



MICHIANA SIERRA NEWS

The newsletter of the Michiana Group of the Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter

To explore, enjoy, and protect the planet

January, February, March 2006

The Importance of Membership

There are over 800 Sierra members in the Michiana area, with 59 new folks joining since October, 2005. Our voices have been added to those of more than 700,000 Sier-rans across the country who want to preserve our wilderness and natural resources, save endangered and threatened wild-life, and protect this fragile environment we call home. Together we can make a difference and have a greater impact.

We all appreciate the benefits of being part of a national organization, but if you have never attended a local Sierra meeting, this is a great time to start. Make it one of your New Year's resolutions! The local club helps to encourage and educate members, providing fun and stimulating opportunities and resources on a local, state, and national level. Look through our newsletter to find a variety of programs, outings, and information that offers something for everyone.

Welcome, New Sierra Club Members!

Kent Balmer, Ronald Barker, Rex Biddle, Stan Bom, Sandra Bridger, Arlene Brown, Donna Brown, B J Burns, Ryan Cam-pion, Eugene Candler, Nichole Carter, Tom Clemens, Harry Coffman, Conrad Damian, Carole Davis, Jillea Dickinson Fry, Harold Grieb, Patti Gyoles, Tracy Harder, Claude Hartman, Ellen Higdon, Andrew Hoffmann, Phillip Hoose, Tony Kauf-man, Laura King, Lori King, Jon Kingston, Roy Klein, Ed-ward Kobek, Norma Kuhn, Roman Ladewski, Joan Laude-man, Rev. Charles Lavelly, Ellen Lechlitner, Jason Lindower, Matthew Longacre, Eileen Manahan, Debra McBrier, Karen McDonald, Daniel Miller, Scott Miller, Rebecca Moskwinski, Donald Nofziger, Barbara Ogden, James Park, Robert Perkins, Rudy Reyes, Jr., Sandi Sizemore, Scot Squires, Nancy Steg-mann, Sharlee Turk, Matthew Vigneault, Susan Widup, Robert Williams, Danae Wirth, Mary Lou Wise, Erik Wogo-man, Stan Wogoman and Alvin Zunkel.

Grassroots Lobbying Workshop

Saturday, January 21, 10:00 a.m.
St. Joseph County Public Library
Details Inside

Outings Listed on Back Cover

We have enjoyed outings of all types, great and small, including trips to Yosemite, Glacier, & Yellowstone (pictured right). Get involved!

Monthly Program Meetings

Thursday, January 19, 7 p.m.

John and Merrill Clark, Owners/Operators of Rose-land Organic Farms, Dowagiac.

The Clarks are modern pioneers of organic farming in the Michiana area and exceed all organic certification stan-dards. They have spent the last 20 years studying and practicing organic agriculture. John has a Ph.D. in bio-chemistry and was a research associate at MIT. Merrill is a former Chairperson for Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance and continues to serve on their Board.

Thursday, February 16, 7 p.m.

Ten Thousand Villages.

A representative from Ten Thousand Villages will discuss fair trade issues and environmental concerns connected with food and hand-crafted items by local/regional com-munities around the world. Samples of items offered for sale at the local retail store will also be displayed.

Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m.

Brian Wright, Coal Policy Director of the Hoosier Environmental Council.

Brian will discuss mercury emissions in the environment. This important topic was rescheduled from last fall, so do not miss hearing the facts on an important health issue. Additionally, information will be provided on mercury in our food chain, and a mercury hair testing kit will be avail-able for a willing volunteer.

Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at the Res, 13950 Scout Lane, Mishawaka (phone: 574-259-1850).





Did You Know?

More than 125 million Americans live in areas with highly polluted air, 50% of which is caused by cars and trucks. Public transit is far less polluting, emitting up to half as much carbon dioxide per mile traveled as do cars. In addition, a full bus is six times more fuel-efficient than a single-occupant car; a full train is 15 times more efficient. Recently, some members of the Indiana legislature asked constituents whether they would support a light rail system in Indiana to connect major urban areas. What do you think? Let your representative/senator know if you support further consideration of this idea. And, of course, try to use car-pooling, public transit, bicycling and walking whenever you can.

