The 2019 KS Legislative Session: “Let’s Get Ready to Rumble!”

BY ZACK PISTORA, STATE LOBBYIST

The legislative session in Topeka begins on January 14th, and with the new year, Kansas Sierra Club members have a role to play in lobbying Kansas lawmakers on key environmental issues. The best way to start is by introducing yourself to your newly-elected or incumbent State Senator and Representative. Let them know they can count on your support when it comes to environmental issues.

We need to convince lawmakers that Kansas can do better in promoting conservation, ecotourism, local food production, and clean energy sectors. We need to improve state regulations to ensure accountability by oil and gas injectors responsible for man-made earthquakes that have damaged homes and buildings. The State Water Plan needs more funding, especially as our state deals with ongoing water quality and quantity problems.

Kansas should focus on protections for rural property owners against pesticides and location of factory farms and industrial plants. Lowering sales tax on food is also essential, starting with farmers market exemptions. The wish list goes on. However, what state legislators pass will depend on their courage and leadership and the pressure they get from Kansans like you to make these improvements.

CONTINUED ON PG 2

THE MANY MEANINGS OF “COMPASS”

- A navigational instrument used for orientation and direction-finding
- A guiding or motivating purpose or principle
- To comprehend, to plan with skill and craft, to achieve
- An area over which activity, capacity or influence extends

WE’VE GONE DIGITAL! / pg. 2

"IF I DON’T DO IT, WHO WILL?" / pg. 3

CHAPTER CONSERVATION / pg. 5

SIERRA CLUB ELECTION MATERIALS ➤ DUE DEC. 31

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PLEASE RECYCLE!
This year is especially significant with Governor Laura Kelly and Lieutenant Governor Lynn Rogers taking the reins. Both Kelly and Rogers, whom the Sierra Club supported, are environmental champions and are ready to lead the state in a bipartisan fashion. For Kansas to make real progress on environmental issues, Governor-Elect Kelly will have to play a major role, and we believe she’s the right person to lead Kansas toward a future that appreciates and protects our natural environment.

She can’t do it alone, however, so be ready to do your part. Sign up for Sierra Club legislative alerts, join our Lobby Corps, prepare to write a letter to the editor or call your state representatives—small actions add up! Our continuing participation as citizens and as Sierra Club members is critical, so keep up the momentum. We look forward to combining our efforts at the Statehouse in 2019.

Here's how to get involved

**SIGN UP FOR KANSAS SIERRA CLUB LEGISLATIVE ALERTS**
We’ll let you know when to write a letter to the editor and call your state representative about important environmental issues.

Sign up: kansas.sierraclub.org/advocacy

**JOIN KANSAS CHAPTER LOBBY CORPS**
Become a citizen lobbyist for the environment by joining the Kansas Chapter’s Lobby Corps. Throughout the state, members are organizing to engage with representatives in informal settings to discuss Sierra Club priorities for Kansas.

Sign up: kansas.sierraclub.org/lobbycorps/

The Kansas Chapter has gone digital!
The monthly newsletter (Waypoints), legislative alerts, meeting and outings notices are all sent out by email. Additionally, the Chapter has a vibrant Facebook and Twitter presence. To stay connected, please make sure your email address is current.

**Overwhelmed by email already?** Don’t worry, you can choose what to receive. Next time you get a Sierra Club email, scroll to the bottom and click “Manage Preferences” to make your selections. Or just send an email to member.care@sierraclub.org with the subject line “Kansas Chapter -- new email address.”

Don’t miss another issue of Waypoints or meeting notice. We’re saving money and paper by going digital. Please do stay up-to-date with your Sierra Club-Kansas Chapter.

