's natural resources through a survey.

As a continued effort to inform the public, a public Iowa Communications Network (ICN) meeting was held at locations across Iowa on November 9, which allowed interaction between the public and the committee via video conferencing. Location sites of the ICN meeting were publicized on the DNR Sustainable Funding website and sent to publications for posting. This meeting was presented by the Sustainable Funding Committee which will ultimately make a recommendation to the General Assembly for creating a sustainable funding source for natural resources.

## Sierra Club Letter to Committee

November 17, 2006

To the Sustainable Funding Task Force Members:

Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter supports the effort to secure sustainable funding for protection of Iowa's natural resources. We believe it is necessary in order to protect Iowa's natural areas, Iowa's natural diversity, special landscapes, species of concern, and to improve the quality of Iowa's waters.

We note that in the table that was handed out during the ICN meetings there is a line stating that sustainable funding will "protect Iowa's natural heritage". We believe that there should also be a goal to protect Iowa's threatened and special places and places of preserve quality added to the funding table handed out at the ICN meeting. Among those places that need to be protected are Iowa's rare and endangered remaining native prairies and savannas. The Loess Hills landform and the Mississippi River bluff lands also need to have particular and special emphasis in any plan to protect natural areas.

As Iowa cities sprawl outward and as pressure increases for development and other uses, there is an increased risk of losing natural areas. We believe that funds need to be available to purchase those natural areas and to protect them. The Mississippi River bluff lands and the Loess Hills are both under extreme development pressures.

The National Park Service has developed materials related to the high quality areas that need to be preserved in the Loess Hills. There are a number of willing sellers in the area, if funds were available. Since this is a special landscape area of state and national significance, where most of Iowa's remaining native prairies are found, it is highly desirable to protect as much of this area as possible as soon as possible. The Loess Hills are highly threatened due to encroachment near urban areas, mining of soil, and loss of soil due to erosion. The Loess Hills landscape is the most erodible region of the state. Invasive species are also making significant encroachments into the native prairies.

Since the creation of the Loess Hills Alliance by the Iowa Legislature, expertise has been developed in western Iowa through the Loess Hills Alliance Stewardship Committee. Funding to increase the number of trained landowners and volunteers, and refined operations for management would enable the Stewardship Committee to enhance their efforts to meet the needs of the Loess Hills region. Sustainable funding from the state could build upon these stewardship skills developed in recent years.

As Iowa cities sprawl outward and as the pressure increases for development or other uses, there is an increased risk of losing our few remaining natural areas all across Iowa. There are too many use demands for our too-few

parks and wildlife areas. We believe that funds need to be available to purchase additional natural areas (from willing sellers) and to protect them for the use of the public.

In the ICN handout, there appeared to be more focus on "management" and "access", rather than on protection and preservation. We believe that protection and preservation of public lands must be accomplished before either management or access can take place. Therefore, we recommend a greater focus in this proposal on protection and preservation, either through direct acquisition from willing sellers, or through permanent easement.

For a number of natural areas already in public ownership, there have been no surveys or inventories of the plant and animal species present on the land. In other areas the surveys may have been focused on a subset of species, and these areas would benefit from additional species surveys. When we do not know what is living on a public land, we do not know how to adequately protect the area.

Regarding the status of Iowa's wildlife, we believe the focus should be on protecting and improving the status of Iowa's threatened and endangered species, and on the status of Iowa's species of population concern. The state's Comprehensive Wildlife Management Plan, now called the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan and recently approved by the Department of the Interior needs to be included and given priority in the sustainable funding proposal.

There are references here and there in the proposed table to "improving water quality" and "reducing soil erosion", and there appears to be an emphasis on watershed improvement efforts in the proposed table. At this

stage of the process, we still do not know how effective any of those efforts are or will be. We encourage a smaller amount of funding for the watershed improvements until the effectiveness has been determined.

However, we do not believe the Environmental Services side of DNR has been mentioned for funding. The ability of DNR to enforce the rules on the books could improve with funding to provide sufficient staff for enforcement and adequate pollution control. A portion of the watershed improvement funds could be designated for staff and enforcement to address water quality problems.

We believe that the sustainable funds should be available to support staffing needs to care for state-owned parks, preserves and wildlife areas. Staff is not able to address threats to our public lands, including invasive species. We believe that this need should be spelled out in the funding table presented at the ICN meeting.

We believe that sustainable funding will help acquire public lands for the public, will protect natural areas that are in short supply in Iowa, will support protection of species of concern and threatened and endangered species, and will assist in improving Iowa's water quality.

Sincerely,  
Pam Mackey-Taylor  
Chair, Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club

**Help Iowa's Natural Resources!**

## Tax Checkoff Reminder

Donate part or all of your tax refund to the Fish and Wildlife Fund and your money is for the birds and frogs and butterflies and....

**Your dollars will support:**

- Peregrine Falcon, Osprey and Trumpeter Swan restoration
- Assisting species that most need help
- Conservation of important Habitat
- Wildlife Conservation Education

Every penny of your donation goes to the Wildlife Diversity Program.



## COOL CITIES - Solving Global Warming One City at a Time

By Jerry Neff, Chair, Eagle View Group

After years of environmentalists warning of the dangers of global warming, Earth residents are starting to wake up and feel the heat. On February 16, 2005, 141 nations signed the Kyoto Protocol International Global Warming Treaty. These countries have pledged to reduce their carbon dioxide pollution and thus put off the effects of global warming. Missing from the list of countries that signed the pledge was, not surprisingly, the United States.

On the same day the Kyoto Protocol took effect, Seattle Mayor Greg Nicholas took a leadership role and created the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. This agreement is gathering support across the country and has earned the support of the US Conference of Mayors. To date, more than 300 mayors in 38 states have pledged to reduce global warming pollution citywide to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012!

Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign is working with mayors to help them get the information they need to become a Cool City. Locally I have visited with three of the mayors in the QC, Mayor Winborn in Davenport, Mayor Schwiebert of Rock Island and Mayor Welvaert in Moline. Due to scheduling conflicts with Bettendorf's mayor, I've made two unsuccessful attempts to visit him but plan to see him in December. I also plan to visit mayors in Clinton and Muscatine. The purpose of my visits is to talk with the mayors, see what they are already doing about global warming, pass out detailed information on how to achieve their goal and to urge them to sign on to the Cool Cities Pledge.

Here is a brief account of my progress so far. The first visit was to Davenport with Mayor Winborn. He welcomed me to his office and was very attentive. He did not seem to be very knowledgeable about the city's transit system (whether the buses use compressed natural gas or bio diesel). When I questioned him about the energy saving technology of the new Figge Building he said it has timer controlled blinds to keep out the sun. Like the other mayors I talked with, he made no commitment but promised to bring the issue to the city council.

My second visit was to Rock Island's Mayor Schwiebert and the City Manager. I was impressed with the number of environmental awards on display in the office and during our visit the Mayor talked a lot about the city's environmental achievements. MetroLink buses use John Deere's clean

burning diesel engines. The city plans to turn a downtown warehouse into condos with the major feature being a green roof for energy efficiency. I suggested they consider phasing out their inefficient vehicles and replacing them with hybrids. The Mayor's own car is a hybrid.

Visiting with Mayor Welvaert in Moline was enlightening. The city has just completed its new LEED Certified (Leadership in Energy and Efficient Design) Library, and a LEED Certified police station is under construction. Moline uses soy diesel in the city's trucks. Mayor Welvaert said he would go over the Cool Cities Plan with the Council. As with my other visits I promised to make follow up visits

within the next few months.

Global warming has been getting a lot of press lately and government leaders are feeling pressure to take action. Even President Bush has shown signs of weakening his resistance to changing the course. Scientists agree that a real effort to use less energy will result in less carbon dioxide emissions and delay effects of global warming. The most successful Cool Cities are engaging their entire communities to help meet the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. Working together we can make our cities more livable and vibrant while lowering energy bills, creating good jobs, and tackling a global problem.

## Wal-Mart Stopped From Building in Iowa City Flood Plain

By Pam Mackey-Taylor, Chair, Iowa Chapter

This past summer Wal-Mart retreated from building a Super Center in a flood plain in Iowa City. Late in 2004 or early 2005, Wal-Mart approached the Iowa City city manager with a deal to purchase about 22 acres of city-owned land for \$3 million. In exchange the city would agree to rezone the land and would grant special exceptions to allow a drive up pharmacy and gas station on the land.

The city owns an additional 32 acres next to the proposed Wal-Mart site. The Wal-Mart contract required the city to deny any Wal-Mart competitors who wanted to build on that land.

Wal-Mart planned to put 10 acres of fill on the site; two acres were going to be directly in the flood plain. One corner of the store was planned to sit in the flood plain. To compensate for building in the flood plain, a moat-like ditch was going to be built on the periphery of the site.

A citizen group called Iowa City Stop Wal-Mart, led by Gary Sanders, became concerned about the scheme, about numerous issues related to the process of how the project was being pushed through the city, and about the wisdom of building the store in a flood plain.

Gary Sanders, along with 1000 Friends of Iowa, filed two lawsuits related to the process issues involved in selling the land to Wal-Mart. The Johnson County district court ruled in favor of the city and the Board of Adjustment. Mr. Sanders

and 1000 Friends began appealing the court's rulings. After the ruling in those lawsuits, the Iowa City officials and Wal-Mart continued pursuing the sale of the land, issuing building permits, and the planning for building the store.

In July 13, 2006, the Iowa City Board of Adjustment denied Wal-Mart a permit to build in the flood plain. After the permit was denied, the city attorney stated that the permit was not required. With the July 31, 2006, closing date fast approaching, Wal-Mart asked for an extension to purchase the property, extending beyond the time that any lawsuits related to the property and permits were settled. However the city council declined to extend the closing for the property.

Faced with a forced closing date for the sale, an appeal of the prior lawsuits and the potential for a series of lawsuits over the flood plain issue, Wal-Mart walked away from the deal.

During the Board of Adjustment meeting, it was very obvious how concerned board members were about the side effects and secondary impacts of filling in the floodplain. They discussed how cavalier engineers and builders are about filling floodplains without considering the affects on neighboring properties. One member said that when an engineering solution is considered next to an environmental solution, the environment always loses out. This time the Board of Adjustment voted to protect the environment and the neighboring properties.

## The Time Has Come for "Local Control"

By Donna Buell

America's drinking water, rivers and lakes are at risk from giant, corporate-owned factory farms. These Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) confine thousands of animals in one facility, and produce staggering amounts of animal waste in the process (500 million tons per year). Too often, this waste leaks into our rivers and streams, fouls our air, contaminates our drinking water and spreads disease. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), hog, chicken and cattle waste has polluted 35,000 miles of rivers in 22 states and contaminated groundwater in 17 states.

In Iowa, the issue of "local control" for the siting of CAFOs was a hot topic during the 2006 election campaigns, and it promises to be an issue for the next legislative session. This article highlights a few of the situations that have prompted the Iowa Chapter of Sierra Club to support local control.

Past legislative and regulatory efforts to deal with setback distances, construction standards, permit thresholds and the matrix have not dealt sufficiently with the issue of concentration. Some counties already have too great a concentration of animals. Hardin County has one million hogs, and all completely in compliance with existing law! Other parts of Iowa should have the right to say, "We see what's going on in Hardin County and we don't want that for our county."