Plastic Bags Are Hazardous!

Daniel Imhoff's book (pictured below) is an excellent resource on this topic. It is printed on recycled paper and is available from Sierra Club Books.



Shoppers worldwide use billions of plastic bags yearly, with each bag taking up to 1,000 years to disintegrate. Plastic bag litter is everywhere and increasing, even as far away as the Himalayas and South Africa (where people dub them "roadside daisies"). In addition, bags kill wildlife (who eat them indiscriminately) and clog drains (which caused deadly flooding in Bangladesh). Now governments are fighting back! Some countries impose a tax on plastic bag use or ban them entirely. When Taiwanese stores began charging 34 cents per bag, use dropped by 80%. In Britain, some supermarkets now hand out biodegradable alternatives. But one of the most effective strategies is simple consumer education. Australian supermarkets reported a dramatic rise in fabric bag sales as a result of a campaign urging customers to shun plastic. How about you? Try to use cloth bags or re-use your plastic bags. Let's clean up!

KUDOS

We can never say "Thank You" enough to all our members and volunteers, but special thanks go out this month to Geza Csapo, Stephen Fredman, Julie Hyndman, and Donna Osborn. Their generous contributions helped greatly with our newsletter costs. You are appreciated!

Official Meets With Environmentalists

On November 9, Gary Gilot, South Bend's Director of Public Works, met with environmental groups about the plan to reduce raw sewage/combined sewer overflows into the St. Joseph River. The meeting was well attended, and we appreciate the city's efforts to include environmentalists in the discussions to improve our quality of life and protect our natural resources.

Michiana News

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Michiana Group, which covers St. Joseph, Elkhart, Marshall and Kosciusko Counties.

Our goal is to educate members and friends about conservation issues, events, outings, meetings, and other environmental news. Submissions are welcome and should be sent to Michiana Sierra, Attn: Hazel Stevens, Editor, P.O. Box 1002, South Bend, IN, 46624.

This newsletter is printed on recycled stock..



What is this person doing?!

- A. Has he fainted because of current environmental policy?
- B. Is he using the luge at Muskegon State Park to work off stress from hearing the news?

If you answered "B" that is correct. Look at our Outings to see how you too can enjoy this cure!

Grassroots Lobbying Workshop

Make your voice heard at the Indiana General Assembly. Are you worried that the state may pass a law prohibiting Indiana from passing environmental regulations more stringent than federal standards? Would you like a bill to pass that will eliminate a significant source of mercury pollution in Indiana? Bills on both of these issues are expected to be introduced in the next session of the Indiana Legislature, and you can have an impact on their fate.

On Saturday, January 21, at 10 AM, at the St. Joseph County Library in South Bend, the Hoosier Environmental Council will be holding a grassroots lobbying workshop to help Indiana residents more effectively make their voice heard by state legislators. We will be talking on how the legislature works, how to more effectively communicate with your legislators, and what environmental legislation has been introduced. **There is no fee, and everyone is welcome.**



For more information, please contact Brian Wright of Hoosier Environmental Council at bwright@hecweb.org or 317-685-8800 ext. 112, or Christine Fiordalis at 574-237-1161. An RSVP is appreciated, but not required. See you at the workshop!

Good Food and Fellowship

Members and guests enjoyed great food and fellowship at the holiday covered-dish meeting at the beautifully decorated Res. Music, photos from the year's activities, and the exchange of ideas on the best environmentally friendly gifts made the evening a real highlight of the season!

In Memoriam

Our friend and fellow Sierran, Beth Miller, will be sorely missed. Gifts to honor her memory may be sent to the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, P.O. Box 392, Goshen, IN, 46527, or to the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation, 1609 Garden Street, Santa Barbara, CA, 93101. If you would like information on running in the Indianapolis marathon in Beth's honor this spring, please contact husband, Chuck Rupley, at 574-277-2511.

