The Future of Wildlife in Kansas...

The Ongoing Saga of the Snake and the Skunk

From Elaine Giessel, Wildlife Chair

Nothing succeeds like success. Sedgwick County Commissioners, following the example of their Johnson County counterparts, are trying to delist a threatened species they claim is hindering public works projects in the Wichita area.

First, a little background –

In the 2014 legislative session, Johnson County Wastewater, the City of Olathe and Johnson County WaterOne went after the redbelly and smooth earth snakes, introducing a bill that would have simply excluded the two snakes from consideration under the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act. Just those two animals; no reason given.

We know now, however, that there was a proposed development project in Shawnee, KS, that would have required installation of a new sewer line through old growth oak/hickory woodlands designated as critical habitat for both snakes.

When the Senate Natural Resources Committee failed to move the bill forward, an attempt was made to repeal the entire state endangered species act. That tactic also failed, due in large part to the intercession of Secretary Robin Jennison of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT).

He testified that it was the job of his agency to determine the status of threatened and endangered species, based on science, not politics.

To their credit, the Johnson County entities, in addition to trying the legislative route, had initiated the KDWPT review process that determines listing of species. A formal petition had been submitted and was under review during the 2014 legislative session by a panel of independent science advisors. The advisory panel agreed with delisting of the smooth earth snake, based on updated population data, but recommended keeping the redbelly listed as “threatened” due to lack of sufficient data.

For 40 years, the KWPT Commissioners have accepted the recommendation of its scientists, but current Kansas politics has changed everything. Last fall Secretary Jennison, a Brownback appointee, overrode his own advisors’ findings and recommended delisting of the two species. He testified that it was the job of his agency to determine the status of threatened and endangered species, based on science, not politics.

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Sierra Club info

Chapter Office
Sierra Club, Kansas Chapter
c/o Craig Wolfe
9844 Georgia
Kansas City, KS 66109-4326
913-299-4443
info@kansas.sierraclub.org

National Headquarters
Sierra Club
85 Second St., 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441
415-977-5500

Legislative Director
Zach Pistora,
785-865-6503
zackpistora@gmail.com

Director of Development
Bob Sommer
816-898-1100
bob.sommer@kansas.sierraclub.org

Chapter Members Holding National Positions
Yvonne Cather
• Chapter-National Relationship Task Force
• Co-Lead Volunteer on the Chapter Capacity Implementation Team
• Co-Lead Volunteer on the Chapter Leadership Training Team

Communications Director
Craig Wolfe
Planet Kansas Newsletter Editor & Webmaster
913-299-4474
info@Kansas.SierraClub.org

Planet Kansas and Website Submissions:
Send articles, events, outings and updates to Craig Wolfe at info@kansas.sierraclub.org

www.kansas.sierraclub.org

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My View of the Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas

By Scott Yeargain

Background from Elaine Giessel, Kansas Chapter Conservation Committee: The Kansas Water Office (KWO.org), the agency charged with water planning, policy, marketing and coordination throughout the state, is currently in the process of developing a “Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas.” Last fall, the KWO reached out to various “water user” organizations across the state to create Regional Goal Setting Teams. Representatives from industry, stock water, municipal, irrigation and conservation groups were recruited as team leaders. The Kansas Chapter invited members statewide to serve as representatives of Sierra Club in their respective areas. From the many who stepped up, the Club nominated six highly qualified individuals to work on different regional teams. Of those, only Scott Yeargain of Ottawa was selected; his report is below. Many thanks to all who volunteered and/or attended a local public input meeting.

I am apparently the lone Kansas Sierra Club member appointed by the Kansas Water Office (KWO) to one of the 14 regional water teams to gather public comments regarding Kansas’ long-term water plan. The plan is the substance of an 80 page document called “A Long-Term Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas,” which is available at www.kwo.org/50. The plan’s subtitle is “Developed based upon input from the citizens of Kansas.” I thought I might

See Water on page 8
The Longest Month

Field Notes from the DD…

By Robert F. Sommer - Director of Development

By the time this issue of Planet Kansas appears in your digital or analog mailbox (the latter being the one on the post at the end of your driveway), the words “March Appeal” will sound like something over and done with. Perhaps that phrase itself is unfamiliar.

The March Appeal is the one opportunity each year, under current Sierra Club by-laws, for chapters to contact all of their members by direct mail and phone for financial support. This is the most important time of year for the Kansas Chapter’s financial life. Members are sent a letter and a return envelope. This year we’ve also included a brochure describing a few of the issues we face and activities your dollars support right here in Kansas.

The importance of this appeal can’t be overstated. The stakes are high as we face not only entrenched anti-environmental forces in the State House, but a culture that seems largely indifferent to the consequences of unending consumption and “development,” if that’s even a suitable word for the continuing destruction of wildlife habitat for commercial use all across Kansas.

But are we in the Kansas Chapter only against things and not for them? We’re sometimes asked that.

The short answer is this: we live in Kansas—the epicenter of the Koch Kingdom, Sam Brownback is governor, American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) writes our legislation. So yes, we have many battles to fight—and with your support, we’re ready to fight them.

What are we for? Clean water, the preservation of habitat for wildlife, respect for the planet, turning back the tide of climate change, clean renewable energy, universal recognition that, as John Muir once said, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

To that end, the Sierra Club’s Kansas Chapter supports public education programs, undertakes activism, sponsors outings and trips, monitors legislation at the local and state levels. When necessary we go to court, as we did to stop Holcomb II. We’ve proposed legislation to regulate fracking.

The Kansas Chapter supports the only full-time lobbyist for the environment in the State House. We keep members informed with legislative alerts, by vetting candidates for office, and through various communications, including Planet Kansas.

The March Appeal did not end on March 31st. It ends when you take action by sending a check or clicking the Donate button at the Kansas Chapter’s website.

If every member donated just $10 (a couple of coffees at Starbucks and less than the price of a pizza), we’d cover most of our operating costs for a year.

If your life has been blessed with greater means, please consider this your call to action. We need your support to be able to take on long-term planning and win the battle to preserve wild Kansas from all that threatens it.

No matter the size of your contribution, please do take action now.

I’m always eager to visit with members about the work we’re doing, so please call or email if you have questions.

Please remember, too, that when you contribute directly to the Kansas Chapter, 100 percent of your donation to stays right here in Kansas!

You can donate on-line at kansas.sierraclub.org (click the DONATE button). You can also make checks payable to the Kansas Sierra Club and mail to:

J. Scott Smith, Treasurer
Sierra Club – Kansas Chapter
2111 Snowbird Dr.
Manhattan, KS 66502

And thank you for all you do to protect Planet Earth!

“Field Notes from the DD…” is a regular feature of Planet Kansas. To reach Bob, email bob.sommer@kansas.sierraclub.org or call 816-898-1100.

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Flint Hills Burning Issue Continues to Smolder

By Craig Volland - Air Quality Chair

In the last issue of *Planet Kansas* we published our letter to the EPA Region 7 Administrator urging him to take additional steps to solve the ongoing problem of air quality standard exceedances from rangeland burning in the Flint Hills. The 2014 burns caused high levels of dangerous fine particles (PM2.5) as far downwind as Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska.

Since then we have had another exchange of letters that can be read at www.kansas.sierraclub.org at http://bit.ly/1FVDGwL:

EPA is basically counting on landowners to spread out the burning beyond the traditional narrow window in early to mid-April.

Fortunately we are enjoying in March an unusual warm spell that could provide a good opportunity for early burning. We will be closely following progress in this regard on NOAA’s satellite imagery website: http://www.ssd.noaa.gov/PS/FIRE/hms.html

You too, can follow the 2015 burn. On this site click on:
1. Archived fire products at lower left of page;
2. What Fire Product? Click on HMS;
3. What Format? Click on “graphic” (best) or KML (via Google Earth);
4. Select desired time period.

