

The ARKANSAS Sierran

Fall 2016



VICTORY: SIERRA CLUB LAWSUIT LEADS TO CLEANER AIR IN ARKANSAS



Glen Hooks,
Chapter Director

After several years of campaigns and legal wrangling, the US Environmental Protection Agency has issued a final “Regional Haze Plan” aimed at reducing air pollution in the Upper Buffalo and Caney Creek Wilderness areas.

This is a significant and hard-fought victory for all Arkansans, and would not have happened without the Sierra Club bringing a federal lawsuit to force action. The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality was supposed to submit a Regional Haze plan to EPA for approval, but did not, punting to EPA draft a federal plan. When EPA took no action and missed its deadline for doing so, your Sierra Club took legal action to force the issue.

So what does this mean? The federal Regional Haze rule is aimed at improving visibility in certain national parks and wilderness areas, so that park visitors could more fully enjoy these areas. The rule required states to draft plans to reduce haze by certain amounts. “Haze” is primarily a byproduct of emissions from older, dirtier coal-fired pow-

er plants—such as Entergy’s giant White Bluff and Independence plants here in Arkansas, each of which lacks modern pollution controls.

The final regional haze plan EPA issued for Arkansas contemplates the addition of “scrubbers” to each of these plants—which could mean billions of extra costs for Arkansas electric ratepayers. The Sierra Club believes that instead of billing ratepayers billions to prop up old, dirty coal plants, we should work to responsibly transition these plants to retirement and replace the power with clean,

renewable energy (like wind and solar power).

Happily, Entergy has already proposed shutting down the White Bluff plant as a way to meet its regional haze obligations, but Sierra Club believes Independence should be shut down as well. We will continue to work on this issue and to keep Sierra Club members updated on progress.

In the meantime: celebrate a job well done! Protecting our parks is exactly the kind of positive action that should make us all proud to be Sierra Club members.



Sierra Club volunteer, April Lane, speaking at a press conference about improving the air quality in our Arkansas parks

SOLAR ENERGY BOOMING—EVEN IN ARKANSAS!



Dr. Bob Allen
Arkansas Sierra
Club ExComm
Member

Sustainable energy is currently the most rapidly expanding form of energy in the United States. The same is true here in Arkansas. Whereas we are not well set for wind as our neighbors are to the west, solar panels (PV) that generate electricity are effective, and getting cheaper by the day. Solar arrays now cost less than half of what they cost just 10 years ago.

The price is now so low as to be competitive with more conventional power sources such as coal and natural gas, and infinitely cleaner. Current solar capacity (as of 2015) is 20.1 megawatts (MW.) This is an unbelievable 640 % increase over all PV power installed up through 2014. The new power installed in 2015 is dominated by utility scale power, 15.4 MW. Commercial industries and businesses installed 0.24 MW and the residential sector 0.46 MW. This represents a 56 million dollar investment in clean energy and jobs.

Solar power has come of age, not just for people wanting a little power for

an off-grid cabin in the woods, but residents tied to the grid, industries, and especially power companies. One real advantage of solar power is its scalability. If a power company needs to expand their energy supply a small amount, they can add a small solar field. If they need a lot of power, they install a bigger field. No alternative has this scalability. You just can't build a (cost effective) small coal or nuclear plant. Not even natural gas fired turbines are as scalable.

The L'Oreal plant in North Little Rock will install several thousand PV panels, about 1 MW's worth. In March 2016 a private-public consortium consisting of two Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporations, and Aerojet Rocketdyne will install a 12 MW solar field near East Camden. The largest install this year will be an 81 MW solar farm to be installed by Entergy near Stuttgart.

Generally installs of home solar arrays are booming also. Most cost effective for the consumer is a grid-tied net metered array. This system allows the home owner to remain connected to the grid in addition to the solar panels. When the sun shines the panels provide energy to the house, but when the sun is not shining, the home can draw power

from the grid just like any other home.

PV systems can be sized to provide all or any fraction of the power needed for the home. If a particular array actually produces more energy than can be consumed in a given month, the law allows the excess to be carried over to a month when energy is needed.

