

Planet KANSAS

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Voice of the Kansas Sierra Club

DEMAND A BALANCED FARM BILL

H.R. 2646—as bad as it gets

Craig Volland



...this appears to be nothing more than “Big AG” wearing a “green” mantle, while it gets more taxpayer subsidies to expand production. This is the very opposite of what is needed, which is to raise crop prices and save family farms.

The House Agriculture Committee has passed out the Combest/Stenholm Farm Bill, which would turn the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conservation program into a mere shadow of its former self. It would gut wetland protection and longstanding wildlife habitat programs, subsidize large hog factories, weaken or destroy the nation’s network of conservation technical assistance, allow payments to go to investors other than real farmers and guarantee at least \$120 billion in direct subsidies to primarily large grain farmers.

H.R. 2646 would spend \$170 billion in farm programs for the next decade. A floor vote is planned for September but could get delayed. This bill not only fails to make environmental progress, but it also undermines critical, long-standing environmental standards and the extensive national network in place for 60 years to help farmers address environmental problems.

guts wetland protection

The “Swampbuster” law, in place since 1985, conditions federal farm payments on pledges by farmers not to drain wetlands. Before 1985, farms caused three quarters of all wetland loss, but Swampbuster has cut these losses greatly. Because of a recent Clean Water Act court decision, it is now the only protection for many “isolated wetlands” critical to ducks and flood control. H.R. 2646 would gut Swampbuster by allowing farmers to retain almost all support payments, even if they drain wetlands. According to a USDA analysis, farmers are likely to drain six to 13 million acres of wetlands if Swampbuster is gutted.

subsidizes large factory farms

Previously the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) placed a cap of 1000 animal units (1000 cattle and 2500 hogs) for payments for pollution control measures at confined animal feeding operations (CAFO). Annual payments have averaged \$1500. H.R. 2646 removes this size cap and allows payments up to \$50,000.

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FROM THE CHAIR

Hello fellow Kansas Sierrans

By now you may have wondered what is up with your new chapter chair, and who is this person? My introduction to the chair position was quick, with little time to sit back and contemplate what I could do to enhance our cause in the state of Kansas. I was elected chair by the state ExCom at our Jan. 28, 2001 meeting. A few days later the infamous Dirty Water Bill, S.B. 204, was introduced in the Kansas Senate. My wife Kathy had to chuckle, “So you thought you were going to just run the ExCom meetings for awhile until you figured out what you were doing.” To make things more complicated, I had filed in early January as a candidate for a position on the Manhattan/Ogden school board. Things were a little hectic around the Smith household for a few months.

Though I have been a Sierra Club member for almost 20 years, it was not until 1996 that I became active. The first meeting I attended was a discussion to form the Flint Hills Group. My intent in attending that meeting was to see if there were any new places to explore in the Manhattan area. At that time Kansas was a strange place for me, as contrasted to Pennsylvania. I was looking for that deep woods experience I was familiar with. And where were all the streams and water that I knew from my Pennsylvania outdoor treks? I’ve since found the deep woods in the prairie; though it is in a different form, it is no less pleasing than the northeast. Before I knew it I was an officer and later became involved at the state level after attending many ExCom meetings.

My background is somewhat atypical of many Sierra Club activist. I grew up in western Kentucky and attended a small local college. Many of my high school friends were farmers, so I spent time helping to bring in the corn crops or chop weeds in the soybean fields (this was before Round-Up Ready soybeans). For several summers I was the only paid employee for a small family hog farm. It was rewarding work, but the pay was terrible. Even free range hogs are quite smelly at times. After numerous years of education, I joined the faculty in the Food Science Department at the Pennsylvania State University. In 1989 I took a similar position as a Food Chemist at Kansas State University.

I don’t anticipate any major changes in our focus at the state and regional level, except that we hope to broaden our efforts on some neglected issues. **Energy and conservation** have not been covered well in the past, but thanks to the leadership of Bill Griffin we have been very active in the legislature and even at the local level. We will continue that thrust as energy issues take on new emphasis in the future. **Transportation is another issue we would like to cover more thoroughly.**

Scott Smith



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Registration: Visions for the Missouri River/Wild River Conference

name _____

phone wk _____

address _____

hm _____

email _____

mail to: Nebraska Chapter of the Sierra Club
c/o Jennifer States
941 O St., Ste. 904, Lincoln, NE 68508

registration: \$18/Friday dinner + \$35/Saturday
jenstates@hotmail.com
Sierra Club office in Lincoln 402-475-2292

registration

Conference price of \$35 includes Saturday breakfast and lunch. Scholarships may be available for students. For more information contact conference coordinator Jennifer States.

jenstates@hotmail.com
or call the Sierra Club office in Lincoln 402-475-2292

- First, call the Lied Center **1-800-546-5433** to reserve your room.
- Then mail the form with registration fee to:
Nebraska Sierra Club
c/o Jennifer States
941 O St., Ste. 904
Lincoln, NE 68508



continued from page 3

Hopefully we can provide guidance to the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), as they revise their long term plans. Last month Charles Benjamin and I met with KDOT planners and gave input on where we think they should be headed. We need more public transportation, walking paths, biking access and trails. What we do not need are more new roads which propagate sprawl. And we surely don't need underground pedestrian tunnels in Topeka at a time when there is almost no money for local transportation enhancement projects, such as historical preservation and pedestrian trails.

Water quality and confined animal feeding operations (CAFO) will continue to be our points of emphasis. We must continue to educate the public that good quality water is important to everyone in the state. **It is critical that we overcome the perception that water quality and farming/ranching cannot go hand in hand.** Some of the agribusinesses in the state have tried to portray the Sierra Club as being anti-farmer. That is just not the case. Several months ago I received a call from a farmer concerned about a new road close to his farm. After we discussed the particulars of the situation, I asked him what he thought about the statement that the Sierra Club was anti-farming. He laughed and said it was all a bunch of propoganda which he didn't believe. That conversation was very uplifting.

I hope to get around the state to visit with you, and **you are always welcome to stop in at our open Chapter ExCom meetings.** I have heard people state that these meetings are a closed deal, but that has never been my experience. I attended the ExCom meetings for several years before I became a member. I was always impressed with how accommodating the members were to an outsider. If you are interested in attending the Nov.17 meeting, give me a call or drop me an email. We welcome any new attendees, though we may put you to work. Keep in touch.

Scott

785-539-1973 wizard1@kscable

HS



- **Don't top off your fuel tank—this causes air pollution.**
- **Shop at stores close to you. Driving to a distant store for a bargain may cost you more when you consider transportation time and costs. Support your community instead.**



Oct/Nov 2001

VISIONS FOR THE MISSOURI RIVER

Wild River Conference

Oct. 12–13, 2001

Arbor Day Farm's Lied Conference Center

hosts

Nebraska Chapter of the Sierra Club, with assistance from the Papio-Missouri Natural Resource District

purpose

- find solutions to the environmental problems facing the Missouri River
- expand and protect the “wild and scenic” stretches of the river
- educate and inform the public on the values of a natural and free flowing Missouri River

In conjunction with Sierra Club's five-year campaign commemorating the 200-year anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Nebraska Chapter is hosting this conference to bring the national campaign into local focus by examining in detail one of the last free-flowing stretches of the River.

