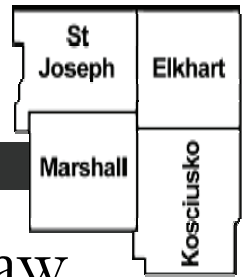




# Michiana Sierra News



Michiana Group of the Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter

April, May, June 2007

## CAFO/Health Ordinance Becomes Law

### Vote Approves County Ordinance

By Kathleen Neal

St. Joseph County, Indiana now has a new rule governing CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations). On February 20th and 21st, 2007, the St. Joseph County Council and Commissioners passed the measure with near-unanimous endorsement. The lone dissenting vote was that of Mark Dobson (R – Granger) who, despite having been involved in discussions on the matter for over a year and having had the proposed ordinance on his desk since the preceding November, said he had not had enough time to study the measure.

The new ordinance is one of the fairest and most detailed CAFO rules in the state of Indiana, and the only one to focus solely on public health issues, according to Marc Nelson, Environmental Health Director and chair of the citizens task force that helped draft the measure. The ordinance establishes limitations on the location, design, construction and operation of CAFOs in St. Joe County, and requires all CAFO operators to obtain a permit from the County Health Department. The new rule determines how far these huge “factory farms” must be from nearby homes, towns, daycares, schools, medical facilities, water features (such as wells, flood plains, and streams), as well as from other CAFOs. The ordinance also specifies certain basic design and operational requirements for manure

storage and handling in order to prevent the release of contaminants to the environment.

In a ground-breaking effort to involve local citizens in the drafting of new laws, the ordinance was drafted over the summer by a citizens task force, made up of local farmers, CAFO operators, and rural residents. The measure was then vetted by an advisory group which included county officials, as well as representatives of the local scientific and health care communities, before being presented to elected officials for their endorsement.

CAFOs are large livestock operations which house thousands of animals in confinement buildings for the production of meat, milk, eggs or fur, and which consequently must have extensive manure handling systems to manage the generated waste. The CAFO issue became of grave concern to many citizens of this highly-populated county when plans were uncovered to establish a 3,500-head dairy on a small plot of land in a neighborhood which is prone to flooding and dotted with many nearby homes. The absence of any existing county rules and the lack of effective oversight by IDEM (Indiana Department of Environmental Management) led citizens throughout the county to call for local control over the establishment and operation of these huge industrial facilities.

*(Editor’s Note: CAFO animals are under the jurisdiction of the Indiana Board of Animal Health.)*

### PROGRAMS (Held at the Res, 13950 Scout Lane, Mishawaka.)

#### Backyard Habitat: Gardening for Birds, April 19, 7:00 p.m.

Our songbirds are losing habitat daily due to human development. Discover ways to make your own backyard friendlier to migrating and nesting birds. Laura Fuderer, President of South Bend-Elkhart Audubon, presents this spring program.

#### The True Cost of Food, May 17, 7:00 p.m.

Bob Perkins leads a discussion on the true costs of mass-produced food. Our current food choices and eating habits are not sustainable, but there are solutions that help us and the planet. Find out how even small changes make a big difference.

#### Cliff Jacobson’s Expert Camping Tips, June 21, 7:00 p.m.

Join us to watch "The Forgotten Skills" for expert techniques and equipment tips to make your camping experience more rewarding. Taught by respected outdoor writer Cliff Jacobson, this program provides 90 minutes of great information.

Visit Michiana Sierra  
on the web

[www.indiana.sierraclub.org/michiana](http://www.indiana.sierraclub.org/michiana)



Earth Day  
Sunday, April 22

<http://www.sierraclub.org/earthday/>

## Second Annual Community Forum on Economic Development

By Linda Wolfson

The second *Community Forum on Economic Development -- Improving Our Quality of Life* will take place Saturday, May 12, from 9 AM to 4 PM, at the Indiana University South Bend, Weikamp Hall 1001. The event is being sponsored by the Community Forum for Economic Development (CFED), a local group that formed after last year's forum, and co-sponsored by other labor and community organizations.



Reverend Christopher Boston, a board member of the national Partnership for Working Families and the Executive Director of the Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope, Inc. (MICAH) will give the keynote address. A representative of the CFED will present an update of local economic practices and afternoon work sessions will address issues central to improving the quality of life in St. Joseph County. One of these sessions will focus on rural economic development, specifically the construction of ethanol and other biofuel facilities in Indiana. **To register for the forum, call 574-287-3834 or contact [developmentforum@sjvp.org](mailto:developmentforum@sjvp.org).**

### More on E-Waste Recycling

Our last issue contained helpful information about recycling e-waste (cell phones, computers, etc.), which you can read on our website. Sierra member Bob Leliaert of Marshall County sent in this site: [www.recycleyourtrash.org/electronics/main.html](http://www.recycleyourtrash.org/electronics/main.html). Earth911.org is another great place to look if you want to find local and national recyclers for items beyond what your curbside program accepts (batteries, phones, appliances, and more).

