



Tallgrass Sierran

May/June 2009 Volume 37 No. 3

THE HEART OF ILLINOIS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB ♦ P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 ☎ (309) 637-1393

HOI Group Meetings

WED
MAY 20

Energy Policy in the New Administration

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

The new administration and Congress are preparing a major legislative program that will impact all forms of energy production and climate change. David Kraft, Director of NEIS, the Nuclear Energy Information Service, Chicago, will give HOI Sierra an overview of what is being proposed and revisions in the programs administered at the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. *All are welcome!*

WED
JUNE 17

Annual Potluck Picnic & White Elephant Auction

Robinson Park Shelter, 6:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual summer potluck picnic and fundraising auction of unusual, useful, and tasty items donated by our members. Bring a main dish or other food to share, plus your own table service. Iced tea and lemonade will be provided. If you like, don't forget an item to donate to the auction.

This year the annual Sierra Club picnic will be held in Robinson Park located on Mossville Road at the top of the Illinois River bluff west of the village of Mossville. Persons who come early can hike the 2.5 miles of trails at the park. Call 243-2230 for more information. *And bring a friend! Everyone is welcome!*



Firefly Energy

BY RALPH GINN, *Opinion Columnist*

As the United States inches toward energy independence and conservation, the role of the hybrid and electric vehicle (EV) is gaining leverage. Many experts agree that the development of battery technology is the key to the success of hybrids and EV's, and located at 6533 Galena Road, Peoria, is a national leader. Firefly Energy Inc. is a company launched on May 1, 2003 based on technology incubated at Caterpillar. Firefly has to date developed two generations of microcell-foam batteries that will compete with traditional lead-acid, and the new tech lithium-ion, and nickel-hydride batteries. In April, 2009, I talked with Mil Ovan, senior vice president, and co-founder of Firefly Energy.

RG: How does your battery differ from lead-acid, lithium and nickel batteries?

Ovan: Our first generation battery uses lead for the positive electrodes and microcell-foam for the negative electrodes. Our first commercial battery based on this technology is called the "Oasis." Our second generation battery uses a microcell-foam for both positive and negative electrodes, in contrast to the lead electrodes of the lead-acid battery, and the lithium and nickel electrodes of the other two types.

RG: What are the advantages of the Oasis battery?

Ovan: The initial cost of the Oasis is 5-6 times higher than the lead-acid battery, but is 1/3 to 1/2 the cost of the lithium or nickel batteries. For example, we sold batteries to Peoria City Link for nine

buses at a cost of \$1,600 per bus, but we expect these batteries to last 3 years. Previously, City Link paid \$290 for lead-acid batteries that lasted an average of 3 months. The life span of the Oasis compares favorably with the life span of both the lithium and the nickel batteries.

Safety wise, the Oasis is comparable with lead-acid, and is significantly safer than lithium or nickel. Comparing disposability, the Oasis is completely recyclable at its end-life, as is the lead-acid. Once a lithium or nickel battery reaches its end-life, it is difficult and costly to recycle. The range of the Oasis is 30 percent greater than the lead-acid battery in warm temperatures and 3 to 6 times greater in cold temperatures. It's range rates about the same as lithium and nickel batteries. The 2nd generation Oasis battery is considerably lighter in weight than the lead-acid battery and similar to lithium and nickel. Lighter weight translates into better gas mileage if used in a hybrid or electric vehicle. A long range advantage of our battery is that both lithium and nickel are found in limited locations around the world, mostly outside of the U.S. If needed in large quantities, would we be trading oil dependence for lithium and nickel dependence? Probably.

RG: Who are Firefly's investors?

Ovan: The Quercus Trust, who is a large contributor to the Sierra Club, and the clean energy technology company, Khosla Ventures are major investors. Grants from the Department of Defense in 2006, 2007, 2008, have been important, and we

(See *Firefly*, page 2)



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Development Plans Will Shrink Peoria Lake

BY TOM EDWARDS

Lower Peoria Lake, created by the last glacier 10,000 years ago, and miraculously still nearly as large as it was in Indian times, will nevertheless be reduced in size if present development plans for it are allowed to be carried out.