A woman I know grew up on a farm in Northwest Iowa. Her family raised livestock and she helped scoop manure, both with a shovel and a tractor. She is not an urbanite who moved to the country with unrealistic expectations. When the woman went down to the creek where she had played as a child, she saw fish gasping for air and literally jumping out of the water to their deaths on dry land. Her family's farm is surrounded by CAFOs, all sited in compliance with the existing law, yet, the woman can no longer enjoy the

water resources on her family's property. People should have the right to say, "Enough is enough. My neighbor's desire to make profit cannot supersede my right to enjoy my own property."

The aesthetic appearance of a water resource is part of the "swimmable" water quality criteria. Water is not "swimmable" if it looks so uninviting that nobody will jump in. Residents at Lake Panorama have reported finding dead pigs in the lake, pigs that washed down the streams from CAFOs and into Lake Panorama. Maybe a dead pig is not that different from a dead fish in its effect on the overall water quality of Lake Panorama, but who wants to go swimming after viewing a sight like that? Lake Panorama should have the right to say, "We want swimmable water."

Analogous to the aesthetics of the water is the odor in the air around our recreational areas. Manure from confinements—sewage that is stored for up to a year at a time where it ferments and emits over 200 chemicals—sends off a most offensive smell to be blown in the wind, or to just settle and hang over an area for extended periods of time. Nobody is going to spend their precious free time voluntarily enduring those odors to recreate in rural Iowa. It is unpleasant to drive through some parts of the state. And it is embarrassing to try to tell out-of-state RAGBRAI bicycle riders that "it's just the smell of money." It is the noxious odor of air pollution that would not be tolerated in more densely populated areas. Counties should have the right to say, "We encourage visitors to our area, and we won't be ashamed when you come."

Particulates and other pollutants in the air from CAFOs have placed Iowa in the unenviable position of having winter air pollution that at times equals the worst in the country. Often in the winter, one cannot see very far down the roadway. The sun is hidden in the fog. A couple moved back to Iowa from California because the California smog unduly aggravated the woman's asthma. But, she found that her health was just as adversely impacted in rural Iowa as it

was in the California coastal city. People should have the right to say, "Fresh air, stary nights and wide open spaces are the reason we live in the country."

County residents have no say when CAFOs are sited near their schools, churches or other public gathering places. For example, Iowa City has no right to stop a CAFO from being sited near its shopping malls or its city limits. Counties should have the right to say, "Keep CAFOs away from our public gathering places."

Situations differ in counties across the state. Sioux County is not the same as Dickinson County, nor is either the same as Winneshiek County. Sioux County has a long-standing tradition of livestock production, and an environmental tolerance level commensurate thereto with this tradition. Dickinson County has over \$150 million annual revenues from its recreational tourism industry, and over \$1 billion valuation in the properties surrounding the Iowa Great Lakes. To protect these revenues and property values, Dickinson County has a significantly lower tolerance level for air and water pollution. Winneshiek County has many karst formations and open sink holes which allow livestock sewage to seep directly into the aquifer and then show up again in neighbors' drinking water and spring-fed ponds. Prime cold-water trout streams, such as French Creek, are not protected from manure run-off. Counties should have the right to say, "Our residents moved here to enjoy our unique cultural values and geographic areas, and we will protect our own uniqueness." Local control with strong state regulations and enforcement would allow each county to site CAFO's in a more appropriate manner than is currently allowed by law.

Talk to your legislators about this issue. Ask them if they would support legislation giving rural communities local control over the siting of industrial animal production facilities in addition to state regulations.



## WILDERNESS WEEK VISITS TO D.C. BY IOWANS

By Neila Seaman, Chapter Director

Three Iowans representing the Sierra Club traveled to Washington, D.C. in September. Neila Seaman of Des Moines, Deborah Williamson of Fairfield, and David Bequeath of Davenport, attended meetings and visited with members of Iowa's Congressional delegation as part of Alaska Coalition's Wilderness Week. The Alaska Coalition is comprised of approximately 1,000 conservation (including the Sierra Club), sporting, religious and labor groups working together to preserve public lands in Alaska.

This year's program focused on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Tongass National Forest and Lake Teshekpuk (T-Lake). The goal of the trip was to persuade Congressional representatives to vote against ANY future legislation that includes a provision to allow drilling in our nation's largest and wildest refuge (the Arctic Refuge); to ensure the House's amendment eliminating taxpayer subsidized road-building and logging in the Tongass National Forest is included in the final Interior Appropriations Bill; and to sign a letter forwarded by Reps. Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD) and John D. Dingell (D-MI) to U.S. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne that would put a halt to the September lease sale at Teshekpuk Lake.

### Background

Located in the northeast corner of Alaska, the coastal plain is considered the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's biological heart. Currently three species of bears – black, grizzly and polar – call the coastal plain home. The polar bear's most important on-shore denning area is in the coastal plain. Activists are concerned that oil drilling and the research that comes with drilling will disrupt the polar bear's routine and they won't come back. The coastal plain is also important to 180 bird species that migrate there from 50 states and four continents.

The Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska represents 25 percent of the world's temperate rain forests. The archipelago (islands in the ocean) includes 21,000 islands and attracts 11 million visitors per year. The majority of the area consists of rock and ice, but trees are the biological heart of the region. The loggers rent the land and the U.S. Forest Service pays to build the roads. In 2004, the U.S. taxpayers subsidized the logging industry to the tune of \$49 million with a return of \$1 million in the Tongass alone.