Sign up for digital communications today ▼

Communications Sign Up

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Or, call 415-977-5653 and provide your full name, e-mail, preferred address, member ID (if available), and whether you’d prefer the Sierra Magazine by mail, online or both.
Let’s face it, we’ve had a tough year. Assaults on both democracy and environment have bombarded us almost daily. The President takes every chance he gets to undermine the rule of law and attack the free press. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt have treated their offices like real estate agencies for the exploitation and sale of public lands, as well as for personal enrichment. But with the recent midterm elections, our collective focus on saving democracy and planet Earth has begun to pay off, both nationally and here in Kansas.

As we head into 2019, the Kansas Chapter is committed to advancing those environmental issues that will affect Sierra Club members in Kansas across a spectrum of concerns:

**Legislative**
The Kansas Chapter supports the only full-time lobbyist for the environment in Topeka. Now, with new leadership in Topeka, our legislative agenda for the environment will gain traction, and our lobbyist, Zack Pistora, will be there to usher it through the legislature.

**Education**
Seven years ago, the Kansas Chapter created the first grant program for environmental education of its kind in the national Sierra Club – and it’s still going strong. Your support makes this possible!

**Health**
The Kansas Chapter is dogged in pursuing polluters. From industrial meat producers polluting streams to coal-burning utilities treating the sky like an open sewer, make no mistake, they know they’re in trouble when we show up with court papers in hand.

**Wildlife & Wild Places**
Throughout Kansas, from the Gyp Hills to Perry Lake, our members are exploring and maintaining the outdoors and its natural riches. Through numerous hikes and education programs, Sierra Club members in Kansas enjoy and learn about wildlife and the natural world.

And much more, as the pages of this issue of *The Compass* and the Kansas Chapter’s monthly online newsletter, *Waypoints*, attest!

**But did you know that the Kansas Chapter is almost entirely supported by donations from our members and friends?**

The Kansas Chapter receives very little financial support from the National Sierra Club. Without direct contributions to the Kansas Chapter, there would be no Sierra Club in Kansas.

When you donate directly to the Sierra Club’s Kansas Chapter, **100 percent of your donation remains here in Kansas**. Please, donate today. It’s easy. Just go to Kansas.SierraClub.org and click the Donate button.

Better yet, think monthly! **Can you give just $10 a month to support the vital work of the Sierra Club’s Kansas Chapter?**

We have much to do in 2019 and beyond. Let’s get started today.

As Executive Committee member Lori Lawrence said, “If I don’t do it, who will?”

Kansas.SierraClub.org
Combating climate change by opposing fracking, promoting energy efficiency and conservation, supporting renewable energy, and fighting industrial agriculture are our Kansas Chapter priorities. But we also work on public health issues, water, air, wildlife, and wildlands/parks.

**Climate Change** – The Kanza Group held educational workshops on the Clean Power Plan and recruited members statewide to testify against the proposed repeal of the CPP at an EPA hearing in Kansas City, Mo. The Kansas Chapter provides grant funds to help citizens in Wyandotte County, primarily in low-income neighborhoods, save energy, increase home security by installing outdoor LED spotlights and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from power plants.

**Industrial Agricultural** – Ongoing Kansas Chapter efforts to oppose industrial animal feeding operations protect water and air quality statewide. The Kansas Chapter has provided grant funds to help create an important informational kiosk at Sunrise Community Garden in Lawrence. We continue to co-sponsor the Annual Eat Local and Organic Farmers Expo in Johnson County, which brings eaters together with organic and free-range farmers.

**Public Health** – The Chapter supports several Sierra Club groups (Southwind, Wakarusa and Flint Hills) working on reducing single use plastic bags, the source of major litter problems in our communities. Working with the Local Emergency Planning Committee in the KC Metro area, we have helped to ensure that Wyandotte County residents, school, churches and workplaces can be better prepared for chemical emergencies. We provided formal testimony at an EPA listening session on PFASs, chemicals that are persistent in the environment, bioaccumulative in living organisms and toxic. As a result, Kansas Department of Health and Environment invited the Sierra Club to help develop a plan to identify PFASs in finished drinking water. Our work on monitoring diesel emissions and on Flint Hills burning helps protect air quality for all Kansans.