The consumers gain is however the power companies loss, and they don't like it. They lose profits by not selling as much electricity and even worse net metering threatens the vertically integrated structure of the business. They are the power generators, the wholesalers, the distributors and the retailers, and they want to keep it that way. Other states, notably Arizona and Oklahoma, have instituted additional fees for home solar which will severely limit the development of truly distributed clean energy.

The Public Service Commission here in Arkansas is empowered by law to set rates and rate structures of electric utilities. Over the next year they will be conducting studies to determine if changes are needed (read additional costs to home solar users.) The utilities will be arguing that they have to claw back their profits to remain in business. Stay tuned.

PAPERLESS OPTION FOR NEWSLETTER

In an effort to save trees and money, your Arkansas Sierra Club newsletter is available in an electronic format. If you'd like to receive your newsletter electronically rather than via U.S. Mail, please email your address to glen.hooks@sierraclub.org, with "ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER" in the subject line.

NOTE: You will still receive a paper newsletter at the end of each year, so that you may receive and return your Sierra Club officer ballots.

The Arkansas Sierra Club newsletter is sent out on a quarterly basis. More frequent information and updates are available on our website at www.sierraclub.org/arkansas. If you haven't received any Sierra Club messages in the last few months, we may not have your email address. To be added to our email list, please send your email address to glen.hooks@sierraclub.org.

UPDATE ON THE C&H HOG FARM AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER

*Carolyn Shearman
Central AR Group Member*

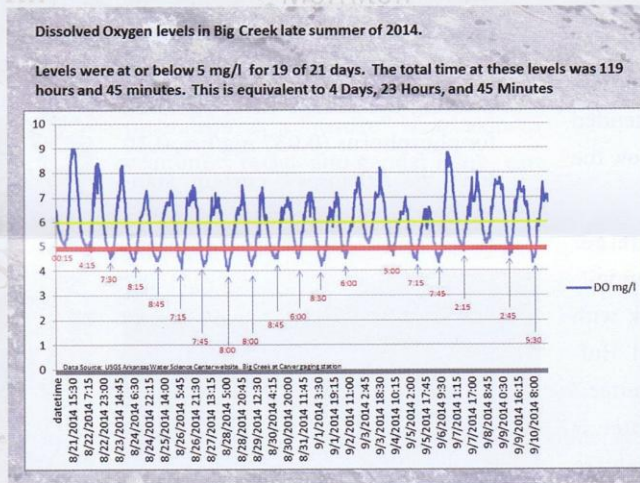
Community actions and effects of C&H Hog Farm to date:

Since the C&H Hog Farm, a Confined Animal Feeding Operation or CAFO, was permitted on the Big Creek tributary to the Buffalo National River in 2013, the following has been done by concerned citizens and various organizations and agencies:

- In 2014-15 the National Park Service performed dye studies in the sink-hole areas around the CAFO which indicated that surface water and seepage in the karst geology of that area goes both vertically and horizontally into the bedrock and discharges into several tributaries on the south side of the Buffalo River including Big Creek and even creeks on the north side of the Buffalo. This means the run-off has found its way into horizontal channels underneath the south side of the Buffalo watershed and has emerged into streams on the north side running into the Buffalo as well.
- In 2014 the Ozark Society and the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance sued the owners of the C&H Hog Farm and Cargill, the then underwriter of the CAFO for, i) improper procedures in the initial permit

granting and ii) insufficient environmental impact statements used to obtain U. S. government guaranteed loans.

- Since 2014 the National Park Service and ADEQ have monitored dissolved oxygen levels in the Big Creek tributary and tests show decreased night time dissolved oxygen levels during dry summer months below 5mg/l which is unhealthy for



native fish and mollusks. A rate of 5 mg/l is considered minimal for fish and mollusks to prevent stress and kills; 6mg/l and above is preferable.

- In 2015, in response to pressure from the Ozark Society, the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance, Sierra Club, the National Park Service and other concerned citizens' groups, the Governor of Arkansas, Asa Hutchinson, called a moratorium on any other new CAFO's in the Buffalo watershed for 5 years, spanning 2015-2020.
- In the summer of 2016, we saw the

biggest algae bloom on the Buffalo River from Gilbert AR to Maumee AR. This was due to run-off from heavy August rains in the area of the CAFO, wildlife waste, people waste, watershed wide agricultural nutrient overloads of nitrogen and phosphorus, and stream bank erosion due to livestock access to side streams.