EPA uses their Air Now site (http://airnow.gov/) to provide near real-time warnings of high pollution affecting our biggest cities. However, there are no continuous PM2.5 monitors between Kansas City and the Cedar Bluff Reservoir monitoring station west of Hayes, Kansas. Similarly there are no continuous ozone monitors between Topeka and the Cedar Creek Reservoir. Thus there is essentially no coverage between Wichita and Lincoln, Nebraska, that could be used to protect rural residents and residents of smaller cities and towns.

EPA Region 7 has requested a meeting with us in April to discuss the situation along with KDHE.

Beware of Fast Track Trade Promotion Authority for Big New Trade Agreement.

By Craig Volland - Trade Chair

In April, a new Fast Track bill is expected to be introduced in Congress to pave the way for a massive new international free trade agreement (FTA) called the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP. The TPP would include the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, Mexico and Brunei.

Fast Track Trade Promotional Authority, variations of which have been used to ram previous FTA’s through Congress, would allow limited debate and require an up-or-down vote on the TPP with no amendments allowed. The TPP has not been finalized, and a security clearance is required to see the working draft. Nonetheless, the Administration wants Fast Track now under the unsubstantiated theory that it would give the other countries confidence to make concessions to complete the negotiations.

So Why Should We Be Concerned?

Aside from the fact that the TPP is being negotiated in secret with hundreds of corporate lobbyists at the elbow of the US Trade Representative, past FTA’s have included provisions that threaten the public health and environment. These provisions fall into three major categories:

1. **Investor - State Dispute Resolution** - any “investor” in any signatory country can file a claim against another country for damages for loss of present and future profits on their investment;

2. **Challenges to Environmental & Health standards** - Any nation can file a state-to-state claim that their producers are being discriminated against, for example by food safety standards they do not meet. Trade agreements contain a chapter on minimum standards wherein signatories pledge to make best efforts to achieve, but these are weakly enforceable.

3. **National Treatment** - a nation cannot reserve products and resources to itself, i.e., no export bans.

See Trade Agreement on page 11
Wildlife, continued from cover

that the redbelly be downlisted to a “Species In Need of Conservation (SINC).” While SINC status still keeps a species under watch, it removes any real protection of its habitat.

At the October Commission meeting in Salina, Kansas Sierra Club testified that downlisting the snake for political reasons would put at risk every species currently listed. The Commission voted 6-1 to downlist anyway, effectively gutting the Kansas endangered species act. We didn’t have to wait long to say, “I told you so.”

Enter the Wichita copycats –

The Sedgwick County folks didn’t even bother to go through the motions of filing a petition with KDWPT. They simply got SB 269 introduced in the 2015 session, proposing to exclude another targeted animal from coverage under the Kansas endangered species act. Clearly, this route is not based on the best available science. It is also in violation of process and excludes opportunity for public input, as required by existing law.

The critter now at risk of unlisting is the eastern spotted skunk Spilogale putorius, which has been listed as “threatened” in Kansas since 1982. The spotted skunk has a historical range throughout the eastern U.S., but its numbers have been in sharp decline in Kansas. Nowhere in its range is the spotted skunk as common as the striped skunk, and in recent years populations have declined drastically due to loss of habitat. While not listed federally, it is listed as endangered in neighboring Iowa and Missouri.

The spotted skunk is smaller and more weasel-like than its striped cousin. It inhabits open prairies, brushy areas and cultivated land. This skunk requires some form of cover such as a brushy field border, fencerow, and rock or debris piles between the den and foraging areas. And therein lies the problem. The main factor in the decline of the species is thought to be “clean” farming methods, which eliminate cover this species requires. Mowing and clearing of floodways also impact critical habitat along streams and rivers.

While the Public Works Department of Sedgwick County had apparently worked well in the past with KDWPT to minimize or mitigate loss of skunk habitat, some Commissioners were not happy with the consultation process. Hoping to avoid delay and reduce costs of future projects, they decided to bypass KDWPT altogether. Without submitting a species review petition, they opted to try to dump the skunk solely through legislative means.

Secretary Jennison spoke again before the Senate Natural Resources Committee in support of the authority of his agency and willingness to work with petitioners. Zack Pistora, lobbyist for Kansas Sierra Club, did not stand alone in defense of the eastern spotted skunk. Six other wildlife conservation groups also opposed the bill: Audubon of Kansas, Kansas Natural Resource Council, Kansas Wildlife Federation, The Wildlife Society (Kansas Chapter), Central Plains Society of Mammalogists and The Nature Conservancy of Kansas.

And there’s more –

Unfortunately, that is not the whole story. Another endangered species bill was introduced this session by proponents in Sedgwick County. It would appear that the Commissioners doubled-down. In addition to trying to unlist the skunk, they also want to eliminate specific projects from oversight by KDWPT. SB 268 would prevent the threatened and endangered species act from interfering with stream maintenance and obstruction clearing. This, despite the fact that KDWPT staff has worked successfully with the county in the past to protect critical instream habitat.

As was the case with the redbelly snake delisting, the passage of SB 268 would set a terrible precedent for protection of wildlife. If the legislature agrees that stream maintenance should no longer be covered by the state endangered species law, then other activities that threaten critical habitat could also be arbitrarily excluded.

Meanwhile, back in Johnson County, there’s an update on the redbelly snake. Local residents near the proposed development made repeated appeals to local officials to protect their property from the unwanted sewer project. A lawsuit was filed. Recently, the Shawnee project was taken off the table by the developer and the approved sewer project put on hold. For the redbelly snake and the Kansas endangered species act, it’s too late. The damage is done.

There is good news, too –

For now, the eastern spotted skunk is safe from legislative delisting. According to Pistora, both endangered species bills introduced in 2015 (SB 268 & SB 269) were left in the Senate Natural Resources Committee. No votes were taken on either. On March 19, Chairman Powell announced the last day for committee business; the bills will not be advancing this session. Unfortunately, these two bills will technically remain alive through the 2016 session.

The bottom line --

The Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club is committed to ensuring that due process, based on the best available science, is followed with regard to listing and delisting of nongame wildlife species in Kansas. Our state government and its agencies hold Kansas natural resources and wildlife in public trust. It is their job to help maintain species diversity and preserve critical habitat for reasonable public use and enjoyment.

Until the precedent set by the downlisting of the redbelly snake is “fixed” by KDWPT, we will have to stay vigilant. As Club lobbyist Pistora warned, “The Kansas endangered species act is itself endangered.”

You can help by tracking wildlife issues at KDWPT:
Sign up for their ListServes at http://kdwpt.state.ks.us/KDWPT-Info/Legislative-Update-Report
http://kdwpt.state.ks.us/KDWPT-Info/News
http://kdwpt.state.ks.us/KDWPT-Info/KDWPT-Social-Media
Follow KWPT Commission meetings online and/or attend a meeting near you. Submit personal comments supportive of protecting nongame wildlife and critical habitat in Kansas.
http://kdwpt.state.ks.us/KDWPT-Info/Commission
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See you on April 25.
Chapter Conservation Committee Holds Planning Retreat

Left to right are: Craig Volland, John Neuberger, Tom Kneil, Ellie Skokan, Yvonne Cather, Zack Pistora, Duane Schrag, Gary Anderson, Kathy Outlaw, and Paula Slater

The Conservation Committee discussed priorities and strategy last March 21 for the issues they will be facing in the upcoming year. Topics at the meeting included Flint Hills and efforts to obtain air pollution data and the lack of such data from KDHE; Mercury in fish and the concern that appropriate mercury warnings were not being issued with women; water meetings held throughout the state with only one Sierra Club representative and some concerns about the questions being asked; greenhouse gas emissions in general; the donation of this property for this branch of the Land Institute; diesel emissions and possible health effects, particularly from rail yards. A written report on the study methodology and results from the local yards should be available soon; the XL pipeline and the various concerns related to spillage and potential health impacts.

Water, continued from page 3

relate some of my observations and thinking about the Vision document and the regional meetings I attended.