Teshekpuk Lake is considered the biological heart of western Alaska. A maze of small lakes and tundra wetlands located in the National Petroleum Reserve, the T-Lake special area consists of 1.2 million acres and it's an important birding area. The Bush administration is attempting to change laws that will provide that the leases granted to oil companies never expire.

Participants heard from members of the Gwich'in tribe that the health of the community depends on not drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Porcupine caribou that migrate from the Porcupine River in Canada to the Refuge provide food for the tribe. Drilling has been proposed in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the exact spot where the caribou calve and nurse in the summer. The Gwich'in said that their tribe members are very healthy and active into old age. They added that health is suffering with the people who reside near the Prudhoe Bay oil and reserves due to emissions. The people there depend on whale and caribou to feed their families because jobs are hard to come by and the natives aren't offered many of the jobs in oil and drilling.

There are economic benefits of outdoor wilderness and eco-tourism. John Sterling of the Conservation Alliance, a non-profit organization of outdoor businesses said the outdoor industry depends on wild places. He added that resource extraction is not a sustainable use of public lands. More information about the Conservation Alliance is available on the web at <http://conservationalliance.com>. Andy Baker, who operates Guest House in Anchorage, shared with the group about "The Real Alaska." The group consists of more than 200 Alaska businesses that support the continued use of the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for eco-tourism, recreation and hunting. According to Baker, these businesses contribute \$50-\$60 million a year to the Alaskan economy. The businesses are listed at [www.therealalaska.net](http://www.therealalaska.net).

### Congressional Visits

After two days of training, the participants met with Sen. Charles Grassley and Rep. Jim Leach and with staff from the offices of Sen. Tom Harkin, Rep. Leonard Boswell and Rep. Jim Nussle.

During the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-2006), the Senate voted on six issues related to Alaska (see inset). Grassley voted the wrong way all six times while Harkin voted the right way five times and was absent one vote. The House also voted six times on Alaska issues. Leach voted the right way five times and was absent once. Boswell voted right four of the six times and Nussle voted the wrong way for all six votes.

When asked why he supports drilling in Alaska, Grassley responded that he has always supported it because the U.S. is so dependent on the Middle East for oil. He said he believes in conservation but "...we need all the fossil fuel we can get." He said he supports logging in the Tongass because "[Sen. Ted] Stevens [R-Alaska] claims there is an obligation by the federal government that the public lands would be in Alaska's domain" and that there is "confusion" around whether Tongass is a federal or state government designation. Stevens argues that it's unfair to single out the Tongass as protected because the Forest Service contracts thousands of acres across the country for logging.

According to Todd Batta from Sen. Harkin's office, Sen. Harkin opposes drilling in the Arctic Refuge because it's one of the few remaining "pristine places." Harkin visited

the Refuge a few years ago and he believes that the U.S. can't "drill its way into energy independence. He prefers to put time and research money into new development of alternative energy sources.

Rep. Jim Leach has advocated an end to all logging on public land. He opposes subsidizing road building and believes more jobs can be related to hiking than for road building. He thinks it's unwise to consume all the oil available in the United States. He agrees that alternatives to petroleum—like wind and solar – are the way to go. About CAFÉ (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) "is the biggest no-brainer in Congress."

Alexis Taylor, Legislative Assistant for Rep. Leonard Boswell, said the Congressman believes Arctic drilling should be "the last resort but it's not off the table." Taylor agreed to check with the Congressman to determine why Boswell voted against eliminating the road-building subsidy in the Tongass and for the energy bill that included drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife refuge. She also agreed to ask the Congressman if he would sign the letter to Kempthorne that would stop the lease sale in T-Lake.

Aaron Burnett, Legislative Assistant for Rep. Jim Nussle, recently began covering the issues the group was promoting because two legislative assistants left Nussle's office since he won't be returning to Congress next year. Burnett said he would relay our request to keep Arctic drilling out of any legislation that comes up before the end of the Congress and to check with the Congressman on his position on the Tongass.



*David Bequeath of Davenport (third row, second from right), Chapter Director Neila Seaman (third row, fourth from right) and Deborah Williamson of Fairfield (fourth row, second from left) lobbied several of Iowa's Congressional delegation to support Alaska Wilderness legislation. The group traveled to Washington in September as part of the Alaska Coalition's Wilderness Week activities.*

## IOWA SIERRAN

Editor: Jane R. Clark  
Associate Editor: Jo Hudson

The Iowa Sierran is dedicated to informing members and other friends about environmental issues that affect Iowa. It is a forum for the expression of ideas on topics of environmental concern, as well as the voice of the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club. Articles with a by-line represent the research and opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Sierra Club.

We invite submissions of letters, articles, photographs and illustrations. Letters and articles must be complete, accurate and identified with your name, address and phone number(s).

**Deadlines are February 5 for the Spring issue; May 5 for the Summer issue; August 5 for the Autumn issue; and November 5 for the Winter issue.** Preference will be given to articles 400-1,000 words in length that relate to Iowa. Longer articles will be considered. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity, space and libel reasons. Copy should be typed or clearly handwritten, or copy may be submitted in text by e-mail. Other word processing formats may be acceptable--please call before sending. Articles sent by e-mail should be included in the body of the message, not sent as an attachment. If you must attach a file, use a Word document and send to [iowa.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:chapter@sierraclub.org).

Photos may be submitted. Your name, address and phone number(s), as well as all significant information describing the photo(s) must be included. Photos will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Display advertising may be accepted. Please contact the editor or executive committee (see Directory of this newsletter) before submitting an ad. Ad rates are: \$450 for full page; \$250 for half-page; \$125 for quarter page (11 x 17 page size); or \$16 per column-inch for camera-ready copy. Receive a 10% discount for the same ad with an annual contract (4 times/year); payment in advance is required. Column width is 3.2 inches, gutter (column spacing) is 0.3 inch. Placement of any ad is contingent upon availability of space, and ads must meet Sierra Club guidelines.