When Lewis and Clark traveled the Missouri River, it was a wild and dynamic waterway of whirlpools, sandbars and shifting currents. Most of the river today is tamed and contained by a network of dams. But along Nebraska's northeast border lies one of the last free-flowing stretches of the river. Our goal is to bring the natural world of Lewis and Clark to life, because we believe that to know your world is to love it.

content

This unique conference will feature a variety of speakers, panel presentations and entertainment. A barbecue with entertainment will be held Friday evening in a historic barn at the Arbor Day Farm. Michael Murphy, noted singer and songwriter, will present a sampling of music.

The full conference will commence Saturday morning, with speakers and panel presentations throughout the day. The keynote speaker will be David Botkin, author of *Passage of Discovery: The American Rivers Guide to the Missouri River of Lewis and Clark*. Congressman Doug Bereuter, who authored the protection of the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers, through the Wild and Scenic Rivers Protection Act, is an invited speaker. Historical photographs of the Missouri River will on display, courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Panel members will be from the:

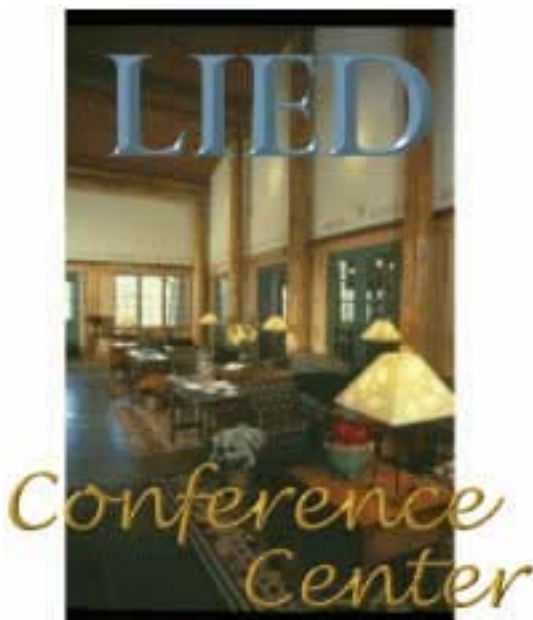
- Mandan-Hisatsas and Sioux tribes,
- National Parks Service,
- Corps of Engineers,
- US Fish and Wildlife,
- American Rivers,
- Papio Natural Resource District and
- regional Sierra Club.

Lied Center

Built as an educational resource for those committed to the sustainable stewardship of the earth, the Lied Conference Center is the ideal place for this event. The building has energy-efficient, environmentally-friendly elements of design and construction. The 260-acre Arbor Day Farm offers trails and educational opportunities, in an ecologically rich and diversified natural setting.

www.arborday.org/programs/FarmArbor.html

2700 Sylvan Road,
Nebraska City, NE 68410



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Big hog corporations work more and more through intermediaries or contractors who would now be eligible for taxpayer funds to build lagoons. Contractors in Kansas are now installing facilities of over 40,000 head. Because large factory farms are already required by law to meet environmental standards, this change would not yield environmental progress. Instead, it would have federal taxpayers subsidize an inadequate control technology and further threaten smaller farmers.

undermines farm conservation network

Faced with the dust bowls of the 1930s, to conserve soil, Congress created what is now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and a vast network of conservation districts in almost every county. They have provided technical assistance to farmers and administered conservation programs to limit soil erosion and improve water quality and wildlife habitat. H.R. 2646 would eliminate NRCS management of all key conservation programs and undermine its staff by allowing unlimited funds to be shifted to outside third parties.

harms wildlife and water quality

This bill would gut the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Farm programs have proved a boon to wildlife by restoring grasslands through the CRP program on 36 million acres of land and by restoring one million acres of wetlands, primarily in permanent easements. H.R. 2646 could eliminate most of the environmental benefits from the programs. It would allow haying and grazing on all CRP land (not just in emergencies as allowed now), which would eliminate most wildlife benefits. It would prohibit the selection of enrollments based on environmental benefits.

H.R. 2646 would probably abolish the so-called "continuous enrollment" and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs that have targeted enrollments at stream buffers, with great benefits for water quality.

This bill eliminates the priority to enroll wetlands in permanent easements. It makes it impossible for many landowners to enroll land in WRP because of payment limitations, and it weakens the environmental standards set out in easement conditions.

Since the bill actually increases funding under the Conservation Title at the same time it undermines many of the environmental benefits, this appears to be nothing more than "Big AG" wearing a "green" mantle, while it gets more taxpayer subsidies to expand production. This is the very opposite of what is needed, which is to raise crop prices and save family farms.

encourages excess cropping of environmentally sensitive lands



Crop programs can encourage farmers to plow up excess, often environmentally sensitive land, by tying the amount of payments to the level of crops produced. Aware of this problem, Congress has in the last several farm bills attempted to reduce this incentive by disconnecting payment levels from the level of specific crops produced. In a variety of ways H.R. 2646 would re-tie payments to the levels of crops produced and increase payments to historically high levels over the life of the bill. This provides an incentive to plow up native prairies and highly erodible land.

other nuggets for Big Ag

The bill removes from payment limitation law the "actively engaged in farming" rule which directs payments to real farmers. This would enable more passive investors to get in on the gravy train. The bill prohibits public access through the Freedom of Information Act (or other means) to information submitted as part of a USDA program. Now isn't that cozy! The 70% of the bill that goes to commodity programs will mean that the other Farm Bill titles such as rural development, credit, research and nutrition will be shortchanged.

Contact your U.S. House Representative (see page two for information) and demand:

- a more balanced Farm Bill that encourages more conservation and rural development funds for real land stewardship practices by real farmers,
- no phony conservation money for more crop production and
- complete transparency and accountability to the public for all funds in the program.

Craig Volland

913-788-7336 hartwood2@mindspring.com



SPOTLIGHT ON A TREEHUGGER

James (Jim) Sherow

Flint Hills Group, Manhattan

Wife, Bonnie Lynn-Sherow,
Daughters, Brie Sherow 19, Evan Sherow 15,
Lauren Hamer 19 and Lisa Hamer 16

Grew up in Maize, KS, a small farm community northwest of Wichita. Now, urban sprawl by Wichita has nearly engulfed the community and the family farms that I knew are shopping malls and housing tracks.

Air Force, four years

Degrees in History and Secondary Education, 1976,
MA in History in 1978, Wichita State University

Taught high school for four years

Ph.D. in History, University of Colorado, 1987

Tenure track position at Southwest Texas State
University in San Marcos, four years

Professor, Kansas State University
History Department, 1992

Sierra Club, education and political action
Friends of Konza Prairie, Board of Directors
Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review, Historian
Board of Deacons, First Congregational Church

I relish my limited opportunities to get outdoors. I enjoy canoeing and confess I have trespassed in paddling the rivers and creeks of Kansas. This state has some beautiful scenery along its water courses, and it's a shame that the people of this state have so little access to these views. I look forward to the day when one can camp out over night in a prairie accessible to all citizens, a prairie that is not associated with a federal reservoir or privately owned. I enjoy biking, mountaineering and hikes in the wild reaches of the U.S.