Too Cold for Global Warming?

Last month, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported that 2005 was the 2nd warmest year on record, continuing a trend that most climatologists attribute to heat-trapping greenhouse gases accumulating in the atmosphere.

The WMO also said that in the Arctic Sea, where average winter temperatures have risen seven degrees, the ice cap this summer is 20% smaller than the 1979-2004 average.

Oceanographers reported that Atlantic currents carrying warm water toward northern Europe have slowed. Freshwater from melting northern ice caps and glaciers is believed interfering with saltwater currents.

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense."—John Muir

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ExCom Members Elected

Bob Mayernick, Hazel Stevens and Julie Hyndman were selected to fulfill two-year terms on the Michiana Group's Executive Committee. Christine Fiordalis, Dawn Kessler, Jeff Kessler and Donna Osborn were retained for the second year of their two-year terms.

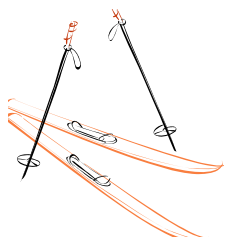
The ExCom meets six times per year (every other month), beginning at 6:00 p.m. on January 19th at the Res. All members are welcome to attend these meetings. Share your ideas!

As the newsletter goes to press, the Arctic Refuge and the Endangered Species Act are under attack. Be as dedicated as the other side. Keep fighting and don't give up!



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OUTINGS CALENDAR

Saturday, January 14 and Sunday, January 15— Muskegon State Park, Michigan: Meet at the park lodge at 10 a.m. The drive time to the park from South Bend is about 2 1/2 hours. The goal is to observe the effect of ice formations and their effect on beach erosion. After the study we will be using the park facilities for cross-country skiing, ice-skating, snowshoeing, **and for the brave—using the luge!** There is a snack and quick lunch facility available or you can bring your own lunch. If you plan to use the luge, bring warm and waterproof clothing. The luge is a fixed sled course with high banks. You ride the sled feet first. There is a training run where a qualified instructor will teach you the techniques required to use the big run, and you must pass this training to use it. Some Olympians have used this run to practice. Luge hours are Friday 4-8 p.m., Saturday 12-8 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Park fees are required and rentals for skis, skates, luge sled and helmets are available. Each person is to make his/her own overnight arrangements. The luge clinic and course fill up early, so call now for reservations (231-744-9629) or visit www.msports.org. For further information contact Bob Mayernick, 574-287-6650. (This event is rated easy/moderate/strenuous, depending on your choice of activity.)

Saturday, February 4, Swiss Valley Ski and Snowboard Area, Jones, Michigan: Meet at 1 p.m. in the cafeteria near the ticket windows. The ski area closes at 10 p.m. While making turns down the various slopes rated from beginner to advanced, we will look for evidence of global warming (Is the only snow on the ground man made?), and reflect on our nation's energy policy (What vehicles dominate the parking lot?). While sitting around a warm fire in the lower lounge, or sharing snacks we bring or purchase in the cafeteria, we can discuss our findings and make comparisons to our early winter cross country ski outing. Lessons are available for all levels of skiing from first timers to advanced. Go to www.SkiSwissValley.com for lift ticket and rental rates, evening discounts, directions, maps, etc. For more information contact Rich Mah, 574-282-1633 (evenings). (This event is easy/moderate/strenuous, depending on your choice of activity.)

Saturday, March 25, Frederick Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Meet at the gardens entrance at 11 a.m. and join the Michiana Group as we tour the Frederick Meijer Gardens. We will enjoy self-guided tours of the many botanical treasures inside and out, while learning about the ecosystems and biomes that are represented in all their glory. The park recommends 4-8 hours to really experience everything this 125 acre facility has to offer. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$8 for age 65 and above, with special rates for students and children. Visit www.meijergardens.org and call Jeff Kessler at 574-294-3619 for more information, car-pooling, etc. (This event is rated easy to moderate.)