Classified ads are five cents per character, including punctuation. Enclose payment with order. Personal checks are acceptable, payable to Sierra Club Iowa Chapter. The editor reserves the right to reject any ad deemed inappropriate. Send classified ad information to: Sierra Club, 3839 Merle Hay Road, Suite 280, Des Moines, Iowa 50310.

A subscription to the Iowa Sierran is included in the cost of Sierra Club membership. For non-members, a subscription is \$5 per year.



# National Issues

## Sierra Club--A Driving Force in the November Elections SIERRA CLUB DECLARES VICTORY AS POMBO (CA-11) GOES DOWN

By Jerry Neff, Chair, Eagle View Group

The environment was the big winner in the November elections across the country. Green candidates were elected or reelected leaving environmentalists beaming the morning after. Perhaps one of the most important races was in California where Representative Richard Pombo, (R) an incumbent with many years in office was defeated by a newcomer. Pombo, who was chair of the Resources and Energy Committee had tried to eliminate the Endangered Species Act, privatize our National Parks, remove environmental restrictions on logging in our national forests and fought to repeal most laws that protect our natural resources from development or extraction.

(Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA) has been Chair of the House Resources Committee in the 109th Congress. This committee has jurisdiction over much conservation legislation as well as oversight of the Department of Interior. Rep. Pombo has pushed an extreme anti-environmental agenda for many years, and has been a foe of conservation.)

In Washington State, Senator Cantwell won reelection to another term. She is a champion of national forest protection.

So how did the Sierra Club help win this election? For the last six years or longer, we have been raising the bar on environmental education. By calling attention to the administration's environmental atrocities through letters to the editor, environmental fairs and rallies, by contacting our legislators with thousands of phone calls, letters, emails, post cards, and in-district visits to legislators' offices, we made our voices heard. In some parts of the country we bought radio and TV time, and put ads in newspapers. The public is now more aware of environmental problems than ever before. Global Warming is not only a household word, it is realized as a real threat to our future existence.

Below is a list of Environmental Voter Campaigns where Sierra Club ran intensive ground campaigns encouraging people to vote for:

CA--House Challenger Jerry McNerney against Rep. Richard Pombo

MI --Governor Jennifer Granholm and State Senator Andy Levin.

OH--Senate Candidate Sherrod Brown, Gubernatorial Candidate Ted Strickland, House Challenger John Cranley and House Challenger Mary Jo Kilroy.

PA--Senate Challenger Bob Casey, Governor Ed Rendell, and House Challenger Joe Sestak in Seventh District and House Challenger Jason Altmire in the Fourth District.

VA--House Challenger Phil Kellam against Rep. Thelma Drake

WA--Senator Maria Cantwell, House Challenger Darcy Burner, State Senator Rodney Tom and State Rep. Deb Wallace

(These campaigns involved intense door-to-door, phone bank and direct mail efforts targeting tens of thousands of voters in each site.)

Even though the election is over our work is never finished. At the Chapter level we plan to meet with newly elected officials to discuss our goals and what we would like to see accomplished during their terms. We will keep you informed. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Neila Seaman at [neila.seaman@sierraclub.org](mailto:neila.seaman@sierraclub.org) or call the office at 515-277-8868.

For detailed information on the Sierra Club Political Committee efforts to defeat Richard Pombo, go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/pressroom/releases/pr2006-11-07.asp>

## Americans Vote for Big Change, Not Big Oil Voters Nationwide Elect Candidates who Support Clean Energy

Washington, DC: The Sierra Club praised voters across the country for electing new local, state and national leaders who are ready to move America's energy future in a dramatically different direction.

"Voters clearly voted for big change, not Big Oil. They want new leadership to move America in a dramatically different direction," said Carl Pope, Sierra Club Executive Director. "And a big part of that change concerns energy security and enacting smart energy solutions that decrease our oil dependence, clean up our environment, curb global warming and create jobs."

"Voters elected a greener Congress and several greener governors. Now America can move forward in a new direction," said Cathy Duvall, Sierra Club Political Director. "That means ending subsidies to big oil and coal companies and instead reducing our oil addiction, reducing pollution, and taking meaningful steps to curb global warming. Americans want an energy plan that invests in wind and solar and other clean renewable energy sources; makes our

cars go farther on a gallon of gas and uses American technological know how to make better, more efficient products and create better jobs."

Never have more candidates, of both parties, run on energy and environmental issues. Voter concerns earlier this year over high gas prices deepened over the course of the election cycle into doubts about our current energy policy, about the lack of responsible leadership, the shortage of forward-looking solutions, the corrupting influence of the oil and gas interests, and finally to widespread voter concern about our energy security—the fact that our dependence on oil ties our fate to the most unstable parts of the world and increases the threat of global warming.

"This year, the Sierra Club ran one of the largest grassroots organizing effort in competitive House, Senate and Governor's races," said Duvall. "Sierra Club took our message of a new direction on energy door to door, neighbor to neighbor in hundreds of communities across America. We had thousands of members from our 450 groups working on the ground to educate voters and to get out the vote."

Following the election, Sierra Club volunteers will now help federal and state lawmakers act quickly and wisely on this call for a new direction in our energy policies. The group will be identifying and recommending smart, safe, clean, cheaper energy solutions that can be adopted quickly to break our oil addiction and curb global warming. This will include solutions like increasing fuel economy for cars and trucks and energy-efficient buildings, and stopping the rush to build coal-fired power plants.

"We are looking forward to working with newly elected officials in statehouses and in Washington to enact policies that create a new energy economy that cuts pollution and creates jobs," said Pope.