Why are you a treehugger?

What inspired you to get involved?

I became a "treehugger," which is what several of my colleagues in my department have called me from time to time, for several reasons. My parents influenced me in the vacations that we took to National Parks and in the outings and camping trips to local reservoirs or streams for swimming, camping or fishing. As a kid I could traipse through fields and explore what little wild life still remained around my childhood home. The outdoors was always there for me and I enjoyed being in it. As a young man I took every opportunity I had to travel and hike the mountains and canyons of the American west. I learned to ski and to do technical rock climbing.



My educational background also led me directly to becoming a "treehugger." I wrote my master's thesis on the history of a small agricultural community in south central Kansas, and from that I became keenly interested in the connection between the practice of agriculture in Kansas and the ability of the land to sustain those practices. I began to see more clearly the relationships between ecology, economics and culture and how changes to one affected the others.

More graduate work at the University of Colorado furthered my understanding of these relationships. I took up the work of doing environmental history by analyzing what role people played in shaping the ecological communities of the Arkansas River Valley in eastern Colorado and western Kansas. That study led me to explore issues of how Indian peoples and Euroamericans used the valley and what those uses meant for their respective cultures, the plants, animals and waters in the valley. More than before, I realized how people in cities could effect changes to crops and wildlife that they seldom if ever saw, through their increasing demands for water. I studied dam building, interstate water compacts, the role of the federal government in sustaining economic growth and agricultural production in the region. I studied water law and what led to conflicts over water in the west. The lessons were fairly clear to me—that people had taken unsustainable means to use and develop water in the Arkansas River Valley. Hydraulic systems, wildlife, soil fertility, agricultural economics and communities all stood in peril. The decline of ditch irrigation farming throughout the region and the out migration of those farmers is a testimony to the concerns that my studies raised. These questions led to me to study pump irrigation too, and the development of the meat packing economy around the mining of the Ogallala Aquifer. —>



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There is something you can do...



When you hear that a local land developer wants to pave over an important wetlands area or start construction in a wildlife habitat.

When you want to find out about the effects of a city-wide pesticide spraying on your children's health.

When you suspect that a local factory pollutes the water you drink or threatens the quality of the air you breathe.



Sierra Club's **ENVIRONMENTAL 911 PROGRAM** provides you with a convenient, accessible, personal resource for obtaining information about actions you can take to address local environmental issues.

By calling the Sierra Club's **ENVIRONMENTAL 911 PROGRAM** at **415.977.5520** or e-mailing **environmental911@sierraclub.org**, you will have available to you the wealth of experience and depth of knowledge that over 100 years of grassroots activism can bring.

Sierra Club Environmental 911 Program - 85 Second Street., 2nd Fl - San Francisco, CA 94105
Funding made possible through a generous grant by The Sierra Club Foundation.

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What issues are most important to you?

Maintaining coherent bio-communities is the most important issue for me. We're all a part of the community of life surrounding us and we rely upon a healthy environment for our own well-being. Ecologists like Daniel Botkins are reminding us that ecosystems are most stable when highly diversified. We humans should take that lesson to heart, the sooner the better. Each time we allow our economic systems or social systems to simplify our social and biological communities, we assuredly erode the bedrock of our own survival. Sooner or later the foundation of our civilization will collapse if we do not take an active role in preserving in it as much biological and social diversity as possible. In my view, we cannot own the land; rather, we hold the land in usufruct, that is the right to hold the land of another so long as the land is not destroyed or damaged. It's mindless to think that humans as a species with a life span of several decades can own an earth a few billions of years old. For me, life is a gift, one I neither created or requested, and as a member of a life community,

I have internalized my own obligation to preserve life in its amazing complexity and diversity.

What issues have you been involved with where you felt you made an impact on the outcome?

In two areas, I think that I have helped make a difference. I was part of a committed group of citizens standing in opposition to the building of a Wal-Mart in Manhattan. We sustained our efforts for over a year, and amazingly we prevailed. This struggle introduced us to environmental, social, political, legal and economic concerns. Participating in this fight led Bonnie and me to reconsider how we were living our lives. We decided to reduce our driving and lend a hand to renew downtown Manhattan. Our answer to sprawl was to buy a house built in 1871, which we are currently restoring. The wood in the house is old-growth white pine and other pines from the Great Lakes region. Bonnie says restoring this house is the ultimate recycling project. We're trying to demonstrate that restoring older homes makes ecological and economic sense in a community experiencing sprawl.

The other area where I see myself making a difference is in my role as a professor. I teach environmental history, and publish in this venue. I give talks on issues related to the environmental history of Kansas and of the grasslands.

Ultimately, I hope that my life will help maintain the viability of the community of life that surrounds me. In this light, my membership and participation in Sierra Club is of utmost importance to me.



Oct/Nov 2001

HS

TRUTH ABOUT SFAAP CLEANUP

why trust OZ to do the job?

Micheline Burger

There has been much wrong information in the media about a number of matters concerning the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant (SFAAP) site and the cleanup going on at that site. The Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) is a citizen advisory board involved in receiving information about the cleanup of Sunflower, in advising those responsible for the cleanup and in communicating with the public about those efforts. The minutes of the Feb. 7, 2001 RAB meeting are posted on the Taxpayers Opposed to Oz (TOTO) Web site Happenings page. Review the minutes to learn the truth about the cleanup at Sunflower.

There are several parts of these minutes which are particularly important. Paragraphs six and seven of the RAB minutes make these points clear.



- ***The U.S. Army has been, will continue to and is scheduled to complete, the cleanup of the Sunflower site by 2012.***
- ***Funds for the cleanup have been received for each of the past 20 years in which the cleanup has already been proceeding.***
- ***Extra monies for cleanup have been allocated for each of those years to date.***
- ***Cleanup for 2001 is already funded.***
- ***Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) does NOT know how much the cleanup of Sunflower will cost.***

These points are significant because they contradict the statements of the Oz officials. Oz claims that the site will not be cleaned up unless Oz gets the property. The RAB minutes show this claim to be false. Oz claims that it will pay for the cleanup, and if it doesn't, insurance will cover the full cost of cleanup.

If the cost of cleanup is unknown, and new contamination continues to be discovered, how realistic is it that an insurance policy will pay for those unknown and unpredicted cleanup costs? How much sense does it make to trust Oz to pay for all the cleanup needed at Sunflower

given their shaky record and finances and the unknown extent of the cleanup needed and costs? If the U.S. Army has been cleaning up the contamination at Sunflower since 1980, funds have been allocated each and every year for that cleanup, and it is on target to be completed by 2012, why would any rational person trust Oz to do the job? They have never done such a project and have no track record of success.

Please remember that the Kansas legislature has extended the time period for Oz to use Kansas STAR bonds for an additional year, conditioned upon Oz repaying Wyandotte County the money Oz still owes. In recent weeks, Oz has demonstrated how untrustworthy and unreliable they are with the games they have been playing with their debt to Wyandotte County. The Johnson County Board of County Commissioners has authorized a feasibility study of the Oz proposal, which will begin shortly. Many people have questioned the wisdom of Johnson County proceeding with the feasibility study before the Wyandotte County debt is repaid in full, especially in light of the recent stop payment on the check Oz sent to Wyandotte County and the Oz claim that the debt is not a debt. If Oz fails to pay it within the next few months, the STAR bond funding will expire, and the Oz project will not get financed. If the cost of the Johnson County feasibility study is around \$100,000, should Johnson County taxpayers foot the bill before we know if it is even needed?