- In April of 2016 an independent study commissioned by the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance found evidence that the settling ponds at the CAFO were leaking and nutrient loading was affecting Big Creek and then into the Buffalo River.

- Based on the independent study results, ADEQ requested permission to drill beneath the main settling ponds to determine their own results on leaking. Drilling and sampling was completed in October 2016. Synthetic pond liners may be required of C&H depending on test results yet to be completed.

- In June of 2016 C&H Hog Farm applied to ADEQ for a Regulation 5 permit which would mean that they no longer would have to apply for 3-year permits and would not have to file updated waste management plans. This is pending ADEQ Public Comment and drilling test results as of October 2016.

- Summer of 2016 independent water analysis of Big Creek shows significant loading of nutrients near the Hog Farm CAFO and at the mouth of the Buffalo River.

- Circled Areas of Excessive Nutrient Loading in Big Creek and the Buffalo River
- Two years of data from Big Creek studies show that nitrate levels in



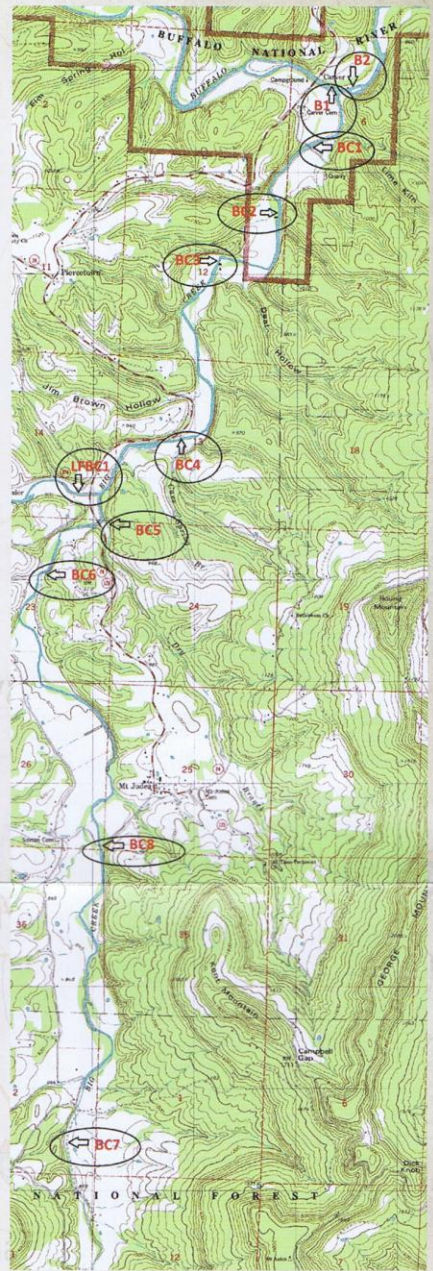
Big Creek increase by 150% in the 1.5 mile stretch adjacent to hog farm. And total phosphorus levels exceed the EPA recommended level of 0.01 mg/l by 50% below the farm.

- In October 2016, the Governor of Arkansas designated a committee of state agencies to work with stakeholders in a "Beautiful Buffalo River Action Committee." The purpose of this committee is to produce a watershed study to identify water quality problems and in the case of unacceptable nutrient loading to set numeric and time frame goals for improvement. Stakeholders who are applying to be represented include local landowners, the Ozark Society, the National Park Service, Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance, and the Audubon Society.

Future actions:

- In January of 2017 ADEQ will have the results of their drilling beneath the waste

- ponds which may determine if synthetic pond liners are required.
- Later in October 2016 ADEQ will rule first on whether to grant an extension of the Regulation 6 permit which expires October 31, 2016 and in late 2016 or early 2017 whether to grant the less stringent Regulation 5 permit to the Hog Farm CAFO as they have requested.
- The Governor's Beautiful Buffalo River Action Committee will begin meeting with stakeholders to devise new standards for maintaining the environment of the Buffalo National River and watershed.
- In 2017 the citizens' groups will press for more stringent mitigating requirements on, for instance meeting the Illinois River standard for phosphorus (0.037 mg/l vs. 0.10 EPA vs. Arkansas's current standard).