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## Landscape—From American Lands Alliance Big Opportunities for Forest Advocates in Our Nation's Capitol! Pro-Extraction Forces are Swept Out of Office

In a stunning reversal of power, Democrats swept to command in Washington on election night, capturing control of both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

For the conservation movement, and forest advocates in particular, this shift in power presents a long awaited opportunity to pro-actively protect and restore our national forests. Among the influential GOP incumbents toppled on November 7th were key figures on forest and environmental policy: House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (CA), and House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Charles Taylor (NC).

Below is short summary of some of the most important races that affect national forests, wildlife and public involvement in public lands issues.

### HOUSE

#### Pombo's Political Career Goes Extinct Jerry McNerney (D) v. Richard Pombo (R) in California

Representative Richard Pombo lost his bid for re-election to Democrat Jerry McNerney. Pombo, who chaired the powerful House Resources Committee, will go down in history as one of the most vehemently anti-environmental lawmakers in history. An avid private property rights zealot, Pombo was the chief architect of the effort to dismantle two of the most important conservation laws: the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which guarantees the public's "right-to-know" about logging, drilling and mining projects on public lands. As Resources Committee Chair, Pombo called the shots, moving damaging legislation forward, such as the Walden logging bill (HR 4200) while blocking bills that would protect forests and wilderness. In his quest to privatize public lands, Pombo proposed selling public lands including National Parks to "mining" interests and real estate developers. He advocated for reckless oil and gas drilling projects on federal land. Pombo has earned a 0% on American Lands' forest scorecard and is listed as one of the League of Conservation Voters "Dirty Dozen."

Clearly separating himself from Representative Pombo, Jerry McNerney, a wind energy expert, names environmental protection as one of his most urgent concerns. He believes that open spaces that preserve natural wilderness for recreation and enjoyment increase our quality of life. McNerney is against Pombo's proposal to sell off public lands and deny public access. He also believes that Washington, D.C. has a moral obligation to protect our nation's

natural heritage. McNerney supports strengthening environmental regulations such as the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act.

#### "Chainsaw" Charlie Bites the Sawdust! Heath Shuler (D) v. Charles Taylor (R) in North Carolina

Representative "Chainsaw" Charles Taylor, the powerful Chair of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which oversees the budget for the Department of Interior, Forest Service and EPA, lost his bid for re-election to Democrat Heath Shuler. Taylor who earned his nickname by authoring the infamous "Logging without Laws Rider" in 1995 is responsible for clearcutting thousands of acres of old growth forests by suspending every single natural resource law and slamming shut the door on public oversight. Voters in North Carolina swept Taylor out with 54% of the vote going to Shuler. Congressman Taylor has been a destructive force against national forests for years, most recently throwing his support behind the Bush administration's failed proposal to sell more than a quarter of a million acres of public lands to raise revenue to pay for rural schools and county roads in the fiscal 2007 budget.

Heath Shuler, a former Washington Redskin quarterback, and current real estate and land developer is strongly opposed to Bush's misguided plan to sell off national forests. As an avid hunter, Shuler does not want to see the loss of open space for hunting and recreation. He sees developing a habit of selling off public lands to pay for government programs as jeopardizing access to these areas. Shuler is a big supporter of National Parks and values the rivers, mountains and forests of North Carolina. He also sees forestry as a major part of the North Carolina's economy. Mr. Shuler promises to oppose any efforts to weaken the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.

### SENATE

#### Forest Roadless Areas Spell Victory for Cantwell in Washington state

Incumbent Democratic Senator Maria Cantwell beat back Republican challenger Mike McGavick by a large margin. Victor Maria Cantwell is one of our nation's strongest environmental leaders. She has been called an "environmental hero" by the League of Conservation Voters and has earned 100% on American Lands' forest scorecard as a steadfast and outspoken leader for forest protection. She is a champion of Roadless Area protection and is the original sponsor of the Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2006 to block Bush administration attempts to open 58.5 million acres of pristine, roadless forest. Cantwell's plan would permanently protect these forests from logging and road building.

McGavick, a former congressional staffer to Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA), would like to weaken logging protections on federal lands. A big supporter of local control over federal laws he described the Endangered Species Act as ineffective and pledged to "reform" the Act. McGavick also supports drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge increasing the development of coal, natural gas, and oil.

#### Hit the Road Burns!

#### Jon Tester (D) v. Conrad Burns (R) in Montana

In a hotly contested race, Republican incumbent Conrad Burns conceded defeat to Democratic challenger Jon Tester. Burns is on the League of Conservation Voters "Dirty Dozen" list of the most anti-environmental members of Congress. With an American Lands score of 0%, Senator Burns consistently voted against any protections for national forests. Burns is fond of using his influence as chairman of the Interior Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee to overturn court rulings that uphold environmental laws. Most recently Burns threatened to introduce a rider to overturn a California federal judge's decision that reinstated the 2001 Roadless Rule, throwing out the Bush administration's 2005 rule. He also snuck in language to the Senate Interior funding bill that would permanently take away the public's right to comment on and challenge significant logging, mining and drilling projects that could potentially damage publicly owned lands. This rider would overturn a court ruling that determined that the Forest Service could not exempt substantial projects from public participation.

In contrast, Democrat Jon Tester was a Montana State Senator for two consecutive terms, where he received a 92% Montana Conservation Voters (MCV) score in 2005. The MCV heartily endorses Jon Tester for his dedication as a family farmer of organic grains and a champion of sustainable agriculture. He has expressed strong support for protecting public lands for fishing, hunting, and recreation while assuring that he will fight to keep these lands off the auction block. Tester also supports renewable energy sources and has promised to create a National Renewable Energy Standard, providing incentives for wind and alternative energy.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(See insert for calendar of events for Central Iowa Group.)