These are all things informed citizens need to think about and to tell others. Distributing accurate information about Sunflower is one of TOTO's objectives. You can help by staying informed and staying involved. We cannot afford to assume that our elected leaders will have the wisdom and foresight to do the right thing on their own. ***Please look and listen for the truth and communicate that to your elected leaders.***

Micheline Burger
SFAAP RAB Member



HOT TIME AT GLOBAL WARMING WORKSHOP

education is the key

David Klar, SPRCC Chair, San Antonio

The Southern Plains Regional Conservation Committee (SPRCC), which includes activists from Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas, held a successful Global Warming Workshop July 28–29, in Kansas City, MO. “Home on the Range...Cooked by Global Warming,” was open to the public and focused on regional impacts of climate change. The topics of heat, drought, extreme storms and flooding, and their impact on agriculture, rivers, lakes, forests, coastal areas, wildlife, urban quality of life and human health were discussed. The Heartland Presbyterian Conference Center offered a retreat-like setting. Approximately 50-60 Midwest activists participated.



business owners discussed current and future applications of solar, wind, fuel cell and biomass technology. A Prius, the hybrid car from Toyota, was on hand for demonstrations. Solar products were also on display.

Sunday morning—campaign to turn down the heat

Activists discussed regional global warming campaign plans. Breakout sessions addressed the sharing of ideas and how to get involved in a local global warming education campaign. The workshop received encouraging words from the participants. ***Education is the key to understanding environmental issues and can energize and ignite grassroots activism.***

next workshop—end commercial logging in our national forests

To continue its mission to educate the region, the SPRCC will hold its next workshop in Fayetteville, AR Oct. 6–7. We hope to see you there.

Saturday morning—climate changes

Problems the central U.S. will face as climate change increases were addressed. Speakers described current impacts on the natural ecosystems and economy and the possible future outcomes of global warming.

luncheon—global climate change and sustainable development

It was an honor and privilege to have Dr. Jerry Schnoor, Ph.D., P.E., DEE, as our luncheon keynote speaker. He is the co-director of the Center for Global and Regional Environment Research at the University of Iowa and has edited several books about the environment. Fifty graduate programs throughout the world use his textbook, *Environmental Modeling*, in their curriculum. His slide show highlighted deadly impacts the global population will face, unless we learn to coexist with natural ecosystems. Uncontrolled exploitation of our natural resources, in combination with mankind’s excessive greenhouse gas emissions, has the potential to destroy natural habitats and agricultural lands. Results could be widespread starvation and infectious disease epidemics. Sustainable development, in which mankind applies widespread conservation methods, can slow down the ominous impacts of climate change.

Saturday afternoon—solutions to global warming


Kate Simmons, of the Sierra Club National Global Warming and Energy Program, identified the biggest single step to slowing global warming—raising fuel economy on our cars and trucks. Another solution is renewable energy. A panel of alternative energy



Wyandotte County Recycles

3441 Park Drive
KC KS
just north of I-70

Toner & ink-jet cartridges
#1 & #2 Plastic bottles
Corrugated cardboard
Household batteries
Mixed office paper
Aluminum foil
Newspapers
Magazines
Glass
Cans



Bridging The Gap
in Wyandotte County, Kansas

Thurs. 7 a.m.–12 noon
Fri. 11 a.m.–4 p.m.
Sat. 8 a.m.–1 p.m.
Sun. 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

To Volunteer call
Bridging the Gap
816-561-1090

FLINT HILLS GROUP NEWS

Scott Smith

fall social



The Flint Hills Group held their fall social the evening of Sept. 4 at the Wonder Workshop Children Museum (WWCM) in Manhattan. Everyone enjoyed the grilled food and a pleasant breeze, while sitting under the trees in the Workshop's backyard. Tours were offered of the museum and the butterfly garden. There were no takers on the offers to try the challenging indoor climbing wall.

The major group discussion was planing our next outdoor gatherings. Richard Pitts and Jim Sherow will coordinate the first fall outing, Oct. 13, at the WWCM Outback Camp on Tuttle Creek Lake, located close to Randolph. Bill Richter suggested that we also co-sponsor an outing with some of the Kansas State University international students, hike on the trail behind Sunset Zoo and perhaps end with a picnic. This would make a good winter hike, which Scott and Bill will start planning.

We will be posting notices on the Flint Hills group events on our listserv and on page A2 of the *Manhattan Mercury*. We hope you can join us for the next event.

If you are interested in the outings please contact:

Richard Pitts 785-776-1234 wonder@kansas.net

Jim Sherow 785-532-0375 jsherow@ksu.edu

Scott Smith 785-539-1973 wizard1@kscable



“What is man without the beasts?

If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit.

For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man.

All things are connected.”

Chief Seattle, 1784–1866



Oct/Nov 2001

Flint Hills Family Outing

Oct. 13, 2001
9 a.m.

meeting place:
Wonder Workshop
821 Poyntz Avenue

destination:
Outback Camp
Tuttle Creek Lake

We will carpool from Wonder Workshop to Outback Camp. Plan on a fun-filled day of hiking, canoeing, and crafts. Please pack your own lunch and the Flint Hills Group will provide grills and charcoal for cooking.

For those who want to do crafts, including candle making, soap making, pottery and hiking stick decorating, please call Richard Pitts, and make your reservation for the craft that you would like to do.

We need an estimate of how many will be going, so please RSVP to Richard.

Richard Pitts 785-776-1234
wonder@kansas.net



Oct/Nov 2001



Oh, say can you see...?

For the past five years, the Endangered Species Act, and the many species it seeks to protect, has been under attack by politicians backed by a powerful coalition of timber, grazing and mining interests as well as real estate developers. The Bald Eagle is a success story — won't you join the Sierra Club, and add your voice to the many thousands who want to ensure that our nation's unique natural heritage is protected?

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
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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	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to the 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 \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.



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P.O. Box 52968
Boulder, CO 80322-2968

FOR THE LOVE OF HUMPBACK WHALES

incredible giants of the sea

What began as a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me, has turned into an annual pilgrimage to the Silver Banks, Dominican Republic, winter birthing and mating grounds for the Atlantic humpback whales. This experience is one-of-a-kind because we humans often have the opportunity to slip into the water and float beside one of the most magnificent creatures on the planet, humpback whales. It changes peoples lives. Amazingly enough, the whales do seem to enjoy and welcome the in-water human interaction.

My mission is to share this with other people, who after spending time with these incredible giants of the sea, will feel moved to speak out for all of the great whales of the oceans whom man is still slaughtering into extinction.

This year we had the expertise of Carol Carlson, a conservation biologist, working for the International Fund for Animal Welfare. We learned that the northern right whale is the rarest and most endangered large whale. Their coastal habitat is from Georgia to Florida, an area congested with large shipping and fishing vessels. Collisions with ships account for half of all northern right whale deaths and currently they estimate only 300 are left.