By virtue of being on the Marais des Cygnes water team I participated in a preparatory meeting and three public meetings held in Fort Scott, Paola, and Ottawa. In Fort Scott, my guess is that there were 2 or 3 members of the public present; there were perhaps 20 people present: 3 team members, Jackie McClaskey, the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture, Tracy Streeter, head of the Kansas Water Office, a member of the Kansas House of Representatives, a plethora of “facilitators” from K-State, and some assistants for officials from the KWO. In Paola there were maybe 40 citizens, in Ottawa maybe 35 citizens, and approximately the same number of “facilitators,” KWO officials, Kansas Department of Agriculture officials, and their assistants, that is, about 17 or 18 KSU facilitators and Kansas government employees.

My observations are as follows: the meetings were not really “public outreach events” in any meaningful sense. There were four questions presented to the participants at all meetings and the questions are so general that, in my view, they are basically meaningless. At each meeting participants are broken into smaller groups and are asked to answer the four questions. The facilitators from KSU behaved more like “handlers” in the sense that no questions are “allowed” but for the four presented, and another KSU facilitator enforces a time limit of 10 minutes per question for all participants, not for each participant. So, there is a question “enforcer” and a time “enforcer” for the small groups. During the last meeting I pushed Greg Foley, who made a presentation for the Department of Agriculture just prior to the breakout sessions, very hard for an open question and comment period regarding the Vision document. There was some support from the public participants and we were told that we could not change the protocol of just these four questions, the time limits, and so on. I asked for permission see a show of hands for those who would like to ask other questions regarding the Vision document and was told that I couldn't do that.

My basic objection, beyond the straight-jacketed meeting protocols, is that there is a basic disconnect between the 80 page Vision document and the four questions asked at these public meetings. I'm inclined to think the disconnect is purposeful because these four questions decoy participants away from the serious proposals in the Vision document. I'll give you some instances of this.

Here are the four “action items” listed in the Vision document:

1. “Evaluate development of option for local economic development entities to obtain an appropriation of water or an existing water right without a specific point of diversion or point of use to protect the potential water needs of a business being recruited to their area. The appropriation would have a reasonable time limit applied for the startup
Water, continued from page 8

of a proposed project.” (p. 21).
This looks to me like a “roving” water right which could be used to recruit a business entity and which right may be granted without reference to water availability or appropriateness of the business for the region, for instance a water-intensive facility in southwest Kansas.
2. “Eliminate statutory prohibition to use drinking water State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) for water transfers and identify other state policies which unnecessarily limit transfers.” (p. 43)
3. “Remove and dispose up to three million cubic yards of sediment from John Redmond Reservoir. (p. 42)
4. “Complete evaluation of large water transfers including legal, environmental, economic, and technical issues”. (p. 43)

The second and fourth “action items” relate to building an aqueduct from northeast Kansas to southwest Kansas to support current and future water-intensive businesses in the southwest.

So, while the action plans above are right from the Vision document, here are the questions which participants were asked to answer:
1. What is the best way to improve reservoir storage?
2. For how long should the state plan in the Vision document?
3. What roles should conservation and public education have in water planning?
4. How important is water quality in the state's planning?

I think these questions are a “disconnect” with the Vision document because they relate obliquely to the proposals in the document and they are so sufficiently general that anyone can answer about anyway and the answers imply nothing for the proposals in the Vision document.

Why this disconnect? I suspect because very few of the members of the regional planning team have read the entire Vision document or they have and they don't really see what the subtexts are. I nominated the water quality issue to the list of questions for our region and the committee supported its inclusion. Yet, the question is so general that without examining the regulatory strictures implied by quality, in this agricultural state, discussion at public meetings was largely vacuous. What I mean by this is that everyone supports clean water and that’s basically what participants stated. What they did not state is under what conditions they support clean water. For instance, there is a stockman who lives close to our farm here in Franklin Co and who winters his cattle on about 15 acres with a stream running right through the 15 acres. He has perhaps 25 calf pairs and the run-off drains into a major tributary of the Marais des Cygnes river about a half mile from his wintering lot. Do we care sufficiently about clean water to enjoin him to a lower stocking rate on the 15 acres?

Here are, I think, the real concerns with the Vision document, Draft II (the draft the public input meetings are supposed to address).
1. The document proposes using water rights as incentives to attract businesses to the state and to this extent the plan is more an economic development tool than a tool to conserve and manage wisely the water resources we currently have;
2. The birth of the Vision document came about because the Governor's Economic Advisory Council requested a plan by which it could assure businesses thinking of relocating to Kansas that the water resources necessary for their businesses would be here;
3. Governor Brownback told the KWO and Kansas Department of Agriculture that the emphasis in the plan should be quantity of water, not quality;
4. There is not one reference in the document to renewable supplies of energy and this relates to water by virtue of the proposed Holcomb II plant in the western part of the state and the imperative to dredge John Redmond reservoir (estimated cost: $500 million) to keep Wolf Creek nuclear plant running. The point is that wind turbines and solar panels don't require reservoirs to cool them. They also don't require tax payers to pony up to dredge reservoirs.
5. Fracking practices in Kansas and their implications for water quality are mentioned zero times in the document.
6. A workable water policy in Kansas requires a regulatory regime with enforcement provisions (for over-pumping, streambed set-backs, enforcement of the clean water and clean air acts, and so on) but the political climate in Topeka is anti-regulatory, free-market oriented, tilted toward small government, anti-environmental, and dismissive of climate change.
7. The Kansas Sierra Club nominated 6 members to 6 key regional water teams. Only one member was appointed to one team. The Kansas Farm Bureau has 3 members on one team (Solomon-Republican team), 2 members on 6 teams, and 1 member on each of the other teams, a total of 22 members.

My conclusion from this data is that the KWO may have already chosen the results of the public input meetings by having chosen the composition of the teams.

I do need say that there are some good things in the Vision document. Yet, my view is that it's basically an economic development tool and the public meetings are theater.

I do think that there are two bibles which best describe the labyrinth of politics, ruthless greed, and enmity all in pursuit more water in the U.S. southwest. The first is Cadillac Desert by Marc Reisner. It was published by Viking Penguin, 1986. The other is A Great Aridness by William deBuys, published by Oxford University Press, 2011. If you think Homer's Odyssey was an adventurous read then read these two books.

And hold on to your seats because here we go in Kansas.
Awareness is Creating Renewed Interest in Protecting the Earth!

By Reuben Eckels, Sunflower Community Action Deputy Director

With the economy the way it is, the middle and low income people are seeing their friends and family being laid off, such as the 600 workers at Bombardier Lear Jet, an aircraft company in Wichita last week, the last thing on a lot of people’s minds is the environment.

So, when people of color, who are faced not only with high unemployment rates but a number of Police related shootings of unarmed black males, cuts in public education, and no healthcare, first heard Sunflower Community Action talk about saving money and saving our planet, they could have cared less about the planet.

But as we went into homes and talked about how the earthquakes have become more frequent, the high asthma rates of black children, the highest infant mortality rates in the country being in their community, not only did they begin to see the connectedness of the earth’s environment, but the daily environment that shapes their lives.

Karen Cayce is now a believer and said, “I am sick of smelling the mess that comes from those businesses on 21st Street. The air that hovers over the industrial corridor is atrocious. I believe mothers that have to smell those gasses every day of their pregnancy ought to be tested for poisonous toxins in their body.”

Greg Williams of Wichita said, “Two of my children have asthma. I never thought it could come from mold through cracks in my walls or leaks in my basement, but trying to fix up the house at my wages makes it tough. But I can now see that living in this neighborhood it is important to have a good sealed house and proper filters. Then, with all the stuff in the air, I was glad to be able to put seals around my doors and windows.”

Many of our volunteers here at Sunflower Community Action are really shocked at how the city of Wichita can ignore the need to repair their streets and lights in their community, and how they notice all the air polluting corporations operating are located in their neighborhood, and that the richer neighborhoods don’t have an industrial corridor located in their backyard.

Pastors at the Greater Wichita Ministerial League have decided to take a stance and have on their agenda to ask the EPA to conduct more inspections in the industrial corridor where they work and most of their families and friends live. Sunflower Community Action works with the Ministerial League and continues to focus on environmental justice issues and reminds the community of their stewardship with the earth.