### Eagle View Group (Quad-Cities Area)

The Eagle View Group meetings are held at the **Bettendorf Public Library** the 3rd Monday of the month except June, July and August. Our EXCOM meets the 2nd Monday of EVERY month at the Butterworth Center in Moline, Illinois. All of our meetings begin at 7 PM and the public is welcome to attend. Because this schedule is made out well in advance, some changes might occur so it is a good idea to call the information number if you are expecting to see a special program. **For more information about meetings, contact Jerry Neff at [gmn14r@aol.com](mailto:gmn14r@aol.com) or 563-332-5373.**

**December 18**—Our annual Holiday Social Event where members bring their favorite slides and snacks. This is an informal get together and lots of fun—held at the Bettendorf Public Library, 7 p.m.

**January 15, 2007**—Professor Tim Kasser, of Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois will present a discussion of Simplicity Living and how having less is really more. The Professor will also talk about his recent book, *THE HIGH PRICE OF MATERIALISM*.

**February 19**—Roger Bollman, Corps of Engineers and an avid canoeist will present a slide program CANOEING THE NORTH COUNTRY of northern Minnesota in the Boundary Waters.

**March 9-11**—Join fellow Sierrans in working “Our” Sierra Club Booth at Canoecopia. What should you expect at Canoecopia? Check out the website at: [www.canoecopia.com](http://www.canoecopia.com). If you like to paddle this is the expo you have been waiting for. For more information contact Holly Johnson at [hollajean@yahoo.com](mailto:hollajean@yahoo.com) or 309-912-8110 cell. Canoecopia 2007 will run the weekend of March 9-11 inside the Exhibition Hall at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

**March 19**—Beth Carvey Stewart, museum director of Blackhawk Historical Site will show slides and give a talk about the Civilian Conservation Corps rebuilding park infrastructure during the Great Depression.

**April 16**—Sheri Colman and Holly Johnson will present a program about the National Outing they led in Iowa’s Loess Hills in September 2006.

**May 21**—This program will be presented by Neila Seaman, Director of Sierra Club’s Iowa Chapter. More information will be available in March.

### Northwest Iowa Group (Woodbury and Surrounding Counties)

All the events are referenced to Karen Juhl at 712-276-6965 or email at [ajxot@longlines.com](mailto:ajxot@longlines.com)

**December 9, 5:50 PM**—Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. “Singing Through the Trees”. We will sing Christmas carols along the trail to the outdoor Amphitheater where a fire will keep us toasty warm. Dress for outdoors and bring snacks to share; beverages provided. Enjoy the beauty and serenity of a winter evening under the stars.

**January 18, 7 PM**—Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. Officials from Sioux City will address the “Green City” issue and what Sioux City is doing to keep the city green.

**February 15, 7 PM**—Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. Speakers to discuss both pros and cons of ethanol production.

**March 15, 7 PM**—Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. Speaker to share how the Monarch Butterfly Way Station Project at Monarch Cove, West Lake Okoboji has rehabilitated a ravine and become a model for other such endeavors.

**April 19, 6:30 PM**—Firehouse 29, Floyd Boulevard Local Foods Market, 1211 5th St. Program includes: organic foods buffet dinner, silent auction and speaker on environmentally friendly topic (to be determined).

### Also of Interest

*The following event is not sponsored by the Sierra Club but is listed because it might be of interest to members. The conduct of this event is the sole responsibility of the organization sponsoring it.*

### Volunteer Action Spearheads the Wildlife Diversity Program's Amphibian Survey

By **Stephanie Shepherd, Iowa  
DNR Wildlife Diversity Technician**

Every year starting in late March to early April, the chorus begins. The Western chorus frog is usually the first to find its voice with its ascending, constantly repeating *errreeek*, and it is quickly joined by the soprano chirp of spring peepers or the rumbling, snoring leopard frog bass. The singers are all males, and they are trying to attract a female for mating. The chorus can be deafening, but for those of us listening it is a welcome and sure sign of spring. And every year, for the past 16 years, at wetlands across the state, dedicated volunteers have been there listening and collecting data on what’s singing.

These volunteers are a part of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ Frog and Toad Call Survey. This survey began in Iowa in 1991 and is coordinated by the DNR’s Wildlife Diversity Program. The survey is based on the national North American Amphibian Monitoring Program, and several states in the Midwest participate, using similar methods. Iowa’s survey is one of the longest running, and in its sixteen-year history over 13,000 call surveys have been done on more than 1200 wetland sites in 82 of Iowa’s 99 counties.

The value of this survey is multi-faceted. The wildlife diversity program is small, and without the dedication of these volunteers it would be impossible to collect data over such a large area (statewide) and time period. The survey provides us with data that allows us to: 1) determine distribution range extensions, 2) monitor population trends, and 3) have an index for water quality.

The survey was started because of serious concern over the precipitous, global decline of many amphibian species. This decline is most often attributed to ever-increasing pollution in aquatic environments. All amphibians spend at least part of their life in the water, and due to their highly permeable skin they are very sensitive to pollutants. Declines can also be due to other factors, such as habitat loss (Iowa has drained approximately 95% of its wetlands) or

invasive species such as the bullfrog, which in Iowa has been expanding its range. It is an aggressive predator of other frog and toad species.

Monitoring Iowa’s populations enables us to catch any downward trends in species occurrences so that we can be proactive in preventing species declines. It has also provided us with a lot of other information about Iowa’s frogs and toads. For example, the two most numerous species found in Iowa are the Western chorus frog and the American toad. None of our species have shown any significant declines; in fact, the survey has confirmed that Blanchard’s cricket frog, which is in decline in many of the states around us, is doing well here in Iowa. Additionally, the survey has suggested the inclusion of a species new to Iowa: the wood frog, which has been reported a few times but not yet verified. We have not been able to determine the status of a few rare species such as the state endangered crawfish frog, historically found in southeast Iowa. Additional volunteers in that part of the state could help us find sites for this endangered species.

