

Nebraska Sierra Club

Publication of the Sierra Club's Missouri Valley Group, Nebraska Chapter

January 2010

<http://nebraska.sierraclub.org>

Vol. 31, No. 1

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet

January Program

Topics to be Fed Stimulus, Education, Legislation

By Mary Green

Mo Valley Program Director

Join the Sierra Club as we explore ways our community is becoming more energy efficient and sustainable. We'll be hearing from three speakers who will share their insights into how to create sustainability at the campus, city, and state level.

Kristi Wamstad-Evans is the sustainability coordinator for the city of Omaha. This is a new position created by Mayor Jim Suttle. In her first few months on the job, Kristi's focus has been on applying for grant monies from President Barack Obama's federal stimulus package. In November, she submitted the city's Energy Efficiency and

Conservation Strategy, outlining eight projects in Omaha that will be funded by \$4.3 million that the city received as part of the stimulus funds. Kristi also recently led the effort to submit a major federal competitive grant that, if received, would provide over \$100 million stimulus toward developing a market for retrofitting older homes and businesses in Omaha and Lincoln to make them more energy efficient.

Daniel Lawse also holds a newly created position: he is Coordinator of Sustainable Practices at Metropolitan

Community College. Daniel's work at

Sierra Club Program *Building Sustainable Communities*

Thursday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
69th & Cass streets, Omaha
(Enter north door,
education wing)

*The public is welcome at
all Sierra Club programs.*

See Program page 3

Camping, hikes for mid-January

Robert Goetschkes
MVG Outings Chair

Come to **Waubonsie State Park** on Jan. 16 day for a 5-plus-mile hike and optional overnight car camp. Meet Saturday, Jan. 16, at the Waubonsie park office, 2585 Waubonsie Park Road, Hamburg, Iowa 51640

From Omaha: Take I-80 East to I-29 South. Travel about 40 miles to Iowa-2 (exit 10). Turn left (east) on Iowa-2E. Follow the road to the park.

Those spending the night will meet at 1 p.m. to pay the \$6/campsite fee, then at park office for two-and-half-hour moderate to difficult dayhike at 1:30 p.m. Dayhikers can return home, campers will set up our camp. Breakfast on Sunday morning, pack gear, and do a short hike to warm up.

A Sierra Club outing fee of \$1 per person supports outings leader training.

For carpooling, let the leader know when RSVPing. RSVP with name,

See Outings page 3

Chapter Chair's Column: Natural Gas Should be Kept Cleaner

By Dick Boyd

Nebraska Chapter Chair

Club Policy On Natural Gas Development: The following is information received by the CCL (Council of Club Leaders) DELEGATES. This is a revision from the original proposed policy because of responses to many comments from Sierra Club members.

The new policy is as follows: all natural gas production, including deep shale gas, should be governed by a robust and effective regulatory struc-

ture: all gas should be produced using rigorous best-management practices to limit environmental damage. The Club opposes all coal bed methane extraction because it poses unacceptable risks to water quality in shallow aquifers.

The following provisions apply to deep shale gas:

First, the Sierra Club opposes fracking ["hydraulic fracturing"] projects if the identity and volume of fracking fluids are not fully disclosed to the public.

Second, the Club opposes any projects using fracking fluids that pose unacceptable toxic risks, including fluids which contain benzene, ethylbenzene, toluene, and xylene.

Third, the Club opposes any projects that do not properly treat, manage, and account for fracking fluids, drilling muds, and produced water. Fracking should not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that drinking-water aquifers and surface waters are adequately protected from contamination.

Fourth, the Club opposes fracking projects that would endanger water supplies or critical watersheds, seriously damage important wildland resources, significantly increase habitat fragmentation, imperil human health, or that would otherwise violate the Club's land conservation policies.

Fifth, the Club opposes any fracking projects that would cause violations of air quality

See Natural Gas, page 2

Annual Silent Auction Raises Record Amount

The November silent auction at annual banquet raised at least more than \$1,400, the most ever, which gives a much-needed and significant boost to the local MVG budget for the coming year.

Volunteers Mary Bamesberger, Carole Larson, Jane Wilson of the Missouri Valley Group of the Sierra Club-Nebraska Chapter made the ideal team to solicit donations and manage the auction

Thanks to everybody who donated items, and to those who bought them.

About 70 items were donated.

Nearly 60 persons attended the banquet, with many bidding on paintings, gift baskets, books, handmade jewelry, homemade goodies and gift certificates to venues such as Lauritzen Gardens, Fontenelle Forest, El Alamo, Charleston's, Henry Doorly Zoo, The Rose Theatre, and others.

Local businesses, as well as individual Sierra Club members, graciously donated a variety of items. Please join us in thanking these businesses, organizations and indi-

viduals who so generously supported our Silent Auction. A list of contributors can be found on the Nebraska Sierra Club website: <http://sierranebraska.org/?p=314#more-314>

Thanks also go out to Helen and Ken Deffenbacher, Jarel Vinduska, Carole Larson, Lowell Eyer, Jane Wilson and Candy Bless, who helped set up the auction and clean up after the event. The auction could not have succeeded without everybody's participation.