Circled Areas of Excessive Nutrient Loading in Big Creek and the Buffalo River

- Ongoing are the efforts of all the local environmental watchdog groups to oversee ADEQ policies and decisions because ADEQ has responsibility for issuing renewed permits and for monitoring current opera-

tions. Our experience shows that ADEQ seems tolerant of reporting omissions relies on the Arkansas Phosphorous Index, which allows excessive build ups phosphorus in farm soils (see bullet point above).

SIERRA CLUB CO-SPONSORS FIRST ARKANSAS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY SUMMIT

More than 100 Arkansans Share Day of Policy and Green Networking

Your Arkansas Sierra Club, along with the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and Arkansas Audubon, co-sponsored our first “Arkansas Environmental Policy Summit” on September 9th. More than 100 attendees spent the day at the Heifer International building in Little Rock discussing environmental issues and hearing from private and public sector experts. It was a fantastic day!

Summit organizers worked to make the event an inclusive gathering that didn't just include “the usual suspects” from the Arkansas environmental community. Those efforts paid off—panelists included utility representatives, state

and federal environmental regulators, elected officials from the local, state, and federal levels, clean energy and water experts, and climate scientists, and faith leaders, among others.

The topic of “environmental justice” wove its way through several of the presentations, from the opening remarks to a stirring lunchtime presentation by Chandra Taylor Smith, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion for the National Audubon Society. A clear message—and challenge—was laid down to the environmental community: to be successful and to effect positive change, we must broaden our focus to include all communities. Thinking of environmentalism as a “justice” issue akin to economic, racial, and gender issues can

really make our work more meaningful, and multiple speakers drove that point home.

Planning will soon begin for next year's Summit—many thanks to all who attended, and special thanks to our special partners at the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and Arkansas Audubon!



PLEASE
RECYCLE
THIS NEWSLETTER!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Explore the state through Arkansas State Parks! Here's a sample of parks from around the state with events coming up at the start of 2017. Contact the park for more info. Don't forget to give your local state park a call and ask about their calendar!

Bull Shoals-White River State Park (870-445-3629; 153 Dam Overlook Lane, Bull Shoals, AR 72619)
First Day Hike- January 1, 2017
Eagle Awareness- January 13-14, 2017
Ozark Springtime Wildflower Weekend- April 14-16, 2017

Lake Frierson State Park (870-932-2615; 7904 Hwy. 141, Jonesboro, AR 72401)
First Day Night Hike- January 1, 2017
Outdoor Skills Saturday- March 18, 2017

Cossatot River State Park & Natural Area (870-385-2201; 1980 Hwy. 278 West, Wickes, AR 71973)
First Day Night Hike- January 1, 2017
Backyard Bird Count- February 11-12, 2017
GPS Scavenger Hunt- April 8, 2017

Moro Bay State Park (870-463-8555; 6071 Hwy. 600, Jersey, AR 71651)
First Day Hike- January 1, 2017
Moro Bay Reptiles- March 18, 2017
Boat Tour- March 18, 22, & 25, 2017

Woolly Hollow State Park (501-679-2098; 82 Woolly Hollow Road, Greenbrier, AR 72058)
First Day Hike- January 1, 2017
Polar Plunge- February 11, 2017
Spring Star Party- March 18, 2017

FROM THE CHAIR



George Wise,
Chair, Arkansas
Sierra Club

I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight a few activities in which the chapter has been involved. We are always pleased to help other groups who are taking steps to protect the environment. Do any of these projects interest you? Get involved and help us protect the environment.

Residential sewer treatment facilities can be an environmental disaster. These are small scale sewer systems which are not connected to a municipal sewer system. Failure rates as high as 50% have been reported. Recently, the West Pulaski Committee sought our help in opposing two high density subdivisions which were planned for Western Pulaski County.