In order to run a frog and toad call survey, volunteers receive a packet that includes a tape or CD of frog and toad calls to learn. Once the calls of Iowa’s 17 species are learned, the next step is to pick five to eight wetland sites to survey. Each of these wetland sites is then surveyed three times annually between April and early July. Surveys are done after dark under appropriate weather conditions. Data is collected on the species of frogs calling and on environmental conditions. For each site, three years’ worth of data are needed in order to detect population trends.

In the last couple of years we have been working on creating a training workshop for volunteers and an online data entry form. We have also been working on recruiting new volunteers to either start a new survey route or take over a currently inactive route. If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions about the survey, I would love to hear from you! Once workshop dates have been set you will receive notification, or if you’d prefer not to attend a workshop I can send you the training packet to get you started. Stephanie Shepherd, 515-432-2823 x 102, [stephanie.shepherd@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:stephanie.shepherd@dnr.state.ia.us).

Whether you run a survey or not, I hope you will get out next spring and summer to enjoy Iowa’s nighttime chorus. It is music to remind us of the promise of spring and the beauty of nature.

### Prairie Lakes Group (Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, O’Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto and Pocahontas Counties)

Contact Donna at (712) 336-2103 or [prairielakessierra@hotmail.com](mailto:prairielakessierra@hotmail.com) for more details about these events.

**January 20, 11:00 a.m.**—Lobbying for Environmental Issues, Spencer Public Library. Potluck lunch.

**February 12, 7:00pm** — Group Meeting with Presentation, Spencer Public Library

**March 12, 7:00pm** — Group Meeting with Presentation, Spencer Public Library



Gray Treefrog Photo by Roger Hill



# Search for Endangered Mussels

By Joe Wilkinson,  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

From the water and muck, a wood and wire mesh cage emerged. Hoisted on board the work boat the mud in the bottom was hosed overboard. As the debris washed away, dime-sized shells--dozens of them, a hundred or more--appeared. Biologists tallied 870 first-year Higgins' eye pearly mussels in eight special cages, pulled from the floor of the Dubuque Ice Harbor. For a moment, it seemed hard to believe that the Higgins' eye is an endangered species. This special harvest, though, was the result of hard work and a lot of luck, as biologists learn how to grow mussels in stable surroundings, for eventual release to the wild.

Their fear is that it might be "too little, too late" to save this integral member of the river community; a species that doesn't get much attention; perhaps because it is hidden on the river bottom for its lifetime. From downtown Coralville to rural Jones County...and along the Upper Mississippi River and tributaries...they're trying to stop the population freefall of mussels.

In this experiment, crews anchored the cages at the back end of the harbor. "We use floats to keep the cages off the bottom", explains U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service biologist Tony Davis. In his wetsuit, he poked around underwater to detach the cages and pull them to the work area. "One of the problems is siltation into the cages. (This way) we keep

them out of the sedimentation that has wiped out some years' production." Even still, silt coated the cage bottoms; with the little mussels sprinkled throughout. They had dropped from the gills of largemouth bass, which had been specially inoculated with the larval glochidia before being placed in the cages, a few months prior.

The outcome was a little more realistic on inland streams surveyed late this summer. Stream teams floated and pawed their way through the shallows, looking for older mussels planted in previous years. With hundreds of staff hours invested, fewer than a dozen Higgins' eyes were confirmed. A few more candidates await DNA determination. One of the "possibles" came from the Iowa River, at Coralville. The rest came from the Wapsipinicon River, where the first confirmed Higgins' eye in 80 years was located in 2005.

"We have definitely found a few, which is fantastic," proclaimed Scott Gritters, a fisheries biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. "We have inoculated some into the gills of fish and turned the fish loose (in the rivers). We have proven that we can restore mussels. We have no idea, though, if the mussels will reproduce." Reproduction will be the next step in this labor intensive, cross-your-fingers quest to restore not only the Higgins' eye, but other species of mussels in trouble as well.

Lately, the "endangered" label is almost a given. If it is--or was--a mussel, chances are it is endangered...or gone now from Iowa waters. Studies in the 1990s showed that a dozen of the

50 or more known mussel species are gone; extirpated from Iowa waters. Another 15 are on the endangered or threatened species lists. The rest are not far behind. "In the late 1980s, there was a die off of mussels in the Mississippi River. We never fully understood why," offers Gritters. It might have been disease. The explosion of zebra mussels harmed native species, too. Overharvesting mussels played a role, too, a couple times in the last century. Now, though, commercial clamming is illegal in interior waters, and on the Mississippi River, where it borders Iowa and Wisconsin. One bright spot has emerged, with some monitoring sites showing slight upturns in the last few years.

No matter what the contributing factors, experts agree water quality is most critical. Gritters, and others, say reducing soil runoff is a logical first step. But that is easier said than done; with thousands of landowners and reams of government policy in the mix.

So they continue their experimentation into ways to prop up the sagging numbers; not just for Higgins' eyes, but yellow sandshells, fat muckets and other species. Seed stock of mature mussels is guarded closely in federal hatcheries. Biologists are actually using 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology on early 20th Century methods, used when the Mississippi River button industry started to collapse. "This is an attempt to culture them", explains Gritters. "If the numbers keep plunging in the wild, this could keep them from going off the face of the planet."


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To get your Iowa legislators' names, addresses, and phone numbers at any time of the year, call 515-281-5129.

\* Changes to occur in January 2007.

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