Continued from page 1

Natural Gas cleaner than Coal, but can also cause problems

standards, individually or cumulatively.

Finally, a series of best-management practices will emerge in the industry -- some already identified, some evolving with time. These best-management practices should, to the maximum extent possible, be swiftly incorporated into regulatory requirements as they are developed. The Club opposes any unconventional or conventional drilling projects that do not comply with best management

practices, even in regions where state or federal law may permit lower standards of environmental management.

The Club will use these standards as a yardstick for any regulatory reform efforts it undertakes or supports, and to judge which new drilling projects, if any, cause unacceptable environment damage and warrant opposition.

Chapters are encouraged to press for effective regulatory frameworks to control the

effects of deep shale gas extraction and may oppose specific projects that are inappropriately sited or that fail to comply with best-management practices.

Increased production and use of natural gas is a touchy proposition. On the one hand, proponents argue that natural gas is the best way to wean the U.S. off coal and oil, and that burning natural gas releases about half as much carbon dioxide as burning coal to pro-

duce the same amount of energy. Also natural gas can be a so-called bridge fuel, to move away from coal and oil without waiting for renewable energy sources such as wind, solar.

On the other hand, there is concern about potential air pollution, water usage, and soil contamination involved in drilling for natural gas. There is a major concern relative to the risk to drinking water due to contamination from hydraulic fracturing in which large volumes of chemical-laced water are injected down wells to release gas trapped in underground rock formations. In addition, more fuel was added to the fire, when Exxon Mobil Corp purchased XTO Energy, Inc. That deal made Exxon the country's biggest natural gas producer. Exxon has been looked upon unfavorably by many environmentalists because of poor environmental practices in the past.

We may be in round one of a 10-round debate.

Please direct any questions or comments to me at dickb8506@yahoo.com.

Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.

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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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**Sierra Club phone:
(402) 551-9480**

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Program on Options, Progress

Metro includes developing a green jobs curriculum, incorporating sustainability in campus management and operations, and guiding Metro towards providing sustainability education and leadership region-wide.

Ken Winston is the Nebraska Sierra Club's lobbyist. His work in the 2009 legislative session included helping to pass legislation that focused on renewable energy, net metering, and many other energy policy areas. Ken will

give us an update on new legislation that the Sierra Club will be supporting in the 2010 session.

Please join us as we explore this topic and learn more about the many ways our local campus, our city, and our state are striving to become sustainable communities.

Sierra Club programs are free and open to the public. For more information contact Mary at mary.green@nebraska.sierraclub.org or at (402) 556-1830.

Lobbyist attends, testifies at hearings

By Ken Winston
Sierra Club Lobbyist

The 2009 interim period has been fairly quiet in terms of public activity. I attended the public hearing on LR 124, the interim study on trails, and testified at the hearing on LR 195, Sen. Ken Haar's interim study on energy efficiency. Moreover, I have been busy with a number of behind-the-scenes activities. Ken Haar has held several meetings on energy efficiency, complete with briefing books. He also hosted presentations on solar energy.

I am part of one of the technical committees on the LR 83 study to determine how to expand wind development in Nebraska. The committee I am working with is looking at the environmental impacts of siting wind turbines and transmission lines. I am also part of the Wind and Wildlife Working Group, composed of representatives from the Game and Parks Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and several conservation organizations. I

intend to recommend criteria that would include prohibiting development in major bird migration flyways or in areas that would affect endangered species, limit development in other critical habitat areas, avoid siting these facilities in areas with intact native habitat and require mitigation for permanent habitat impacts.

There is a lot of activity surrounding wind development. I moderated two sessions on net metering at the Nebraska Wind Conference in Kearney. I attended one of the American Wind Energy Association's presentations in Omaha. I recently met with representatives of an organization looking at expanding wind development in Nebraska.

I am now working with legislators and staff to wrap up interim study activity and develop proposals for the 2010 legislative session. I expect that issues related to energy efficiency and expanding renewable energy development will be at the top of our priority list.

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Hike Fontenelle Forest Perimeter

phone number, and email in case of cancellation: MVG Outings Leader James Phernetton, jamesphernetton@mac.com or (402) 319-2322.

* * *

Join Fontenelle Nature Association volunteer naturalist Bob Goetschkes on a fast-moving hike of **Fontenelle Forest's** perimeter trails. The hike will leave the Nature Center at 1111 Bellevue Blvd. North, Bellevue, Neb. at 11 a.m. Sat. Jan. 17 and will try to return between 5 and 6 p.m.

Hikers should be prepared to pay a day-use fee to FNA of \$7 if not already

members of the Forest. Dress for current weather conditions: hat, gloves, layered clothing and sturdy boots. Bring a sack lunch and 2 liters of water. Trails will be slippery.