**Water** – The Kansas Sierra Club is part of an Environmental Gatekeeper Group in Lawrence, which is developing a plan to remove contamination at an old Farmland fertilizer plant without discharging additional nitrate-polluted waters to the Kansas River. The Chapter sent a letter to Nebraska opposing an interbasin water transfer that has the potential to introduce invasive/non-native species into the Kansas River.

**Wildlife** – The Chapter continues to be represented on the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism advisory council on non-game wildlife. And we participate monthly on calls of the national Sierra Club’s Lands, Water & Wildlife team to help stop legislative efforts to gut the Endangered Species Act. We are a part of the Kansas Monarch Task Force to protect habitat for the butterfly and other pollinators. The Wakarusa Group advocated for the City of Lawrence and Westar to stop retrofitting streetlights with glaring LED lights that threaten nocturnal wildlife.

**Wildlands/Parks** – Several of our Groups are engaged in protecting local parks. For the first time ever(!!), the Kansas Sierra Club was successful in getting two Kansas Congressmen (Yoder and Marshall) to cosponsor reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides grant money from offshore extraction of fossil fuels for park development and recreational amenities for states and local entities.

*Contact Elaine: Elaine.Giessel@Kansas.SierraClub.org*
The Chapter seeks to increase environmental protections for rural residents

In recent years, the state has further reduced meager protections for air and water resources crucial to enjoyment of rural living in Kansas. In 2004, a court ruling confirmed that state law preempts the regulation of animal factories (CAFOs) by local governments. In 2013 the legislature specified that any agricultural practice that meets (often, weak) legal standards cannot be subject to a nuisance claim. In 2018, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) allowed a large hog producer to evade rules for separation from surface water and neighbors by splitting two large operations among immediate family members. This would set a dangerous precedent, so the Club has filed suit in state court to overturn KDHE’s action. We are also seeking better protection of neighbors subject to spray-drift from the application on fields of wastewater containing dangerous pathogens.

At the request of “Big Chicken” the legislature passed Senate Bill 405, which allows up to 1/3 million chickens within 1/4 mile of homes and only 100 feet from property lines. Up to 100,000 birds can be placed within 100 feet of a neighbor's home. The legislature ignored our recommendation that the bill be referred to experts like the Kansas Health Institute for further study. In anticipation of future battles over these massive broiler chicken operations likely to enter the state, we have posted on our website an analysis (read online: bit.ly/review-of-405) of likely health impacts, and will continue to follow this issue.

We have also witnessed this year the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) overriding rural landowners’ concerns about pollution potential from oil and gas production in the state, especially earthquakes Caused by activities related to "fracking". It’s obvious that the current state administration has favored industry over the interest of many rural residents.

Urban and Rural Air Quality. In urban areas we are seeking to increase protections against unregulated diesel emission "hot spots." We partnered with CleanAirNow, formerly the Diesel Health Project, to perform some air quality monitoring in Kansas City, Kansas, neighborhoods in the Kansas and Missouri river valleys. This area is subject to temperature inversions and buildup of emissions from nearby heavy industry. This work has recently been completed, and a report is in preparation.

We continue to follow ozone and fine particle pollution from the annual burning of grasslands in the Flint Hills. Since 2002, an average of 2.3 million acres have been burned each spring. In general, air quality standard exceedances have been avoided in years when less than 1.7 million acres were burned. In 2018, only 1.45 million acres were burned primarily due to dry conditions, and there were no air quality standard exceedances. In response to recent research it seems that some ranchers are experimenting with burning in late summer as more effective in reducing noxious weeds. We regard this as a very hopeful development.

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‘There Is No More Normal’: The Kansas Chapter Takes on the Climate Crisis

Sierra Club members and friends gathered at the Baker University Wetlands in March of this year for the Kansas Chapter’s third biennial statewide conference. By every account it was the best Chapter conference yet, with over 130 in attendance.