### Green Lawns, Clean Water

By Christine Fiordalis

We all are part of a watershed (a region where water flows across or under the ground on its way to a lake, river, stream, reservoir or ocean), so our lawn and yard care practices impact water quality even if we don't live near a body of water. In particular, lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus significantly reduce water quality.

Phosphorus is present in all living things. However, too much of it disrupts the natural balance. Phosphorus is "junk food" for algae. One pound of phosphorus can produce 10,000 pounds of wet weeds and algae. Repeated algal blooms cause fish kills, reduce cold water fish habitat and foul the taste and smell of drinking water. Recent studies have even implicated certain forms of algae in the onset of Alzheimers disease and other illnesses.

The solution to phosphorus run-off is to control the source. USE PHOSPHORUS-FREE LAWN FERTILIZER! Check out the three numbers on the lawn fertilizer bag. The middle number indicates phosphorus content and generally should be "0." The first number indicates nitrogen, the third number potassium. Phosphorus is needed only on newly seeded lawns or where soil testing indicates a deficiency. Better yet, use organic lawn fertilizers! Water is a precious resource, with fresh water making up less than 1% of our earth's total water supply. We cannot afford to squander it.

### Welcome, New Members!

Lauro Banda, Thomas Beath, Tabitha and Gregory Butts, Valerie Collins, Donald Darnell, Mr. and Mrs. Fillio, Will Jolley, Bruce Hammond, Joann Harlow, Mishawak Harris, Gloria Heller, Laura Hieronymus, Brent Hile, Norman Horvath, Helen Kennell, Richard Klee, Albertine Kramer, Tina Mealer, Emily Minnick, Stephanie Moore, Leo and Jean Murphy, Thomas J. Nace, Jr., James Nesbitt, Thomas Nowak, Dennie Ohrazda, Robert Pfeil, David Poage, Kevin Rose, Dan Schrock, Marlene Y. Schroeder, Rhonda Skinner, D. Spalding, Bill Staunton, Vernabel Stayrook, David Visser, Sheryll Wells, Harold Wenger, Janet Wood, Mary Yocom, Connie Yoder, and Joan Yoder.

### Sustainable Living Tour, April 28

The tour provides practical resources and solutions for sustainable living. Events are in South Bend, Elkhart, and Goshen, and one is hosted by Sierra member, Becky Reimbold. Visit [www.michianaearthgroup.org/](http://www.michianaearthgroup.org/).

*Michiana Sierra News* is published quarterly by the Michiana Group of the Sierra Club, Hoosier Chapter. Submissions are welcomed and should be sent to P. O. Box 1002, South Bend, IN, 46624, or emailed to [michiana@hoosier.sierraclub.org](mailto:michiana@hoosier.sierraclub.org). Publication does not necessarily constitute endorsement, but is for information only. You can also e-subscribe to the newsletter by sending an email to the above address and placing "Michiana Sierra News" in the subject line. **This newsletter is printed on 100% recycled stock made from wind power.** The next newsletter deadline is June 21, 2007. Officers, meetings, events, green links, and other resources are available on our web site.

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## HOME IMPROVEMENT TAX CREDITS

Christine Fiordalis



In the spring, a young person's fancy turns to thoughts of home improvements (at least, for some of us!). The season brings routine maintenance chores as well as sun and returning songbirds. Nowadays, we also feel an increasing need to use and conserve energy wisely, which encourages us to insulate, seal, protect and upgrade our homes as smartly as possible. When planning projects for your home, talk with your local hardware store and also look into the various federal tax credits for energy improvements. The law permits you to claim a total energy efficiency credit of \$500 collectively for years 2006 and 2007. In other words, if you took a credit of \$125 on your 2006 income tax return, you can take an additional \$375 credit in 2007. If you didn't claim any credit in 2006, then you can claim the entire \$500 on your 2007 tax return - provided your improvements qualify as energy efficient.

Two websites offer great assistance! Check out [www.energytaxincentives.org](http://www.energytaxincentives.org) for a wealth of information about energy saving windows, appliances, lighting, water heating, heating and cooling, insulation, sealing leaks and renewable energy. The site identifies qualifying materials and gives expert guidance on how to evaluate your individual situation.

Another website, [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov), also provides a library of tools and resources. In addition, its special section, "Tax Credits Under the Energy Bill," walks you through the actual credits themselves with a computation chart that is very user friendly. For instance, 10% of the cost of energy-efficient insulation materials (attic, exterior walls and floors) can be taken as a credit (up to the \$500 limit). You can claim a credit of \$150 for qualified furnaces and hot-water heaters; \$300 for energy efficient air conditioners (again, up to the \$500 maximum collective credit). Replacing windows? Ten percent of the total cost (\$200 maximum up to the \$500 limit).

Tax credits reduce your actual tax bill dollar for dollar (they aren't just deductions). Be sure to save receipts and paperwork to substantiate your claim if asked, but most importantly, make sure you use qualifying materials. Not only will your home be more comfortable and easily maintained, you will be using resources wisely AND your pocketbook will thank you!