Bishop Wade Moore, the president of the Greater Wichita Ministerial League, has put environmental justice on the top of their agenda for next month, and Sierra Club member Rabi Moti Rieber is expected to speak there in the near future.

In the past, many in the poorer neighborhoods in Wichita didn’t much care about the earth or organizations like Sierra Club, but through the partnership between Sunflower Community Action and the Kansas Sierra Club, they have become more aware and are now paying attention to terms like fracking, environmental justice, and energy conservation. A little bit of the education by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation and Education program has gone a long way.
Investor-State Dispute Resolution.

Any “investor” can file a claim for cash damages against any signatory country on account of “indirect expropriation” of investment value. That is, the investment is not taken away, but may be subjected to rules that lower its value. This process was originally set up to address the arbitrary expropriation of an investor’s real property, which makes sense. However, in recent decades this right has been extended to cover loss of present and future profits on account of national or provincial policies, such as those promulgated to protect the environment, public health and labor rights. Decisions are made in secret by international tribunals staffed by private attorneys. There is no recourse to the U.S. court system.

An exceptionally bizarre and egregious loophole gives multinational corporations a means whereby they can attack domestic laws they don’t like. For example, a U.S. based global corporation can easily employ one of their foreign subsidiaries to challenge any U.S. government regulation they claim unfairly diminishes their profits – say, a regulation protecting the environment, protecting American consumers from unsafe products, or workers from unsafe working conditions.

Foreign corporations from a non-signatory country can even incorporate a subsidiary in a signatory country and then file a claim against another party to the FTA. This is akin to the “nationality-shopping” we have been reading about lately where U.S. Corporations are “moving” their headquarters to foreign countries to get a lower tax rate.

However, this is not so much about foreign corporations attacking our laws. It’s about our legions of global corporations attacking laws everywhere. Public Citizen compiled a summary of all 88 of the investor cases initiated so far under NAFTA, CAFTA and certain bilateral FTA’s. Sixty-three of these (or 72%) were brought by U.S. investors, 21 by Canadian companies and only four by Mexico. That’s exactly the result one would expect from trade agreements written on behalf of global corporations. There have been a total of 14 monetary awards so far favoring a rogue’s gallery of huge U.S. corporations: Ethyl, Exxon-Mobil, Cargill, ADM and Corn Products, Inr'l, plus large forest products companies, Atibi-Bowater (Canada) and Pope and Tolbot (U.S.).

Many are still pending. Even where a defending country prevails and the claim is dismissed, taxpayers are usually forced to pay legal costs running to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Worldwide, among all the trade and investment treaties, some 600 cases have been launched against 100 governments. Of those that have been concluded, nearly 60% were settled or ruled in favor of the investor.

A particularly insidious case was brought by Dow Chemical and resulted in a settlement without a monetary award. Dow went after Canada and the province of Quebec on account of its ban on the use of the 2,4-D pesticide for lawn care. 2,4-D, you may recall, was a component, along with 2,4,5-T, of the Agent Orange defoliant that wreaked havoc among the rural population of Vietnam.

In order to settle the case Quebec had to specify that 2,4-D is safe which, of course, is not true. Dow’s ploy was no accident because new GMO corn and soybean crops resistant to 2,4-D have just been approved to replace Round-up Ready crops that have led to super weeds everywhere. Thus Dow used NAFTA to intimidate public health officials in Canada and gained an invaluable claim they can use to further their commercial interests.

In a similar example, the parent of Doe Run, a Missouri mining company, is using the FTA with Peru to avoid their commitment, signed in 1997, to clean up massive pollution at their smelter in that country. They have succeeded in using their FTA claim to interfere with local court cases in Missouri.

Challenges to Environmental and Health Standards.

The President argues that the TPP will actually raise environmental standards of all the participating countries. It is true that some of the more recent FTA’s include stronger protections for national policies. However, the “best effort” clauses are not easily enforceable, and the GAO recently noted that most countries in existing agreements are not living up to their promises. There is no enforcement mechanism, similar to those for investors, where U.S. citizens or non-governmental organizations can initiate dispute resolution proceedings to force compliance.

A bipartisan consensus was forged in Congress in May of 2007 that protections for environment and health in the TPP must:

- be binding and subject to the same dispute settlement provisions as commercial chapters (investor-state);
- ensure that countries uphold and strengthen their environmental laws and policies;
- address the core conservation challenges of the Pacific Rim region, such as protection of forests and wildlife.

If the President is confident about the environmental benefits of the TPP then he should be happy to provide us with a draft of the agreement, so we can ensure these commitments have been met. We are still waiting.

An area of particular concern is food safety standards. The FDA inspects only a tiny percentage of the food imported into the U.S., and several Asian nations that would be part of the TPP have a poor record on food contamination and adulteration.

National Treatment and Export Limitations.

Countries are prohibited from limiting export of products or materials such as rare metals, natural gas and crude oil. Presently, for example, the U.S. Department of Energy must first conduct a public analysis to determine whether natural gas exports are consistent with the public interest. Thus we may lose effective control of our supply of critical materials.
Southwind Sierra Club - St. Patty’s Day Parade

Parade participants include Deborah Gafvert, our Southwind Group Chair, as Ms. Liberty, and her husband Clyde Flaming as the Leprechaun driving the Smart car; Lori Lawrence, ExCom member, driving the Prius “Sierra Club Mobile”, Jennifer Connelly, as the sun, and Kent Rowe, ExCom member, promoting wind and solar. Erin and Dan DeGroot are our banner carriers, and Yvonne Cather is pushing the “wind powered” stroller with her two-year old grandson Ivan.

On Saturday, March 14, 2015, Southwind Group participated in the 9th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade in the Delano District of Wichita, Kansas. The weather was great and we were one of 120 entries this year in the parade. Coordinators of the parade said there were 2,000 people parading, and the police estimated there were 12,000 to 15,000 spectators lined along Douglas Street to watch. Everyone had a great time with lots of smiling faces in the crowd.

Southwind Group

Fragile Earth 5th Annual Banquet

The Southwind Group Executive Committee hosted their Fragile Earth 5th Annual Banquet at the Unity Church in Wichita, Kansas on Friday, March 13, 2015. A big THANKS to all that attended! We had 65 attendees plus Richard Crowson, cartoonist and his wife Karen Crowson. Richard gave us a lively presentation of his cartoons and a little history behind cartooning. Richard and his wife sang several songs that politically charged us up.

We also want to THANK all of the following: Jeanette at Artisan Catering, Jaurez Bakery, Whole Foods and Natural Grocer for providing vegan choices, Paulette Rains, Tim Lytle and Bruce Fueling of Unity Church, Jane Byrnes and Ellie and Don Skokan for significant help with the auction, all of the Southwind Executive Committee and their spouses, and Richard and Karen Crowson for their significant contribution to the banquet.

Southwind Group

Valentine Day Service Hike

Southwind Group members hike on the Chisholm Trail at the Great Plains Nature Center for the Southwind Valentine Day Service Hike. It was a very nice sunny day for the 14th of February. We collected several bags of trash and afterwards, we went over to the home of Don and Ellie Skokan and held our Southwind Group Conservation Retreat. Stuart Bolt, Zack Pistora, Yvonne Cather, Darrel and Elizabeth Bishop and Don and Ellie Skokan all hiked and Tom Kneil joined us for the Southwind Group Conservation Retreat.

Spring - 2015
Celebrate Margaret and Paul Miller on May 9

Yvonne Cather invites friends of Margaret and Paul Miller to the dedication of a campsite and water garden on May 9, 2015, high noon, at 1199 Old Goat Ranch Road, 2 ½ miles south of Mulvane, Kansas. We will celebrate the achievements of this remarkable couple! They have led recycling efforts across Kansas and established the ProKansas Miller Recycling Center in Wichita, Kansas; published Sierra’s state newsletter and other causes as activists and church leaders and canoeists.