In June 1999, the U.S. government launched a Mandatory Ship Reporting System requiring ships to report right whale sightings to the Coast Guard so they can send out alerts on collision avoidance procedures with the whales.

Humpback whales are on the endangered species list, and the global population is less than 10% of their pre-whaling population. Last year an endangered Humpback whale calf and its mother were slaughtered by fishermen from St. Vincent and the Grenadines islands in full view of tourists and reported by international media. Hunts of the same species of whales and dolphins that are protected in U.S. waters are done right in front of tourists in non-U.S. waters.



Gayle Lawrence, Ohio Sierra Club

Perhaps multimillion dollar resorts like Club Med, Sandals, Hyatt and the Hilton who market ecotourism attractions in the islands should speak out in support of whale watching rather than whale killing.

Despite a worldwide ban in 1986 on whaling, they are still being slaughtered. Populations of the larger whales have been so depleted the focus is now on the smaller minke whales. During the past two years, Japan has killed over 1000 minke whales, deemed "scientific" research. Norway, in direct defiance of the ban, slaughtered 589 minke whales during their last season. Fortunately, Japan's attempts to establish the first international commercial trade of beluga whale meat from Russia was thwarted by media exposure from the world press.

We must be the voice for these great and magnificent whales that inhabit our oceans, that thrill and delight us with their awesome presence and beautiful original songs. To see them from the bow of a boat or to be with a humpback in the water is an experience that I can only call a miracle. Please speak out! Support these organizations:

- *International Fund for Animal Welfare*
<http://www.ifaw.com>
- *Allied Whale, College of the Atlantic*
<http://www.coa.edu/alliedwhale/>
- *Whaleman* <http://www.whaleman.com>
- *Green Peace* <http://www.greenpeace.org.au/globalwhalesanctuary/petition.html>

I will once again be going to the Silver Banks Humpback Whale Sanctuary, Dominican Republic in February 2002. If you would like information regarding this trip please contact:

Gayle Lawrence

419-281-2887 7sisters@bright.net



Oct/Nov 2001

COLLABORATION CRANKS UP THE VOLUME

Carey Maynard-Moody

“You provoked me!” Terry Shistar said when I answered the phone. My heart sank. Terry has been a generous contributor to the *Planet Kansas* over the years. Her articles have not only educated me, but have encouraged my work as an activist. Her respect for me was important. Did her words mean I had lost her respect?

“In a good or a bad way?” I ventured. Earlier I had pleaded with her to participate in the facilitated stakeholders’ regarding the completion of the South Lawrence Trafficway (SLT). Terry argued that to participate would feel like colluding in what was a rigged process to begin with. She said that what she was willing to do was to help orchestrate an educational forum the night of the public scoping meeting for the Environmental Impact Study (EIS). She said the Kaw Valley Greens were willing to help. I jumped at the idea.

The failed completion of the SLT has become a canker festering in Lawrence for over 10 years. The western leg was completed. The eastern leg was halted when a lawsuit was filed by Native American members of the Haskell Indian Nations University community, several environmentalists and a University of Kansas (KU) environmental group. The Supplemental Environmental Impact Study (SEIS) was underway to address the highway project’s injury to the sacred grounds of the Haskell/Baker wetlands. The suit contended that the SEIS had to be finished. Sierra Club member Bruce Plenk and Bob Eye represented the plaintiffs. The U.S. District Court for Kansas ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. Douglas County, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) appealed to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. The court upheld the decision that the SEIS must be finished. When FHWA went back to finish the SEIS, they concluded that the no build option was the best choice.

Undeterred, KDOT authorized their attorney Mike Rees to drum up community momentum for the SLT’s completion. KDOT amassed extraordinary funds to be sure this new project was crossing all its t’s and dotting all its i’s. This included hiring The Osprey Group Consultants from Boulder, CO to facilitate the public discourse around the SLT. This KDOT move encouraged the Wakarusa Sierra Club to speak up for the first time and participate in the public forum for discourse. The Kansas Sierra Club ExCom

approved a position statement on the SLT at their July meeting (see page 16). KDOT heard from us and soon from others, that no build was still an option. Overlooking it in their public forums would no longer be tolerated.

I dusted off and studied National’s Sierra Club sprawl materials. I spent time on the Surface Transportation Policy Project’s Web site (www.transact.org). I studied federal acts like the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The more I learned, the more I wondered about missing pieces—like the place in this discussion for transportation options. Still, I needed more support. Alone, my voice was too weak. Everyone was out of town, it was summer. Even those environmentalists I shared my concerns and ideas with expressed doubt that there was a place in this discussion for public transportation. They reassured me that the SLT would be built. In a word, I was told to step aside.

I pressed on. At a county commissioners’ meeting in July I spoke about my concern that no other transportation options were being explored during the discussion of the SLT. The listeners looked at me as though I were from another planet. I took comfort in the words of encouragement from another concerned citizen, Wayne Richardson, who thanked me for speaking up. Still, I felt like I was getting nowhere fast, stuck in the gridlock KDOT was promising to Lawrence if we didn’t surrender to the SLT.

So when Terry offered to stage this demonstration, I was heartened. An emergency meeting was attended by four KU students, three Kaw Valley Greens and three members of the Wakarusa Sierra Club. ***In just two days, a handful of exhausted people orchestrated an event that was successful beyond our wildest dreams.***

Terry Shistar was able to rent the room connected to the scoping meeting’s room at the local county fairgrounds. This was a critical piece, accessing immediate approximation to the public scoping meeting. Email notices about the scoping meeting went out to chairs of local environmental groups in the county. A brief notice made it into the *Lawrence Journal World*.

Sierra Club members Haley Smith, Sarah Stafford and a friend arrived early and cranked out posters (see photos). As a KU freshman, Sarah, was motivated to join the Wakarusa Group because of her rewarding experience in Wichita with Southwind Sierra Club. The 10 p.m. local news that night captured these three young women’s brave demonstration at the entrance of the scoping meeting room. Pennie Von Achen gathered missing data and ran copies for the Sierra Club table. Richard Morantz of the Kaw Valley Greens supplied us with paper for signs. His enthusiasm and humor energized us and calmed our jitters. A beloved local wetlands steward loaned us his slides of the wildlife inhabiting this threatened sanctuary. The Haskell students brought their maps and materials from

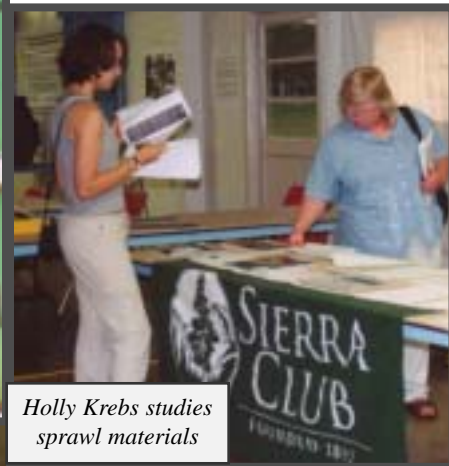


their Wetlands Preservation Organization (WPO). Caryn Miriam Goldberg brought materials from her Franklin Douglas County Coalition of Concerned Citizens (FDCCCC). They had earlier protested the realignment of Highway 59. Wakarusa Sierra Club's conservation chair, Todd Aschenbach manned his power point presentation on the hype of the proposed constructed wetland mitigation offered by KDOT. Audubon passed out stickers of a frog croaking: "Baker Wetlands: Stop & Hear the Hop." KU student Joe Jarvis posted photos of roadkill. He also posted maps of the Major Corridor Study, "Kaw Connects" along side a myriad of articles that questioned public input opportunities. *Environmentalists were present to answer questions and encourage dialog between the most unlikely players in this SLT debacle.* A no build petition was crafted from the Kansas Sierra Club position statement.