Please RSVP to Bob Goetschkes at (402) 614-4788 or bobbygoetschkes@hotmail.com with name and phone number in case of cancellation. Directions from Omaha: Route 75 south to Chandler Road Exit. Turn left onto Chandler Road, cross RR tracks and Fort Crook Blvd. Go uphill on Chandler Road to Bellevue Blvd. Turn right, following signs to the Fontenelle parking lot on your left.

Nature photos part of Wachiska Audubon meeting

Dr. Josef Kren will share photographs of the Czech Republic and the central U.S. during the general meeting of the Wachiska Audubon.

Wachiska Audubon's general meeting will be at 7 p.m., Jan. 14 in room 3 of the Dick Administration Building at Union College in Lincoln.

Kren is professor of physiology at Bryan LGH Medical Center, College of Health Sciences. He will share photographs designed to capture the vanishing natural world of his native Czech Republic and the Midwest, including the Sandhills of Nebraska, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, and Audubon's Spring Creek Prairie near Denton. Visitors are welcome to hear Dr. Kren's stories of our remaining natural world.

Some of his images and greeting cards will be available for purchase after his presentation. Proceeds will go to Audubon's Spring Creek Prairie.

Refreshments will be served. For further information, contact the Wachiska office, (402) 586-4846.

Chapter Election Results

This past November five of the fifteen Executive Committee seats were up for election. A close race saw only a few votes separating the six candidates for the five Executive Committee vacancies.

The five elected to serve on the

Chapter Board for a two-year term during 2010-11 were Roy Guisinger, Cottonwood Group; Steve Andrews, Mo Valley Group; Mitch Paine, Bluestem Group; JoEllen Polzien, Bluestem Group; and Anna Wishart, Bluestem Group.

Sierra Club
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Events

Tuesday, Jan. 12, 7 p.m., Learn about the Water Quality Plan for Carter Lake at Carter Lake City Hall, 950 Locust St. in Carter Lake, Iowa. The engineers from Tetra Tech and the government resource technical team have been working on this plan for two years. They are now ready to present their recommendations and plans to restore the lake. For more info, contact Jeanne Eibes, president, Carter Lake Preservation Society, (712) 347-6455, or (402) 669-8586 www.carterlakepreservation.org

Thursday, Jan. 14, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Green Product Tour at OPPD Energy Plaza West, (409 S. 17th St.), hosted by KONE. Hors d'oeuvres, beverages and live product demos, such as the KONE Polaris Destination Control System Elevators, the Xerox ColorQube Multifunction Color Printer and energy-efficient air systems from DTL

Controls. Reserve your place by Jan. 7. Email Chad Johansen at chad.johansen@kone.com.

Thursday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m. "Building Sustainable Communities" with Kristi Wamstad-Evans, Omaha's Sustainability Coordinator, Daniel Lawse, Metro Community College's Coordinator of Sustainable Practices, and Ken Winston, Nebraska Sierra Club lobbyist, at First United Methodist Church, 69th & Cass streets.

Saturday, Jan. 30, 6:45 a.m., meet at McDonald's at 3330 S. 10th St. in Lincoln and leave at 7 a.m. for Wachiska Audubon Eagle Viewing Field Trip at Johnson No. 2 hydroplant in Lexington. Bring binoculars and sack lunch. Dress for the weather including warm footwear. We'll carpool for conversation and to save gasoline. Please RSVP Bob Boyce if you're coming: 770-6865 or bob-boyce66@gmail.com. Include phone

number and an e-mail, so you can be contacted if we have to postpone the trip. The backup date will be Saturday, Feb. 6.

Saturday, Jan. 30, 10 a.m., Sierra Club Nebraska Chapter meeting, at the Lincoln Unitarian Church, 6300 A St. The meeting will primarily focus on the legislative bills introduced to the Nebraska Legislature that relate to the environment.

Thursday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m. "The Road to Black Sheep Farms" with Brian and Kelly Smith, at First United Methodist Church, 69th & Cass streets.

Thursday March 25, 7 p.m. "Living with Harmony with Native Wildlife" with Laura Stastny of Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, at First United Methodist Church, 69th & Cass streets.

April 13, 2010, Nebraska Action for Healthy Kids Summit 2010, at the Holiday Inn, down-

town Lincoln. Nebraska Action for Healthy Kids is a statewide coalition of state and local leaders in public health, education, and community outreach organizations. This event aims to engage students, educators, administrators, health professionals, and policy makers in promoting school wellness. Schools will also be recognized for their outstanding wellness efforts, and can apply online for the Action Award in January 2010. For more information visit: <http://www.neactionforhealthykids.org>.

To list an event or activity in the newsletter and online, e-mail the particulars to MoValSierraNews@yahoo.com or mail it to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 4664 Omaha, NE 68104 For more information, call Scott at 981-7819