Yvonne has recruited Bill Cather to grill hamburgers and veggie burgers (bring your own burgers or other food for the grill). The dedication will be at noon and we will all tell Margaret and Paul stories. At the conclusion, we will inspect the other gardens on the (environmental) “Giants Path,” including Charles Benjamin, Bobbie Keltner, Tom Kneil and others. Then those wearing hiking boots may hike the remarkable dunes and sandhills, forests and islands on the Arkansas River, with Bill and Yvonne. Tent camping overnight with campfire will be available Saturday, May 9, 2015, with tall tales about wilderness outings, river trips and mountain climbing. For those of you eager to hike and camp overnight, camp sites are available.

Contact: Yvonne Cather to RSVP & obtain directions - Yvonne.cather@kansas.sierraclub.org; (316) 204-8920

A little Miller history...

Beginning the mid 1980’s, Paul and Margaret Miller joined with a few like-minded environmentalists in Wichita to collect recyclables. At first, it was just newspaper, collected on Saturday’s in three parking lots in Wichita. That was successful, so they added #1 and #2 plastics. They added cans, and the volume grew. After three years the demand was so large they approached Dillon’s, Waste Connections, and the City of Wichita about placing drop-off containers in Dillon’s parking lots. They became a 501(c)3 non-profit and the City of Wichita provided a vacant buildings. The ProKansas/Miller Recycling Center opened on Clark Street in 2003.

Margaret and Paul produce the “RECYCLING IN KANSAS Newsletter - Environmental News You Can Use” and you can get a copy of the latest by contacting kansasrecycling@gmail.com

You can find ProKansas Miller Recycling Center at:
http://www.recyclewichita.org/
https://www.facebook.com/pages/PROKansas-Recycling-Center/139368796107931?ref=205840531352

And, you may want to read an article published in The Wichita Eagle on Paul and Margaret Miller leading recycling efforts in Wichita
Paul and Margaret also belong to the Kansas Organization of Recyclers and were Honorees in 2009. The Kansas Organization of Recyclers recognize those whose efforts in recycling and waste reduction in Kansas, and across the country, positively impact Kansans.

http://www.kskor.org/about/kor-awards

Trade Agreement, continued from page 11

needed for industry and the public welfare.

This may have the following effects:
1. threat to national security;
2. increased energy prices and lower standard of living;
3. environmental damage from increased mining and drilling especially as investors seek new reserves in hard to reach and environmentally sensitive areas.

For example large-scale exports of natural gas by pipeline, or as liquefied natural gas (LNG), would lead to more drilling using the environmentally damaging and insufficiently regulated fracking process. Japan is a major importer of LNG, which is associated with increased emissions of greenhouse gases.

Conclusions

As far as we now know, the TPP will continue to subordinate our right to protect the environment and public health to a global corporation’s right to protect its investment. That is fundamentally unacceptable. Unless and until we are provided proof otherwise, we have to assume that Fast Track Trade Promotional Authority is a scheme to implement another corporate power grab.
From “Humane-Washing” to “Truly Humane”

Eating as Though the Earth Matters

By Judy Carman, M.A.

“Surely a better time must be drawing nigh when godlike beings will become truly humane and learn to put their animal fellow mortals in their hearts instead of on their backs or in their dinners.” John Muir, Founder of the Sierra Club

The Wizard of Oz is not just in Kansas.

He is everywhere attempting to fool us and admonish us to “pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” But when “the man behind the curtain” is in it for the money, we really need to pull that curtain down. As buyers become more educated and discerning, sellers look to find as many ways to confuse and confound as possible. We’ve watched some of the worst, most environmentally destructive companies adopt “green washing” campaigns. On the one hand, it’s encouraging to realize that we are having an impact. Otherwise these companies would not feel the need to appear green. On the other hand, their ads serve to confuse the people who have not studied the issues in depth.

Craig Volland questions false labels:

Now that the public is becoming more aware of food and cruelty issues, the same strategy is taking place with many of the same companies, who are, after all, just as destructive to animals as they are to the environment. In the fall, 2014, issue of Planet Kansas, Craig Volland pulled the curtain down on Hen House’s “Farm to Fork” campaign in his article “How Not to Buy Free Range, Humanely Produced Animal Products.” In their brochure promoting chicken consumption were false terms, parading as the truth, such as “cage free,” raised on local farms, and “T reat Range, Humanely Produced Animal Products.” In their brochure of malleability and acceptance. Forester bears no resemblance to a farmer’s market. It is actually a huge 240 million dollar enterprise that obtains broiler chickens from 8 different confined animal feeding operations (CAFO’s, aka, factory farms). As with green washing, this humane-washing is firmly rooted in the belief that we human beings can be manipulated by advertising and corporate shell games. The good side of this coin—the silver lining of this cloud—is that these corporations do understand the power of boycotting and seek to prevent it by spending billions on ads, legislation, and other tactics. They know they can lose profits if we wake up and look at the wizards who are trying so hard to convince us that they have the best interest of our health and the animals’ well-being at heart. In other words, we have power over them, and they know that. The more green-washing and humane-washing they do, the more we are seeing their fear of what we can do as consumers.

An example of that is found in Volland’s same article. He explains that the Kanza Group confronted Balls Foods (owner of Hen House) with the fact that the pork they were selling as “humanely treated” and local was in fact coming from factory farmed pigs. As a result, the humanely treated claim was removed from the ads. That is consumer power, but if no one had confronted them, we can be sure the false claim would still be on the ads.

Nor “compassion:”

Whole Foods supermarket is hiding behind inaccurate labels as well. Now they have added “compassion for our animals” to their list of false claims. Undercover investigators released a video in January that showed extreme suffering of hens at Petaluma Farms, a giant egg supplier for Whole Foods. Whole Foods claims these eggs come from “Chickens Raised with Care.” Instead investigators found debeaked hens and roosters who were starving, crowded in dark buildings polluted by their own feces—a typical factory operation. The owner of Petaluma Farms defended the practice of treating the birds in this manner because they were not from the “certified humane” flock. As Hope Bohanec stated in a letter to the editor of The Press Democrat, “So let me get this straight—the Mahrts [the owners] are OK with having some of the birds suffer, as long as they are not the certified humane hens? If the owners truly cared about the birds, they would have the highest standard for them all….” Hope concludes, “Let’s embrace a new ethic. Bring farmed animals into our circle of compassion and not eat meat, dairy or eggs.”

But let’s say we actually find a local farm that allows chickens access to the outdoors. For every egg laying chicken on that farm, a male chick was killed shortly after hatching either by being ground up alive or suffocated in a trash can. The egg laying chickens and their brothers, of course, never saw their mothers, and their mothers were deprived of caring for their babies. Nearly all of these hens will have had their beaks mutilated without anesthesia. Once their production declines, usually within two years, they are killed, often ground into fertilizer or simply thrown away as trash. In nature or at a sanctuary, they can live ten years or more. Ironically, the organic label for all animals often spells even greater suffering. Since the “organic” industry withholds antibiotics, sick animals suffer from their illnesses without the medicine they need.

Or, let’s say that in our research, we actually find a local farm that claims to sell milk from happy cows. Is that possible? In order to keep cows producing milk, they are forced to stay pregnant. When their babies are born, they are taken away from them so that human beings can drink their milk, not their babies. Moms and babies cry for one another and suffer greatly from this forced separation. The baby boys are usually confined in veal crates and killed at about 4 months of age. To re-impregnate the mother dairy cows (whether labelled “humane” or not) they are restrained on rape racks. The scientific sounding “artificial insemination” involves someone crudely and disrespectfully
inserting his arm into her rectum in order to position the uterus while an insemination instrument is inserted into her vagina. Cows that could live into their twenties if they could live normal lives, are usually unable to produce milk by the young age of 4 to 6. By then, they have lost enormous amounts of calcium. Their bones can break while being transported to slaughter, and they often are sick and very weak. It is difficult to imagine how someone could refer to these sensitive animals as happy.