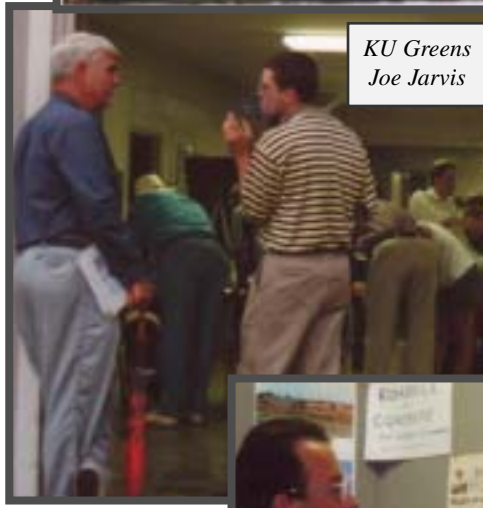
Over 200 residents attended the scoping meeting, submitted their comments, and gathered additional information to support their concerns from our educational forum. The energy level was staggering to those that entered this arena. "What's going on here?" begged one beleaguered and lonely-looking KDOT staffer identified only as John. "It's all about love," I offered. "There's something about this place, Lawrence, Douglas County, that engenders love. That's what you see here. Love. When love is present and loss of the love object rears it's ugly head, protest ensues. Sometimes it's deafening."

Indeed, the volume of the dialog spoke volumes about love of place. EarthWeAre students from Baker University sat down with the Audubon and Sierra Club to discuss collaboration. Farmers from the threatened Wakarusa River valley sat

down with environmentalists. The conversations occurred between the most unlikely players such as John and me; Mike Rees and the Haskell students. Gaps were being bridged. The us vs. them approach seemed to be dissolving into something more constructive. The HNTF engineers patiently listened to yet other routes and options. Citizens unable to commit to carving their place up and paving it over, were begging for outrageous (says KDOT) alternatives: a tunnel, a flyway, a retrofitting of the botched 23rd Street. This street, with its hundreds of curb-cuts has stood for years as the eastern end of the K10 Highway that the proposed SLT will replace. The question of need for the SLT was pushed by many citizens. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that an EIS be completed before a decision is made. Therefore, it is inappropriate to select a route before the EIS is finished.



Holly Krebs studies sprawl materials



KU Greens Joe Jarvis



examining a map from KDOT and KTA's Major Corridor Study "Kaw Connects"

KDOT and the business community who stand to gain so much may yet succeed in convincing the public that no matter how heinous it is to pick a route, maintaining the addiction to the gas nipple is worth the injury incurred to the land. Or maybe the collective efforts like this one by Wakarusa Sierra Club, the Kaw Valley Greens, KU Greens, FDCCCC, Environmental Studies Students' Association (ESSA) and the WPO may empower other groups to join the effort to demand more sensible options than simply pavement.

As the photos suggest, those who love their place the most stand to lose the most when their silence allows stones to be left unturned. *We also stand to gain the most when we work to raise funds as well as awareness and to spend time letting our collective voices speak new ideas.*

This SLT educational forum was a rush job. It was born out of a relentless appeal to the larger environmental community to collaborate and promote alternative thinking about moving the population and commerce. It was born out of love of place, and the knowledge that transportation is more than highways. It seemed to have an impact. By the time the stakeholders forum was convened by Osprey a week later, the option of no build and the place for public transit were finally on the table. The wildest dream came true. Finally KDOT and the community heard the challenge: transportation is more than highways like the SLT. Yes, we acknowledge, it might be a tall order to shift the priorities of our transportation decision makers. All we are asking is that our communities become enhanced by transportation options rather than damaged by the SLT, which focuses solely on moving automobiles. Owning a car should be a choice, not a necessity. It drains our wallets, severs our community ties, degrades our environment and threatens our health and safety. If the SLT were offered as part of a complete menu of transportation options, we would be able to comprehend its merit. Prohibiting the discussion of transportation options precludes such comprehension.

If so much interest and participation could be generated with only a two-day lead and from the Sierra Club, only seven volunteers to prepare for such an event, imagine what could be accomplished with a few months lead time, a fatter treasury and more volunteers. Missing at this forum were the costumed players. In my mind's eye I imagined students costumed as monarchs silently floating through the crowd, awing the participants with their colorful flight. I imagined children in salamander and frog costumes playing hide-and-seek behind big folks' knees. I wanted to run video footage of highway land and habitat demolition.

I wanted to hear audio simulations of the real noise generated by highway projects like the SLT.

If only we had more volunteers, more money. It's the whine of all grassroots groups that only you can quiet. Only when the voice is a truly a large collective one, can it provide the impact needed to make a difference. Too few, just won't do.

Carey Maynard-Moody, Chair Wakarusa Group
785-842-6517 785-841-9594
careymm@ixks.com

POSITION STATEMENT

Completion of the South Lawrence Trafficway

The Wakarusa Group and the Kansas Sierra Club support National Sierra Club's campaign to stop urban sprawl. We recognize that road building encourages traffic and sprawl. We foresee that the creation of new highways such as the proposed eastern leg of the South Lawrence Trafficway (SLT) is a sprawl magnet. Expanding highways encourages increases in traffic. Studies have shown that places that have built the most roads have not relieved traffic congestion. Adding capacity to highways actually generates additional travel as people take more car trips. The sprawl that follows such road building creates even more demand and swallows precious open space.

The Wakarusa Group and the Kansas Sierra Club believe that citizens deserve clean air and land conservation for quality of life. Cars and trucks served by such road building initiatives as the SLT are among the largest sources of smog and cancer-causing pollution in America. We endorse only those Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) proposals and policies that move people and products in a healthful, sustainable fashion such as bus and rail service. These alternatives can preserve greenspace (including farmland) and prevent urban sprawl while connecting the communities in northeast Kansas. KDOT initiatives that promote walkable communities with links to public transportation are supported by the Wakarusa Group and the Kansas Sierra Club.

We firmly believe that the transportation planning process should be a transparent one that operates with public participation. The Wakarusa Group and the Kansas Sierra Club are interested in participating with KDOT in designing a community and nature-friendly transportation system of choices, not more road space.

ES



Oct/Nov 2001

WAKARUSA GROUP OUTING

Haskell/Baker Wetlands

On a hot July day, young and old Sierra club members from Topeka, Kansas City and Lawrence appreciated the beauty and value of the threatened Haskell/Baker wetlands. Wakarusa Group outings leader Matt Nelson explained the wetlands unique value for species habitat and natural flood control properties.