First, the Army Corps of Engineers has received preliminary federal funding to begin this summer a project for a 20-acre island to help, it says, keep the lake from filling in with silt — which isn't happening. The lake and its shoreline are virtually the same now as 40 years ago when thoughts of saving it finally came into vogue. The Corps honestly projects its island project will only help a little for maybe up to 20 years. Yet the Corps is slated to get \$2.7 million this year for the first phase of its 3-phase island building.

Second, the Peoria city administration wants to build a row of condominiums or other residences in its present riverfront park, "upscale housing" separate and apart from the city's declining north side itself, and install for access to this housing an all-purpose road right along the river.

The city is advertising for developers, and offering financial "incentives" and "favorable purchase price or transfer of real property."

To compensate for this loss of public riverfront park and access, the city is proposing to fill along the riverfront to create about 8-acres of "islands" a bit offshore and upstream of the Park District's "Rec Plex" building near downtown, with more filling to follow later. "It (the lake) is going to fill-in anyway," said the in-charge official.

Giant steps were taken in the past to prevent siltation and promiscuous dumping and filling from gobbling up the lake, which is why it is still there.

Back in 1950 the Corps of Engineers built Farmdale and Fondulac Dams to protect East Peoria from Farm Creek flood waters. Perhaps as importantly they trap and prevent massive amounts of silt from reaching Peoria Lake. In 1972 Caterpillar built a dam and small lake on 10-Mile Creek specifically to trap and retain soil washing off its denuded proving ground

where its equipment is both tested and demonstrated.

Those 3 projects are, literally, why Lower Peoria Lake is still there with little change. They have prevented many millions of tons of soil from washing into the lake, virtually saving it, showing a way to the future. Yet they have been virtually forgotten.

On the Peoria side, in 1968 the City of Peoria and Park District halted what had been free-for-all dumping along the lake's shore by both them and contractors, and the city's present riverfront park has gradually come into being since then.

In 1972 former Gov. Richard Ogilvie personally denied the East Peoria City Council a permit to be allowed to dike off 1,000 acres of the east side of the lake and begin filling it with waste dirt, broken concrete and rubble for future building development. Now, as a half century ago, there are avaricious whisperings again, "It's going to fill in anyway."

But what could be more vital to us now than keeping Lower Peoria Lake itself?



Photo: Joyce Blumenshine

Proposed Banner Mine Site Flooded

The proposed Banner Strip Mine site is shown in the recent March, 2009, Illinois River flood. This land is in the Illinois River floodplain and is located between Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area and Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, both internationally recognized essential migrating bird habitats.

(Firefly, from page 1)

are excited about the possibility of receiving some of the \$2 billion allocation for advanced batteries, a part of the stimulus bill, recently passed by Congress and signed by President Obama.

RG: What's in the immediate future for Firefly?

Ovan: Our first priority is in trucks and buses. The Oasis battery is especially well suited for start-and-stop bus use and powering the electrical components of today's modern truck. We also believe we can be very competitive, and are expanding our focus in the hybrid and EV market.

Thanks to Mr. Ovan and Kevin Johnson, manager of media relations.

P.S. Considering, the environment needs more electric and hybrid cars and the U.S. needs less dependence on foreign oil, when you buy that hybrid, EV, bus, or truck, make sure it has a Firefly battery.

Send comments to Ralph Ginn at randdginn@earthlink.net.



HOI volunteers at the Peoria Chiefs game on April 26th during a rare lull in business.
Photo: John Wosik

Take Yourself Out to the Ballgame..... And Help Raise Funds for HOI Sierra Club

We Need Volunteers!

This baseball season, HOI Sierra Club volunteers are selling concessions at nine (and maybe more) Peoria Chiefs home games at O'Brien Field to raise money for the HOI Sierra Club. At each game we are assigned a concession stand and receive a percentage of the stand's revenue for the game.

We have already volunteered at three games, but we still need more volunteers for the remaining dates below:

- June 14, Sunday 2:00 pm
- June 19, Friday, 6:30 pm
- June 21, Sunday 2:00 pm
- July 10, Friday 6:30 pm
- July 12, Sunday 2:00 pm
- July 27, Monday 7:00 pm

Volunteers are required to wear black pants and closed shoes with socks. Tennis shoes are recommended. Hats and loose-fitting, short-sleeved shirts are provided and are mandatory. If you wear a long sleeved shirt (underneath the shirt provided) try to wear a black one.