The impossibility of raising animals outside of factory farms and of killing them humanely.

But what if Big Ag and small farmers actually did commit to pasture-raising each animal? It would be physically impossible to produce the amount of animal products currently being eaten by human beings that way. There is simply not enough land available to do it. The film Cowspiracy calculates that when a person commits to eating a plant-based diet, (compared to someone on the standard American diet) that one person saves 1100 gallons of water, 45 pounds of grain, 30 square feet of forest, 20 pounds of CO2 equivalent, and one animal’s life every single day. The “Facts” page on Cowspiracy.com includes mind-blowing statistics to show the destructive impact on the environment of eating animal products, regardless of what label is applied to the neatly wrapped package in the supermarket. Another good source of information is humanemyth.org. The over-arching dilemma that permeates all these issues is the simple, heart-wise, inner knowing that there is simply no way to kill an animal for meat humanely. Other oxymorons pale in comparison to “humane slaughter.”

“Slaughter and justice cannot dwell together.” Thankfully, there is a logical and most rewarding solution to this dilemma. There is only one way to be certain that we are not supporting the agriculture industries that are simultaneously degrading the environment and causing immeasurable suffering, violence, and death to billions of animals all over the world. By committing to a nonviolent, vegan philosophy of life and a healthy plant-based diet, we do not have to concern ourselves with labels and ads or wonder if Whole Foods really does have compassion for animals. Regardless of whether an animal is raised in a factory farm or by a neighbor in a green pasture, that individual animal has been deprived of his or her right to live free and happy, to not be owned, to not be used, and ultimately to not be barbarically transported to slaughter and then mercilessly killed. In fact, we are being insulted by the industries that are attempting to convince us that meat, milk, and eggs can be produced humanely. As we reflect on the savagery of owning, abusing, mutilating, chaining to rape racks, confining, and killing, we see living beings who demonstrate at every slaughterhouse that they want to live just as much as we do. As Isaac Bashevis Singer stated: “As long as people will shed the blood of innocent creatures there can be no peace, no liberty, no harmony between people. Slaughter and justice cannot dwell together.”

© 2014, Judy Carman, M.A., is author of Peace to All Beings: Veggie Soup for the Chicken’s Soul and co-author of The Missing Peace: The Hidden Power of our Kinship with Animal. 2014 winner of the Henry Spira Grassroots Animal Activist award; and owner of a truck and a car powered by used veggie oil and house powered by solar. Her primary websites are circleofcompassion.org and peacetoallbeings.com.
Chapter & Group Leaders

Groups are the local body of the Kansas State Chapter

Chapter Executive Committee
Officers, Committee Chairs
*Elected ExCom member; **Appointed ExCom member, ***Group Representative to Chapter, ****Officer/Committee Chair, or Contractor

Yvonne Cather*, Chair, Council Delegate, (316) 522-4741, yvonne.cather@kansas.sierraclub.org
Elaine Giessel*, Vice-Chair, Water Quality Co-Chair, (913) 888-8517, elaine.giessel@kansas.sierraclub.org
Scott Smith***, Treasurer, (785) 539-1973, wizard13@cox.net
David Kirkbride***, Secretary, Outings Chair, (785) 779-7336, david.kirkbride@kansas.sierraclub.org
Gary Anderson***, PAC Treasurer, Topeka Group Rep, (785) 246-3229, gian gleich 1963@gmail.com
Calen Hall***, Wakarusa Group Rep, aleb.hall.ch@gmail.com
Lori Lawrence***, Southwind Group Rep, (316) 688-1484, lawrencelori d@gmail.com
Richard Mabion*, Environmental Justice Co-Chair, Education Chair, (913) 481-9920, rmabion@sbcglobal.net
Jennifer Robinson*, ExCom Member, (785) 550-6123, jlrshar@aol.com
Kent Rowe*, Toxics Chair, (316) 409-7178, hark glider@yahoo.com
Gail Shafton***, Communications Chair, (913) 909-3127, gail@ shafton.com
Duane Schrag*, Conservation Chair, (785) 263-4002, schrag.duane@gmail.com
Joe Spease*, Legislative Chair, (913) 492-2862, spease4kc@everestkc.net
Bill Griffith****, Energy Chair, (913) 772-8960, bill.griffith@kansas.sierraclub.org
Bob Sommer****, Director of Development, 816-889-1100, bobsommer09@gmail.com
Craig Volland****, CAFO Chair, Trade Chair, Agriculture Chair, Air Quality Chair, (913) 788-7336, volland@kansas.sierraclub.org
Craig Wolfe****, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor, Communications Director (913) 299-4443, info@kansas.sierraclub.org

Flint Hills Group (Manhattan Area)
Carol Barta*, Chair, Newsletter Editor, Program Chair, (785) 539-1973, wizard13@cox.net
Scott Smith*, Treasurer, Chapter Group Rep, (785) 539-1973, wizard13@cox.net

Kanza Group (Kansas City)
Elaine Giessel*, Group Chair, Water Quality Chair, (913) 888-8517, elaine.giessel@kansas.sierraclub.org
Gail Shafton*, Vice Chair, Program Chair, Publicity Chair, (913) 909-3127, gail@ shafton.com
Richard Voss*, Treasurer, (913) 888-8517, vossricho@everestkc.net

(Kanza con’t)
Mike Kozisek****, Secretary, (913) 788-2957, kozisek@hotmail.com
Shelley Brodie*, ExCom Member*, (913) 299-6620, gatorgal68@yahoo.com
Kerry Herndon*, ExCom Member, (816) 804-9277, kerry.herndon@outlook.com
Fred Hopkins*, ExCom Member*, (913) 384-0165, fredhopkins@kc.rr.com
Craig Lubow*, Conservation Chair*, (913) 299-6620, craig.lubow@kansas.sierraclub.org
Gary Mass*, Membership Chair, 913-338-4990, gmass2@yahoo.com
John Neuberger*, Air Quality Chair, (913) 492-1723, jneuber@ku.edu
Sarita Singh*, Political Chair, (913) 563-4437, sarit888@hotmail.com
Craig Wolfe*, Auction Chair, Communications Chair, Program Chair, (913) 299-4443, info@kansas.sierraclub.org

Southwind Group (Wichita)
Deborah Gafvert*, Chair, (316) 733-5102, dstgafvert@gmail.com, Kent Rowe*, Vice Chair, Conservation Co-Chair, Energy Chair (785) 409-7178, hark glider@yahoo.com
Dave Kirkbride*, Secretary, Outings Chair, Political Chair, (316) 945-6528, daw kirkbride@kansas.sierraclub.org
Yvonne Cather**** - Treasurer, Conservation Co-Chair, (316) 522-4741, Yvonne.cather@kansas.sierraclub.org
Stuart Bolt**, Fundraising Chair, Membership Chair, (316) 682-4722, stuart bolt@kansas.sierraclub.org
Lori Lawrence*, Chapter/Group Rep, (316) 688-1484, lawrencelori d@gmail.com

Topeka Group
Gary Anderson*, Chair, Program Chair, Chapter Group Rep, (785) 246-3229, gian gleich 1963@gmail.com
Bill Cutler*, Secretary, Treasurer, (785) 379-9756, spudspa@yahoo.com
Ramon Powers*, ExCom Member, (785) 224-9225, ramonpowers@sbcglobal.net
Anita Frank*, Conservation Chair, (785) 273-5305, afrank16@cox.net
Helen Woerner*, ExCom Member, (785) 224-9225, woerner.helen1@gmail.com
Paul Post*, Membership Chair, Outings Chair, (785) 554-1972, paul.post@paulpost.com
Duncan Whittier*, ExCom Member, (785) 234-6819, duncan888@aol.com

Wakarusa Group - New ExCom!!
Olga Khakova*, Chair, olga.khakova@gmail.com
Caleb Hall*, Vice-Chair, caleb.hall.ch@gmail.com, (913) 568-1785
Karin Pagel-Meiners*, Treasurer, (785) 550-6123, kpagelmeiners@earthlink.net
Courtney Schwartzbeck*, Secretary, (316) 461-5830, schwartzbeckcourt@gmail.com
Travis Robinett*, Outings coordinator, arrowhead_t@aol.com
Randy Kidd**, Executive Committee member, drkidd@gmail.com

Spring - 2015
**General Meetings**

**General public is welcome to attend**

**Kanza Group (Kansas City)**
Saturday, April 25, 6-9:30 pm

**Kanza Fundraiser Silent Auction.**
Join us for our Kanza Group Fundraiser-Silent Auction on Apr 25, 6:00 – 9:30 pm. See ad on page 7 for details.