While group outing leader Matt Nelson informs participants of the value of wetlands, his son Michael encourages a spider back into its natural environment.



Michael Nelson and Jeff Hansen

Kenzo Recycling ^{aka} Garage Sale

- Saturday, Oct. 13
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- SM Unitarian Church
7725 W 87 St.
Overland Park
- Volunteers needed:
2 till 9 p.m. Friday
7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday
- Contact Jim Horlacher
jimhorlach@aol.com
913-492-7818 hm
913-432-4958 wk
- Stuff needed:
camping gear, furniture,
appliances, kitchenware,
household items, crafts,
toys, clothes, books,
garden stuff
- All items should be
*clean and in good
working condition*
- Donations can be dropped
off at the barn chapel
Friday 2–8 p.m.



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Oct/Nov 2001



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3. Call, write or email Craig Wolfe with the above info

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Oct/Nov 2001

FRIENDS OF THE KAW/KANSAS RIVERKEEPER

Laura Calwell, President



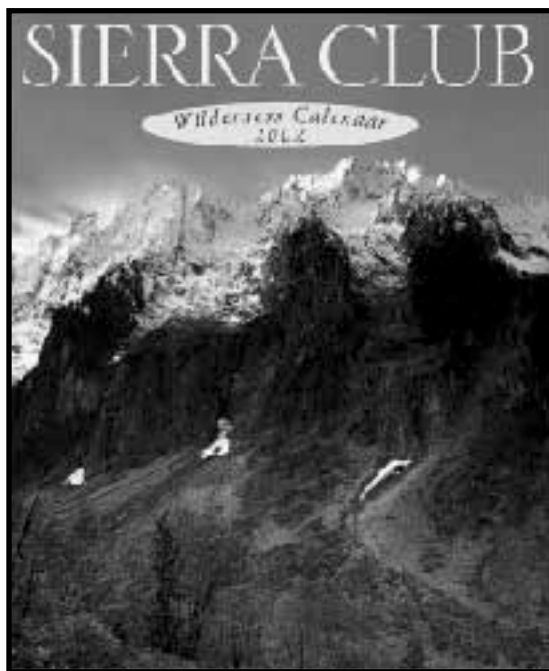
www.kansasriver.com

Aug. 1, 2001 was a red-letter day for our organization, as Dave Murphy officially started as the Kansas Riverkeeper. He is fired up and ready to roll. His first mission will be to get the ball rolling and fund this project. A big thank you to John Verbanic and the Briedenthal-Snyder Foundation for this year's generous donations.

Our event with Bobby Kennedy, Jr. is now slated for Wednesday, April 17, 2002. For more information:

Laura Calwell 913-677-5854
creativechoice@yahoo.com

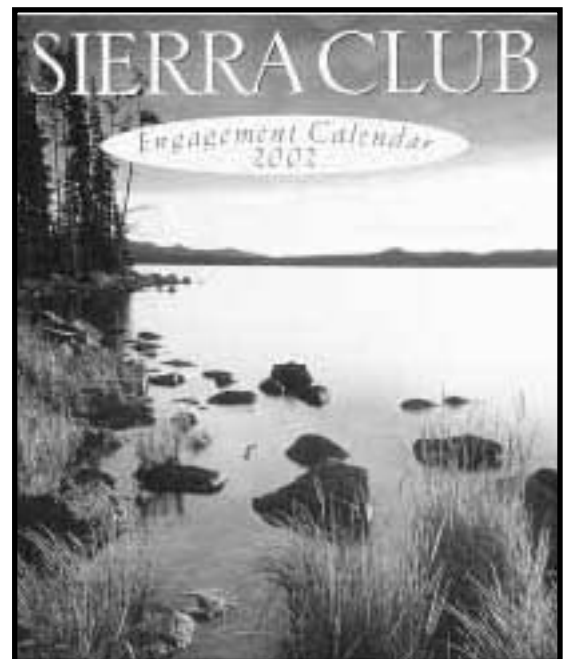
Dave Murphy 913-406-2260
riverkeeper@kansasriver.com



It's time to order 2002 Sierra Club Calendars

Wilderness Wall
Calendar \$12

Engagement
Calendar \$13



contact: Craig Lubow, Kanza Group
913-299-6620
alan54atty@hotmail.com



Oct/Nov 2001

BUYER'S GUIDE FOR LAWRENCE

Fall 2001, Part I

Michael Campbell

This is Part I of a five-part list of Lawrence businesses where you can buy environmentally-friendly products.

Clothing

Backwoods Equipment Co.

Sunflower Outdoor & Work Clothing

Both of these stores sell Patagonia clothes made from organic cotton, hemp or recycled fibers. The variety of clothes available includes shirts (casual, dress and tee), sweaters, dresses, pants and coats.

Coffee Shops serving organic coffee

Java Dive

Z's Espresso Community Mercantile

Compact fluorescent bulbs

Cottin's Hardware

K-Mart

M&M

Office Depot

Westlake Hardware

Wal-Mart* widest variety of sizes

Greeting cards

Hallmark Store, Shoebox Division series

20% post-consumer

Wal-Mart* Hallmark Comedy Club series

20% post-consumer

Grocery Stores

Community Mercantile

stocks a wide variety of all types of organic foods

Paper products

napkins & toilet paper

Community Mercantile, 80% post-consumer

Hy-Vee, 80% post-consumer

Office Depot, 60% post-consumer

paper towels & facial tissue

Community Mercantile, 80% post-consumer

Hy-Vee, 80% post-consumer

Photocopying

Kinko's

white paper tree-free

20% post-consumer,

80% sugar cane colored paper

20% post-consumer

Rechargeable batteries and chargers

Cottin's Hardware

K-Mart

Office Depot

Westlake Hardware

Wal-Mart*

**When deciding to use Wal-Mart, please take into account that National Sierra Club wishes for its members to boycott this store because of their building practices, which encourage sprawl.*

We want this list to be as comprehensive as possible, so let us know about products that should be added to future editions. To get a copy of the complete list, please contact:

Michael Campbell

785-542-3885

shamsoup@hotmail.com



Oct/Nov 2001

CAN WE “PROTECT THE PLANET?”

changing minds should be our focus

John Kurmann

As you may have noticed, there are many shades of green in the green movement. Most people would probably call me a green after they got to know me. I suppose that's fair, but I don't think I'm your average green. Why am I different? Because I proceed on the basis of different assumptions. Before I give you a peek at mine, though, let me demonstrate the assumptions I detect underlying the vision of most greens.

Some organizations expose their assumptions right up front, in their names, which makes my job here easy. The Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense and Defenders of Wildlife are a few prominent examples.

The World Wildlife Fund seeks “to protect nature and the biological diversity that we all need to survive.” The National Wildlife Federation of the U.S.A. strives “to protect wildlife, wild places, and the environment.” The World Resources Institute wants “to move human society to live in ways that protect Earth's environment and its capacity to provide for the needs and aspirations of current and future generations.” Our own Sierra Club, the largest green organization in the U.S., exhorts us to “explore, enjoy and protect the planet” and says it's “protecting the environment...for our families, for our future.” Earth First! insists on “no compromise in defense of Mother Earth,” and the Earth Liberation Front exists “to take direct action in defense of the earth.”