We will have a concession stand leader with us at all times who will keep

things going and give directions. There may be additional employees in our stand (we are supposed to have ten people at all times), who will help us feed the people hot dogs, nachos, beer and other processed items of questionable nutritional value. Various tasks can be rotated if you get tired of doing one particular thing.

What fun what fun what fun! *Take me out to the ball game, take me out with the crowd. Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack, I don't care if I never get back.*

Don't have the time or don't want to volunteer at a game? Then consider becoming an "Honorary HOI Concessionaire" for one game by donating \$35 to HOI Sierra Club, or for the whole season by donating \$350.

Contact David Pittman at 676-5237 or dvdpttmm@aol.com if you are interested in volunteering, or would like to make a donation. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated and will help support the local HOI Sierra Club in it's mission to protect our environment.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



It's time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power. Let your voice be heard.

**Add your voice to protect the planet.
Join Sierra Club.**

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Zip _____ Phone (____) _____
Email _____

**Join today and receive
a FREE Sierra Club
Weekender Bag!**



Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.
Please charge my: Visa Mastercard AMEX
Cardholder Name _____
Card Number _____
Exp. Date ____/____/____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club,
P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968
or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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BY KIERSTEN SHEETS

We are working hard with students, faculty and alumni from Bradley University to request President Glasser sign on to the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment. If you are a Bradley student, faculty member or alumni, please contact David Pittman for additional information on how you can help Bradley to be a greener campus. A May meeting is set with President Glasser and the agenda of this program will be presented to her. (For more information on this program, please visit www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org.)

Any interested Bradley student, faculty or alumni can visit http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/BU_carbon_neutral/index.html and sign the petition asking President Glasser to agree to implement the strategies toward becoming a carbon neutral campus. The number of signatories will be presented at the May meeting with President Glasser.

We are working with a local restaurateur and farmer's market in setting up a "Locally and Sustainably Grown" food booth at the Universal Rhythm Assembly event set for the Peoria Riverfront in June. This booth would provide festival goers with great food grown right here in Central Illinois! Vegetarian options would be available, too. Set the date on your calendar now to see some great live bands and nibble on a few of our vittles, June 26th and 27th. If this is something you would like to volunteer for, please contact me or David Pittman.

The "Climate Change and It's Solutions" library display will be in Creve Coeur for the month of April and Bartonville's Alpha Park library will host in May. Please let us know if you would like to see the display in a library near you!

Please visit our website for future events and interesting information: www.gwsolutionsgroup.com. Or join our Yahoo! Group: ciglobalwarmingsolutions.com. Or look us up and join us on Facebook!

Kiersten Sheets. wtigerme@yahoo.com or 309-251-4950

We Appeal IPCB Decision Allowing PDC to be Toxic Waste Treatment Site

BY TOM EDWARDS

Peoria Disposal Co. will not have to close its Peoria "hazardous waste landfill" if it doesn't quite fill it, its attorney has commented. But either way, PDC intends to keep in use its landfill site off Rt. 8 on Peoria's west side by receiving and treating there highly toxic "electric arc steel mill waste" from, so far, six different states to just reduce its toxicity. Then it would re-truck it to a regular municipal waste landfill for burial.

Though the Illinois Pollution Control Board denied PDC a new permit to continue "burying" toxic waste at its Peoria site, it okayed receiving steel mill waste there for treatment, then trucking it elsewhere for burial. The treatment would be by a "secret" process which neither PDC nor the IPCB are divulging to the public.

The IPCB's decision to allow PDC continued use of its landfill as an open air storage, treatment, and transfer site is being appealed by HOI Sierra and Families Against Toxic Waste, and this writer. All arguments are to be in by July 8.

More Health Problems Near Hazardous Waste Landfills

BY TOM EDWARDS

Even if the Peoria Disposal Co. "hazardous waste landfill" actually gets closed this year, that doesn't mean the hazards of its nearly 70 years of dumping there will go away. Though so far ignored here, in studies elsewhere air rather than water pollution is emerging as the prime danger to health from such landfills.