**Location** - Thompson Barn Conference Center, 11184 Lackman Road (College & Lackman).

**Special presentation** by Julene Bair, author of “The Ogallala Road,” a story of growing up on her family's farm and her struggle with the rapidly disappearing aquifer as traditional ways of life collide with industrial realities.

**Contact** - Craig Wolfe, (913) 299-4443, info@kansas.sierraclub.org

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**Kanza Group (Kansas City)**
Tuesday, May 12, 6:45 pm

**Community Gardening and Sustainable Food Systems.**
Meet, Greet, and Gather.
7:00 pm - Program. There will be a panel of local experts with the purpose of connecting people of faith and urban communities that are helping to serve people in need and to build sustainable food systems.

**Where** - Overland Park Lutheran Church, 7810 W. 79th St. 8 blocks west of Metcalf at Lowell. Park on north side.

**Contact** - Gail Shafton, (913) 909-3127, gail@shafton.com

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**Kanza Group (Kansas City)**
Thursday, June 18 ??.

**Concert for the Planet.**
Sierra Club, along with other organizations, will organize a concert event in support of the Live Earth Concert on June 18 ?? Date and details are TBA, but we are shooting for June 18. Together with the United Nations, Live Earth will once again create a global series of events over 24 hours, on six continents, anchored from Paris and New York. Live Earth Road to Paris will be broadcast across all media platforms and supported by a yearlong campaign in partnership with the world's leading brands, NGOs and non-profits.

**Contact** - Craig Wolfe, (913) 299-4443, info@kansas.sierraclub.org

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**Southwind Group (Wichita)**
Friday, June 12, 6:30 pm

**Southwind’s Group’s Annual Picnic**
Picnic at Deborah’s Place - Featuring a former chlorine pool converted to a natural swimming pool/Koi pond, windmill rain barrels, rain drains and passive solar applications. BRING: lawn chairs, a side dish and musical instrument if you play one.

**Where** - RSVP for directions: Contact Deborah Gafvert, dsgafvert@gmail.com or call (316) 733-5102.

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**Topeka Group**
Tuesday, April 28, 7:00 pm.

**Tackling the Life of the Planet: We don’t know what we don’t know.**
6:30 pm - “Meet, Greet and Gather”
7:00 pm - Tackling the Life of the Planet: We don’t know what we don’t know by Leonard Krishakta, Director of the KU Biodiversity Institute and Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Our grand challenge for the 21st Century is to map the life of the planet - diversity of life, the tree of life, the language of life and the web of life. Answering this challenge demands the smart integration of science, humanities, and the arts across nature and culture.

**Where** - Topeka Shawnee County Public Library Marvin Auditorium 101C, 1515 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, KS.

**Contact** - Gary Anderson, (785) 246-3229; gjanderson1963@hotmail.com

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**Topeka Group**
Tuesday, May 26, 7:00 pm.

**Jeffrey Geuther, Next Generation Nuclear Reactors.**
6:30 pm - “Meet, Greet and Gather”
7:00 pm - Jeffrey Geuther, Nuclear Facilities Mgr. at KSU will discuss how nuclear power currently represents the largest source of non-fossil fuel electrical power in the US. These reactors are designed to produce large amounts of baseload electricity. However, they are not readily adaptable to many other potential uses of nuclear power, such as the production of hydrogen, burning of long-lived nuclear waste, or the breeding of new fuel. He will discuss how next generation (Gen-IV) reactors are being designed. Six candidate Gen-IV technologies will be summarized, along with the specific potential capabilities of each.

**Where** - Topeka Shawnee County Public Library Marvin Auditorium 101C, 1515 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, KS.

**Contact** - Gary Anderson, (785) 246-3229; gjanderson1963@hotmail.com

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**Topeka Group**
Tuesday, June 23, 7:00 pm

**Prairie Parks of Shawnee County.**
6:30 pm - “Meet, Greet and Gather”
7:00 pm - Prairie Parks of Shawnee County by Mickey Delfelder. Covers the 4 parks, historical extent of prairies, ongoing restorations and maintenance concerns and some of the plants you will find on local prairies.

**Where** - Topeka Shawnee County Public Library Marvin Auditorium 101B, 1515 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, KS.

**Contact** - Gary Anderson, (785) 246-3229; gjanderson1963@hotmail.com

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**Southwind Group (Wichita)**
Friday, April 10, 6:30 pm

**Inspiring documentary: “Bringing It Home”**
6:30 pm - Social hour at 6:30 with Hearty Soup, Salad, Artisan Breads, bring your own place setting (Suggested $5.00 donation)
7:30 pm - Program. Inspiring documentary: “Bringing It Home” reveals commercial and environmental prospects of industrial hemp in the USA with Dr. Kent Rowe

**Where** - Great Plains Nature Center, 6232 E 29th St. N., Wichita

**Contact** - Kent Rowe, (316) 409-7178, harkglider@yahoo.com

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**Southwind Group (Wichita)**
Friday, May 08, 6:30 pm.

**Ireland and Scotland Spectacular Photo Journey**
6:30 pm - Social hour at 6:30 with Hearty Soup, Salad, Artisan Breads, bring your own place setting (Suggested $5.00 donation)
7:30 pm - Presentation. Spectacular photo images of Ireland and Scotland on foot with Bill Gress, Rick Langerott and Irene Langerott.

**Where** - Great Plains Nature Center, 6232 E 29th St. N., Wichita

**Contact** - Dave Kirkbride, (316) 945-0728, david.kirkbride@kansas.sierraclub.org
Sierra Club Outings

General public is welcome to participate

Below is the combined list of all outings by the Kansas Chapter and Groups. Please contact the outing leader listed after the description by phone or e-mail before attending any of these activities. For trips requiring physical exertion, leaders need to know your ability and condition. Sierra Club policy also requires participants to sign a liability waiver or acknowledgement of risk prior to departing the trailhead. Outings organizers have a Meetup webpage for the latest outings updates at: http://www.meetup.com/KC-Sierra-Club-Outings/. Outings are also listed at http://kansas.sierraclub.org/outings/.

Apr 03. 7:00 pm. Southwind Supports Wichita Alternative Film Series
Brought by the Wichita Alternative Film Series; Murdock Theatre, Groundswell Rising: Protecting Our Children's Air and Water is a documentary that takes a hard look at energy extraction techniques not yet proven to be safe. Following the showing will be informal networking among the audience about nearby fracking and Skypeing with the director. (Suggested donation of $8) (If you have earthquake damage, send pictures to Earthquake.action@gmail.com). Southwind. Lori Lawrence, (316) 688-1484, lawrencelorid@gmail.com

Apr 03. to Apr 05.. Backpacking 101 Series: Backpacking Trip, Columbia, MO
This backpack trip at Three Creeks Conservation area just south of Columbia, MO is for those who completed both classroom sessions on 2/21 and 3/7. Cost for the series is $50 per person with participation limited to 25 people.. Kanza. Paul Gross, (816)228-6563, wildwoodp@hotmail.com

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Apr 04. 1:00 pm. Wildflower Identification Part 1, Discovery Center, Kansas City, MO
Educational Specialist Pat Whelan will explain how to ID wildflowers based on their color, shape, leaf arrangement, time of blooming, habitat and distribution. We will walk the grounds of the Discovery Center woodlands to ID spring ephemerals. Missouri Wildflowers field guide can be purchased in the gift shop for $14.. Kanza. Eileen McManus, (816) 523-7823, eileen4250@sbcglobal.net