I trust you've noticed the common theme here. Even with ambiguous names, I don't generally have to look far to find the rhetoric of protect and defend. To understand the assumptions an organization runs on, though, look at their actions, which can be trusted to demonstrate more

accurately than their words, what their assumptions are. Fortunately, in the cases of the cited organizations, their words are consonant with their actions.

Because this is the *Planet Kansas*, and I'm a member, I'm going to focus on the wording it uses. The exhortation to protect the planet sums up quite nicely the assumptions I want to address.

What does it mean to say one's goal is to protect the planet? Well, first, it obviously means that the person or group making this declaration perceives “the planet” to be under some sort of attack. Why else would one commit to protecting it?

But where is this besieged planet? The phrasing suggests that the implicit “we” will protect the planet as something separate from “us.” Can anyone tell me how to distinguish where the planet ends and we begin? Every tool I use is made of planet-stuff, every morsel of food and drop of water I sustain myself with is planet-stuff, and every bit of waste I produce continues to cycle through the regenerative life processes of the planet. Consequently, if the planet is under attack, then we are under attack as part of it.

But under attack by whom? Clearly, anyone making such a declaration means “under attack by someone else.” If you found out your own attacks were the source of the damage, you wouldn't need to figure out how to protect the planet from yourself, you'd need to figure out how to stop attacking it. So, who is it that is attacking the planet? Obviously we're not talking about an alien invasion here. No, this perceived “enemy” is obviously much closer to home than that.

Lots of people would point to corporations as the attackers, given the common misconception that our present ecological crisis grew out of the industrial revolution. But what is a corporation? It's a legal construct and nothing more. It's an organization made up of people, and people make the decisions that produce its actions.

Of course, it's also true that, as a legal entity, a corporation has an existence that transcends any individual employee, executive, boardmember or stockholder. Maybe the enemy is to be found among the drafters of the laws that govern corporate behavior—except they're people, too. The legislators that passed the laws governing corporate behavior, the presidents and governors that signed the laws and the judges that interpreted the laws to give corporations the legal status of persons—we find people everywhere we look for enemies.

John's previous articles can be found at:
[www.mind-like-water.com/Primordial_Stew/
PS_Articles/EcoLogic/Destroy_Environment.html](http://www.mind-like-water.com/Primordial_Stew/PS_Articles/EcoLogic/Destroy_Environment.html)
[www.mind-like-water.com/Tide_Turning/
RTW/K_SixthExtinction.html](http://www.mind-like-water.com/Tide_Turning/RTW/K_SixthExtinction.html)

Web sites for other organizations mentioned:

www.nrdc.org

www.edf.org

www.defenders.org

www.wwf.org

www.nwf.org

www.wri.org

www.earthfirst.org

www.earthliberationfront.com



But we're people, and I already pointed out that it doesn't make much sense to set out to protect the planet from ourselves. It must be other people the Sierra Club is determined to protect the planet from. You know, selfish people, greedy people, careless people. Except I, a Sierra Club member, have been known to be selfish, greedy and careless at times. And while I wish I could honestly say that I live a sustainable lifestyle—I'd be a liar if I did. Am I an aberration among Sierra Club members in this regard? I doubt it.

Does it make sense to imagine ourselves the protectors of the planet when we're taking part in the destruction? I don't think so. Degrees of destructiveness certainly vary from person to person, but most—maybe all—Sierra Club members are living unsustainably. I think we'd get a warmer reception from the more destructive folks, if we stopped casting ourselves as the good guys who protect the planet from the bad guys.

If we really want to create a world we'd like to live as part of, I think we'd be wise to stop dogging other people and start addressing these questions: Why are so many people destructive? Why are some people more destructive than others? Are people destructive to the world simply because it's human nature? Most people in industrialized countries seem to think so, and that assumption underlies the vast majority of the green movement's efforts. What other explanation is there for the fact that most groups are focused on forcing people to change? Some groups do this primarily through direct action, but the majority focus on lobbying the government to legislate and regulate behavior. If these groups believed people truly want to live sustainably and are able to live sustainably by their own choices, wouldn't they focus on helping people to do that rather than relying on the blunt instrument of coercion? Change comes much more quickly and is far more effective when people want it than when they're pushed into it kicking and screaming.

Does the evidence support the assumption that people are destructive to the world by their nature? The first species of the genus *Homo* is thought to have emerged three million years ago, and our own species, *Homo sapiens*, is thought to have emerged more than 200,000 years ago. Yet the world went on doing just fine after that, too.

Things did change. The emergence of every new species produces ripple effects, and *Homo sapiens* were no exception. Existing species are inevitably affected as they make room, and in some instances the ultimate effect is extinction. Some scientists think ancient humans contributed to the extinctions of other species—possibly even the Neanderthals—as they spread around the world.

Whether this hypothesis is correct or not, the important point to remember is that, even if people did cause those extinctions, they were limited events. People moved into a

new area, behaved in such a way that one or more extinctions resulted, and then found a way to live that worked for that part of the world (or died out themselves). They didn't practice a way of life that caused more extinctions, eventually threatening the biological diversity and stability of the community of life—which is what we're doing.

Now, if people of our species have lived for more than two hundred thousand years without destroying the world, how can anyone reasonably claim that people are destructive to the world by their very nature?

Moreover, there are still people—the people of the remaining tribal cultures—living today in ways that don't destroy the world. They're generally referred to as primitives, but they're just as modern in their own ways as we are in ours. They're as human as we are and don't live in a way that destroys the world. Since we're biologically the same species, what is the difference between us?

It only takes one word to answer that question: culture. Our civilized culture is founded on growth without limit and tribal cultures are not.

Once you recognize that human nature is not the source of our troubles here and our civilized culture is, the foolishness of trying to protect the planet becomes clear. We don't need to protect the planet—we need to transform our culture from our worldview out. We may choose to do some protecting along the way, but changing minds must be our focus if we're to have any hope of succeeding.

With their minds unchanged, people will continue to make new choices that destroy the world, and we'll spend our lives trying to repair the damage of their old choices. We'll also find ourselves with fewer wild places to explore and enjoy. That is what we've seen happen over the last 40 years of the modern green movement.

We cannot protect or defend the planet, environment, nature, biodiversity wildlife or wild places—not even natural resources. Fortunately, we don't need to.

John Kurmann has an earnest desire to save the world, thinks of himself as a community of life activist and has been a Sierra Club member for almost five years.

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Correction: The Sixth Extinction: And Then There Were None, John Kurmann, June/July *Planet Kansas*, fifth paragraph, page 9:

...fully modern humans were identified by the subspecies name *Homo sapiens sapiens*

...while estimates vary as to how long ago *Homo sapiens sapiens* emerged as a distinct subspecies, the oldest fossil specimen classified as *Homo sapiens sapiens* found so far has been dated to about 130,000 years ago.

Even if we only consider anatomically modern humans—*Homo sapiens sapiens*—the evidence shows that these ancestors of ours lived for more than a hundred thousand years without causing a Sixth Extinction episode."