One of the world's most comprehensive studies of health problems of people living in the vicinities of hazardous waste landfills was done in New York state by the University of Albany. It found, in particular, "strikingly elevated" and diverse health problems "near hazardous waste sites" due to "inhalation of contaminated air." It didn't differentiate whether these kinds of landfills were active or closed.

The study reported these health problems include 15% to 25% higher rates of stroke, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and asthma and respiratory diseases. Moreover:

- In Europe a 5-country 2002 study of babies of mothers living near toxic waste landfills had 41% more birth defects. Air pollution was evidently the main culprit.
 - A New Jersey study revealed twice as many premature babies near a landfill accepting toxics. Air pollution was the cause since the drinking water was piped from a far source. The landfill was closed in 1971. But the problem took 26 more years to fully abate.
 - At Love Canal in New York state, with less than 100th of PDC's volume, it cost \$247 million in 1980 dollars to rectify. 750 houses ended up being razed by the state. Air pollution was again the leading cause. Toxics also migrated through the soil.
 - It has a "documented high cancer burden" and "rate", according to St. Francis Medical Center's Cancer Committee.
 - Plus, "elevated blood lead levels in Peoria's children" — Peoria Medical Society official.
- Peoria County? It hasn't been determined why at this point, but:
- Peoria County evidently has the state's highest infant mortality rate, according to Illinois Health Dept. statistics.
- According to the USEPA, Peoria County has by far the highest Toxic Release Inventory in the state, over 4 times that of Cook County (Chicago), and 16th highest in nation. Peoria Disposal Company's TRI was more than 20 times the county's next highest pollution source, that of ADM, an ethanol manufacturer.
- PDC has the only active commercial toxic waste landfill in Illinois, also the only one from Indiana to the Rocky Mountains in the top half of the U.S. PDC is also the only toxic waste landfill still active in the nation that 1) sits directly above an aquifer from which a municipal area draws its main water supply, and 2) is immediately upwind of the air a city must breathe.

Environmental Legislation Needs Your Help !

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Call and Write to Your Illinois Representatives and Senators

Legislation that will make our state environment better needs your help! Please call and write to your legislators to support these important state bills:

■ **The Illinois Clean Car Act, House Bill 422 / Senate Bill 1941**

Fourteen other states and D.C. have adopted stronger controls for pollution from cars, and Illinois should join them. This bill will adopt California type emissions standards, which will help improve air quality in Illinois cities and cut pollution linked to respiratory health.

■ **Energy Efficient Building Codes, House Bill 3987**

Adoption of this Code will make Illinois eligible for federal stimulus dollars by requiring the adoption of the International Energy conservation code for all new buildings, including residential.

■ **The Global Warming Response Act, House Bill 3668 / Senate Bill 856**

This legislation will establish a hard cap on global warming emissions in Illinois, and require a 100% auction of emissions credits which will help Illinois move into a new energy economy.

More information and detailed fact sheets are available on the Illinois Sierra Club website at <http://www.illinois.sierraclub.org> by clicking on the " Legislative " link on the left.

If your local Representative and Senator are not on the list below, look on your voters registration card for your state district and call your nearest public library to ask for addresses and phone numbers for your district.

Representative David Leitch
220 Capitol Bldg.
Springfield, IL 62706
217-782-8108
District Office: 309-690-7373

Representative Jehan Gordan
282-S Stratton Office Bldg.
Springfield, IL 62706
217-782-3186
District Office: 309-681-1992

Senator Dale Risinger
M103F Capitol Bldg.
Springfield, IL 62706
217-782-1942
District Office: 309-693-4921

Senator David Koehler
311 B Capitol Bldg.
Springfield, IL 62706
217-782-8250
District Office: 309-346-4646

Call and Write in Support of Federal Legislation

■ **The Clean Water Restoration Act, House of Representatives Bill 1310 / Senate Bill 787**

This bill will restore essential provisions to protect wetlands and other water resources.

■ **Renewable Energy production of 25% by sustainable sources by 2025, House of Representatives Bill 890**

■ **The Federal Energy Efficiency Resource Standard for retail electric and natural gas distributors, House of Representatives Bill 889**

■ **The American Red Rock Wilderness Act for protection of public lands of unique beauty in Utah, HR 1925 / Senate Bill 799**

Thank Senator Durbin for being a leader in sponsoring this bill in the Senate.