**Shocked by Results of "Circuit Breaker" Law!** Approved by the state legislature last year, a law known as the "Circuit Breaker" was passed in order to reduce property taxes. Many local government services are funded by property taxes, and this law may have devastating effects on future funding of vital services. Read Laura Fuderer's letter at [www.indiana.sierraclub.org/michiana/issues.htm](http://www.indiana.sierraclub.org/michiana/issues.htm) to learn about the environmental impact.

### Students for Environmental Action

Step It Up! Saturday, April 14.  
Notre Dame Main Campus, 1-4:00.  
Music, art, food, info & more!

Environmental Ed: South Bend  
Farmers Market, April 28/May 5.

### Nature Deficit Disorder

How important is it to get your children outdoors? In his book, "**Last Child in the Woods**" author Richard Louv discusses how nature stimulates children's creativity and offers therapy for depression, obesity, and attention deficit disorder. Louv also shows how environment based education increases children's critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving skills.

### Environmental Concerns Ignored in House Bill 1762

By Joseph Skelton

The State of Indiana is attempting to change the Lowering of the Ten Acre Lakes Act (called by some the "Ditch Act"). Representative William Friend has submitted HB 1762, which would eliminate permits being required to (1) locate, make, dig, dredge, construct, reconstruct, repair, or re-clean or (2) order or recommend the location, establishment, construction, reconstruction, repair, or re-cleaning of a ditch or drain having a bottom depth lower than the normal level of a lake within a one-half (1/2) mile of a lake. This would allow a person to put any ditch or drain into a lake without permits or hearings.

The permitting process was established to provide safeguards against the lowering of a freshwater lake's level as a result of ditch or drain activity, especially important in northern Indiana where many of the lakes are underlain by sand and gravel layers. If the legislature passes this amendment, no one will even know when a drain or ditch is going to be worked on or constructed. Ditches and drains could be installed below the level of a lake and water could be drained affecting its ecological health. Neither the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Management, or the Army Corps of Engineers will know what is going on.

*Editor's Note: The Indiana/Hoosier Chapter web site has the following links about the current legislative session: Legislature 2007, Legislature Tracker, Legislative Alerts, and Look-up Your Legislator.*

Membership Categories	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47

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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Enclose check and mail to:  
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Boulder, CO 80322-2968

### World's Largest Garage Sale

Michiana Sierra will again be at South Bend's big sale on June 2, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Municipal Parking Garage, Wayne and St. Joseph Streets. Donations are appreciated and help defray expenses such as the newsletter. If you would like to volunteer at the sale or have items for pick-up, contact Julie at 574-246-0133. Your items may be another's treasure!



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**OUTINGS CALENDAR** (Also check state and national outings on-line.)

**Friday, April 6 to Sunday, April 8: Cabin Outing, Potato Creek State Park.**

Geza Csapo is a long-time Sierra Club member and it is time for his semi-annual outing to Potato Creek State Park near South Bend. Join Geza and other Sierrans at Family Cabin #13, any time after 4 p.m. Friday to noon Sunday. Come for fun, camaraderie, relaxing and hiking while exploring the park and looking for osprey nests around the shores of Worster Lake. The cabin has a full kitchen, plus room for 8 overnighters on beds or rollaway sleepers. Do not bring firewood, but take along some food to share and your eating utensils. (Bring bedding if planning to stay overnight.) For more information call Geza at (574) 255-9960. (Easy/Moderate)

**Saturday, April 28: Pumpkinvine Nature Trail Service Project**

Have a late celebration for Earth Day by helping to clear a section of the Pumpkinvine corridor in Middlebury. Meet at 9:00 a.m. and bring loppers, brush trimmers, etc. For directions and more information call Jeff Kessler at 574-294-3619 or go to [www.pumpkinvine.org](http://www.pumpkinvine.org). (Moderate/Strenuous.)

**Sunday, April 29: Wildflower Walk, Love Creek County Park, Berrien Creek, Michigan**

Celebrate Spring with a naturalist guided wildflower walk through this beautiful Berrien County Park. Meet at the nature center at 10 a.m. EST. The park's naturalist will take us on a guided tour that will last approximately 1 1/2 hours, as we learn how to identify the wildflowers and hear some of the historical folklore of the flowers. Entrance fee per car: Berrien County residents \$3, non-residents \$5. The park is located outside Berrien Center at 9228 Huckleberry Road. For park information, call 269-471-2617. For more details and to let us know you are coming contact Julie Hyndman at 574-246-0133. (Easy/Moderate)

**Friday, May 4 to Sunday, May 6: Mountain Biking in Southwest Michigan.**

Strap on your Camelbak and tighten your chinstrap as we tackle over 25 miles of single track trails at Fort Custer Recreation Area in Augusta, MI. Located between Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, Fort Custer was a military training center for the U.S. Army during World War II. The park includes three lakes, the Kalamazoo River, restored prairies, and second growth forest. Four different colored, well marked loops offer challenges for all skill levels. If unable to ride, the multi-use trail system allows for a slower paced hike. See how the Emerald Ash-Borer Beetle has killed every Ash tree in the area and learn what can be done to stop its invasion. With 6-12 participants we can stay the weekend in one of the heated cabins located in secluded areas of the park. For complete details and costs, contact Bob Perkins, (574) 276-7825.