With environmental threats reaching critical levels, the conference theme, “There Is No More Normal,” focused on the issue of climate change and its impacts. Climatologist Dr. Johannes Feddema, from the University of Victoria, B.C., offered a compelling keynote talk on “Putting Climate Change in Perspective,” which traced both the history and study of climate change.

Special guest panelists included Susan Stover (Kansas Geological Survey), Tatiana Lin (Kansas Health Institute), and Brad Bradley (Sierra Club Life Member), who discussed how climate change in Kansas will affect agriculture, food production, water, and health.

Also participating were Chapter ExCom members Joe Spease and Craig Volland, as well as Zack Pistora, the Chapter’s lobbyist in Topeka. Guests also included Kansas Chapter Education Grant recipients Lisa Ball, Amy Lewis, and Josie Milligan, who shared samples of their classroom work on climate change.

This event was a great day for all thanks to the hard work and dedication of Kansas Chapter volunteers, Gary Anderson, Stuart Bolt, Yvonne Cather, Bill Cutler, Erin DeGroot, Elaine Giessel, Karin Pagel-Meiners, Zack Pistora, Paul Post, and Bob Sommer – and also, importantly, thanks to financial support from our great Sierra Club members and friends throughout Kansas.

To support your Kansas Chapter, please visit Kansas.SierraClub.org
The Ed Rowe Memorial Grants for Kansas Primary and Secondary Environmental Educators

The Kansas Chapter proudly begins its seventh year of grant-making for Kansas teachers by honoring the memory of long-time Sierra Club member Ed Rowe, who passed away earlier this year.

The Kansas Sierra Club’s education grant program has been renamed The Ed Rowe Memorial Grants for Kansas Primary and Secondary Environmental Educators.

Ed taught biology for 30 years at Emporia State University and then dedicated his life to volunteer activities on behalf of the community. He was a lifelong learner whose dedication will continue to make a difference for future generations through this grant program. Ed served on the Kanza Group’s Executive Committee as a member and officer and, with his wife Leanora, was a fixture at Sierra Club meetings and events.

This grant program supports Kansas teachers who are educating students about the nature of the climate crisis and how human activity has accelerated climate change. Teachers in all academic disciplines are encouraged to apply. We can’t imagine a better tribute to Ed Rowe than by supporting teachers and students who are seeking effective solutions to the ongoing environmental crisis.

For more information about The Ed Rowe Memorial Grants for Kansas Primary and Secondary Environmental Educators, visit Kansas.SierraClub.org and click Projects.

2017 Grant Recipients present at conference: Amy Lewis (left) Lisa Ball (top center), Josie Milligan (right)
BEYOND CONSERVATION & OUTINGS: FOCUSING ON THE ELECTIONS

BY GAIL SHAFTON,
PROGRAM CHAIR, KANZA GROUP

The Kanza Group Executive Committee recognized that 2018 was going to be a critical election year when it met last January to plan programs. Wanting to educate the public on the importance of voting for environmental protection and climate action locally and nationally, the ExCom decided to showcase Kansas election-year issues.

Our energy went into four election-related meetings: organizing grassroots activism, supporting investigative journalism, building climate resilience in the Kansas 3rd Congressional District, and highlighting the Johnson County Board of Commissioners race. Also included were socials and pop-up events designed to build community and reinforce resistance to the federal agenda.

These programs had high attendance, with many new people attracted to our focus on political races, candidate positions, and how government works (or doesn’t).

Facebook was critical to engaging other community activists, especially younger voters.

We took a risk and went all in to connect environmental issues with politics. It paid off by recruiting new members, as well as by raising our visibility within the broader community. The Kanza Group’s 2018 election-year programming helped build relationships with voters who supported the Kansas 3rd District’s new Congressperson, the new Kansas Governor-Elect, and two new Johnson County Commissioners, all of whom are more likely to support our agenda.

The challenge for 2019 is to engage with other groups to increase attention on local environmental issues, including climate change. We’re ready.