Apr 12. 1:00 pm (Time Tentative). Wildflower Identification Part 2, Eddy-Ballentine Trail, Kansas City, MO
We will walk about two miles through thick woods and along a rock crevice and stream in search of spring ephemerals to identify. $3 donation requested.. Kanza. Eileen McManus, (816) 523-7823, eileen4250@sbcglobal.net

Apr 18. 7:30 am. Elk River Wind Farm Tour
Get a closer look at the wind energy in the making! Carpool meet up at 7:30 am at the old Tanger Mall by the East entrance to I-70. The farm is about 2.5 hours away. Options to bring your own lunch or purchase lunch at the Beaumont Hotel. Please dress appropriately for the weather. The space is limited, please RSVP to Travis Robinett travis.robinett@gmail.com Optional $5 donation. Wakarusa. Travis Robinett, (512) 775-4040, travis.robinett@gmail.com

Apr 18. to Apr 20.. 2015 Missouri Wilderness Backpack Series: Piney Creek Wilderness, Shell Knob, MO
This is one in a series of backpacking trips to explore the wilderness areas of Missouri in 2015. We will backpack the 13 miles of trails within the wilderness. $10 donation requested.. Wakarusa. Derrick Mahoney, (785) 845-5793, derricknindy@gmail.com

Apr 18. 10:00 am. Southwind Group - Earthfest VII
Join us for music, organic/vegan food trucks and Earth themed attractions. Sierra Club booth workers needed. Contact Stuart at stuart.bolt@cox.net or Lori Lawrence at lawrencelorid@gmail.com. Southwind. Stuart Bolt, (316) 682-4722, stuart.bolt@kansas.sierraclub.org

Apr 22. 7:00 pm. Topeka-Bidder 70 Film Screening
Kansas Interfaith Power & Light plus Topeka Sierra Club present Bidder 70, a film screening. Tim DeChristopher, known as bidder 70, inspired us all with acting upon the courage of his convictions by derailing a widely protested federal oil and gas land sale, bidding millions of dollars to save thousands of pristine acres surrounding US National Parks - with no intention of paying. Rabbi Moti Rieber, Director of KIPL, will lead discussion after the film. A suggested donation of $5 by those attending will help defray the cost and will be appreciated. Contact Gary Anderson with questions at gjanderson1963@hotmail.com or 785-246-3229 . Topeka. Gary Anderson, (785) 246-3229; gjanderson1963@hotmail.com

Apr 25. to Apr 26.. Women's Backpacking Trip on the Pigeon Roost Trail
We'll do an easy, 8.5 mile loop with one backcountry overnight. The PRT is located in the Hobbs State Park Conservation Area in NW Arkansas, about 4 hours from KC. Dogs are welcome, too! $5 donation requested.. Kanza. Renee Andriani, (913) 488-4445, randri4445@gmail.com

May 03. 1:30 pm. Hike the Serengeti & Wagon Trails, south side of Kansas City, MO
This will be one of several Sunday afternoon hikes on the
Sierra Club Outings

General public is welcome to participate

May 09. to May 10.. Southwind Sierra Giants Margaret and Paul Miller Dedication
Yvonne Cather invites friends of Margaret and Paul Miller to the dedication of a campsite and water garden on May 9., high noon, at 1199 Old Goat Ranch Road, 2 ½ miles south of Mulvane, Kansas. We will celebrate the achievements of this remarkable couple! Yvonne has recruited Bill Cather to grill hamburgers and veggie burgers (bring your own burgers or other food for the grill). The dedication will be at noon on Saturday and we will all tell Margaret and Paul stories. At the conclusion, we will inspect the other gardens on the (environmental) “Giants Path”. For those of you eager to hike and camp overnight, camp sites are available... Southwind. Yvonne Cather, (316) 204-8920, yvonne.cather@kansas.sierraclub.org

May 23. to May 24.. Kayak/Kanoe Kamping on the Kaw, Lawrence, KS
Weather and river conditions permitting, we will put in at Lawrence below the dam, camp overnight on a sandbar, and take out at DeSoto, paddling 20 miles in two days. Previous experience required. Howling at the moon optional. Group limit: 8. BYOB (bring your own boat). $10 donation requested. Wakarusa. Tim Cross 785-330-3655 tecross3@gmail.com

May 29. to May 31.. 2015 Missouri Wilderness Backpack Series: Irish Wilderness, Doniphan, MO
This is one in a series of backpacking trips to explore the wilderness areas of Missouri in 2015. We will backpack the 18 mile loop trail within the wilderness. $10 donation requested. Wakarusa. Derrick Mahoney, (785) 845-5793, derrickncindy@gmail.com

Jun 06. to Jun 08.. 2015 Missouri Wilderness Backpack Series: Hercules-Glades Wilderness, Bradleyville, MO
This is one in a series of backpacking trips to explore the wilderness areas of Missouri in 2015. We will backpack some of the 18 miles of trails within the wilderness. $10 donation requested. Wakarusa. Cindy Spears, (785) 845-5793, derrickncindy@gmail.com

Jun 06. 10:00 am (Time Tentative). Bike Ride to Powell Garden, Kingsville, MO
Cycle 25 miles of rolling hills & rural settings from Blue Springs to Powell Gardens. We will lunch at Café Thyme, followed by a hike through the gardens. A trailer for bikes and car rides will be available for our return. $5 donation requested. Kanza. Paul Gross, (816)228-6563, wildwoodp@hotmail.com

Jun 12. 6:30 pm, Southwind’s Group’s Annual Picnic
Picnic at Deborah’s Place - Featuring a former chlorine pool converted to a natural swimming pool/Koi pond, windmill rain barrels, rain drains and passive solar applications. BRING: lawn chairs, a side dish and musical instrument if you play one. RSVP for directions: dsgafvert@gmail.com or call (316) 733-5102. Southwind. Deborah Gafvert 316-733-5102 dsgafvert@gmail.com

Jun 13. 9:00 am. Bike the Millcreek Streamway Trail, Shawnee, KS
The Mill Creek Streamway Trail runs more than 17 miles from the Kansas River in the north to Olathe in the south. We’ll meet at the Barker Road access point north of Shawnee Mission Parkway and pedal south about 8 miles then return. This ride will be leisurely and family friendly. Bring water and snacks. We’ll head to lunch afterward for those who are interested. $5 Sierra Club donation requested.. Kanza. Melissa LeSage, jmfamily76@hotmail.com

Jun 13. 9:00 am. Southwind Group - Walk with Wildlife
Meander past 50+ wildlife stations, visit with naturalists along the nature trail. Contact Stuart at stuart.bolt@cox.net or GPNC at 683-5499. Southwind. Stuart Bolt, (316) 682-4722, stuart.bolt@kansas.sierraclub.org

Jun 27. 9:00 am. Hike through Native Prairie Grasses & Wildflowers, Prairie Center, Olathe, KS
Join us on a leisurely hike through the 300-acre Prairie Center to identify wildflowers and prairie grasses in bloom on an early summer morning. We’ll also review the current status of the prairie ecosystem. As chiggers and ticks are abundant during this time, please wear long pants with insect repellant. Suggested donation $3. Limited to 12 participants.. Kanza. Mike Miller, (913) 362-2600, mrmiller1@mindspring.com

Jun 06. 8:00 am (Time Tentative). Day Hike at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Strong City, KS
It’s wildflower season, so bring your field guide if you have one! We’ll do an 8 mile loop through the bison pasture and take in some stunning vistas, then reward ourselves with an early dinner at Ad Astra in Strong City. $3 donation requested, plus $ for dinner. Kanza. Renee Andriani, (913) 488-4445, randri4445@gmail.com
Calendar of Events

Below is a listing of all General Meetings, Outings, and Committee Meetings for the Kansas Chapter and Groups. For specific information, see General Meetings page 17 and Outings page 18. For the latest update on events, go to http://kansas.sierraclub.org/calendar/