18th Congressional District
Representative Aaron Schock
509 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-6201
District Office: 309-671-7027

Senator Richard Durbin
309 Hart Senate Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-2152
Springfield Office: 217-492-4062

Senator Roland Burris
523 Dirksen Senate Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-2854
Springfield Office: 217-492-5089

How could on-line shopping and searching result in donations to Heart of Illinois Sierra?

Answer: www.iGive.com & www.iSearchiGive.com

BY KIERSTEN SHEETS

Do you shop on-line? iGive.com is an internet company whose goal is to enable the economic power of individuals to benefit their chosen communities. Shop through iGive and a portion of each purchase helps Heart of Illinois Sierra Club. You will not pay more to shop through this website. Online retailers pay iGive.com a sales commission, which is totally separate from the donation rates listed on the website. Paid advertising on the website and through the e-mails iGive sends also allows them to expand their free services for you and your chosen cause. Bookmark the iGive website or install their handy Toolbar to make sure you never miss out on a donation opportunity. You'll find over 700 of the web's best stores at iGive.com with new stores added every week.

Do you Google? Try iSearchiGive.com. iSearchiGive.com is a search engine powered by Yahoo! Use it just as you would Google and you will raise \$0.02 per search which adds up to quite a bit when you start to think about how much you Google!



Millions of Dollars for the Band-Aid Approach: Dredge Will Build New River Island

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

\$2.7 million is just the beginning for construction of a new island north of McCluggage Bridge, intended to help maintain the river channel. The island will also provide a location for the tons of silt that need to be dredged from the river. State and federal officials will be announcing this project April 21st at Peoria. Sad to say until society addresses the root causes of siltation, these very expensive band-aid approaches will be only a stop-gap.

HOI Group Calendar



May

- 7 THU Global Warming Solutions Group Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
Peoria Public Library, 2nd floor conference room, downtown Peoria. Check <http://gwsolutionsgroup.wordpress.com> for more information.
- 13 WED Executive Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
Judy Stalling's home, 1311 W. Moss, Peoria. Call 673-4673 for directions.
- 20 WED Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
Forest Park Nature Center. *David Kraft, Energy Policy in the New Administration.* Everyone is welcome!

June

- 4 THU Global Warming Solutions Group Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
Peoria Public Library, 2nd floor conference room, downtown Peoria. Check <http://gwsolutionsgroup.wordpress.com> for more information.
- 10 WED Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**
James Thomas' home, 1303 N. Glenwood Ave., Peoria. Call 673-0083 for directions.
- 17 WED Annual Potluck Picnic & White Elephant Auction, 6:30 p.m.**
Robinson Park picnic shelter. See front page for more details.

- 22 MON Newsletter Deadline**
Send articles for July/August to: John Wosik, 12409 N Blackhawk Ct, Dunlap, IL 61525, or johnwosik@comcast.net
- 29 MON Newsletter Mailing, 6:30 p.m.**
Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights

Other Events: (Not sponsored by the Sierra Club but provided as a public service.)

- May 5 (Tue)**
Clean Transportation Day
Bike, walk, or ride the bus .
- May 11-15 (Mon-Fri)**
Bike to Work Week
For more information, contact David Pittman at 676-5237 or dvdpttmn@aol.com.
- May 16 (Sat)**
RTA holds Kellar Branch Line clean-up
Recreation Trail Advocates cleanup of the Kellar Branch Line. Meet at the Peoria Heights Library parking lot at 9 a.m.
- June 6 (Sat) - National Trails Day**
- June 19-21 (Fri-Sun)**
MREA Renewable Energy Fair, Custer, WI
Checkout www.mrea.org for more information.



Prairie Dawgs Work Crew

The Prairie Dawgs meet the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month at Jubilee State Park. Work includes prairie burns, brush cutting, eradicating alien plants, native plant seeding, and planting root stock. Call Doug Franks at 691-7993 for more information.



Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 Hotline: (309) 637-1393

Executive Committee

- Chair** Robert Jorgensen . . 698-0325 jestpr@aol.com
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Conservation Co-Chair Tom Edwards 637-1979
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 Judy Stalling 673-4673
 Jim Thomas 673-0083



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HEART OF ILLINOIS
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