One high density subdivision would discharge treated sewage directly into Fletcher Creek. Fletcher Creek runs down stream into four recreational use areas. Okatoma Camp, Pfeifer Camp, Walnut Grove Church, and Pinnacle Mountain State Park. If this development had been approved it would mean that sewage and bacteria at unacceptable levels would be discharged into Fletcher Creek.

The Mountain Valley Subdivision would have discharged

treated sewage into Nowlin Creek. This high density subdivision (134 homes) on 36 acres requires a sewage treatment plant that would discharge 40,000 gallons of treated sewage into Nowlin Creek, a tributary of the Little Maumelle River. This means the Little Maumelle would have been be stressed with treated sewage from two high density subdivisions.

Thankfully, the Little Rock planning commission did not approve either of these subdivisions. Through our involvement in this issue, we have learned that residential sewer systems are a problem in other parts of the state. We will continue to monitor the water quality of these two Pulaski County creeks and gather more information about these inadequate sewer systems being used in other parts of the state.

By the time this newsletter arrives, the Central Arkansas Group of the Arkansas Sierra Club will have conducted a public showing of a new documentary which brings light to a problem in South Arkansas. "Company Town" is about the ongoing efforts of the minority community in Crossett Arkansas to battle pollution made by the Georgia-Pacific plant (a Koch Brothers-owned business) in their neighborhoods. It is clear that they have had clusters of cancer and asthma in their neighborhood, illegal dumping that EPA and ADEQ will not do anything about, and water contamination that includes carcinogenic chemicals from the plant in their wells and water sources, and discrimi-

nation in the remediation money offered to white neighbors versus black neighbors. There is a very courageous pastor, David Bouie, who has been leading their efforts. We hope to continue to highlight this problem and look for ways to collaborate with this community.

We also continue to follow the Arkansas Highway Department's plans to widen Interstate 30 in downtown Little Rock. This project has potentially damaging environmental consequences for those living in downtown Little Rock. To date, there has not been an Environmental Assessment of this project. Patrick Stair, a Sierra Club member, represents our interest on the Metroplan Regional Planning Advisory Council.

Here are research links, if you want to read more about the subject:

Anti-expansion: The Facebook group "Improve 30Crossing", at www.facebook.com/groups/1625941031012464 (many excellent discussions)

Neutral (in the opinion of many, but not in the opinion of the Highway Department): Metroplan, at www.metroplanrpc.org/ and www.metroplan.org (many excellent technical details)

Pro-expansion: The Highway Department, <http://connectingarkansasprogram.com/corridors/9/i-3>

ARKANSAS SIERRA CLUB WANT ADS

Are you looking for ways to get more involved? If so, consider serving on one of the important committees below. We'd welcome your participation and perspective—contact Chapter Director Glen Hooks at glen.hooks@sierraclub.org or (501) 301-8280.

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS FOR WORK IN THE 2017 ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Arkansas General Assembly begins its next session in January, 2017, and your Arkansas Sierra Club will be there every day. We'd welcome Sierra Club members who'd like to help our efforts to monitor legislation, contact senators and representatives, and roam the halls of the Capitol as needed. If this is your cup of tea, join us!

WANTED: FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Are you an experienced fundraiser, or simply a passionate Sierra Club member who has no qualms about asking for donations? If so, we need your help! Fundraising Committee members will help in all areas of Arkansas Sierra Club fundraising: major gifts, small donor projects, and fundraising events. Creative and dedicated people are a plus!

WANTED: MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Our strength lies in our numbers—increasing our membership numbers is key to our success! The Membership Committee will work to add a significant number of new members to our Arkansas Sierra Club rolls in the next year through tabling events, public outreach, and other creative methods. Sign up today!

WANTED: CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chapter Conservation Committee identifies and researches Arkansas environmental issues of concern, and makes recommendations to the Chapter Executive Committee about our environmental priorities. The ideal Conservation Committee member is knowledgeable about Arkansas environmental issues, knows her way around state administrative and legislative bodies, and has a passion for finding solutions that will improve life here in The Natural State.

SUPPORT YOUR ARKANSAS SIERRA CLUB WITH AN END-OF-YEAR GIFT

2016 has been a fantastic and productive year for the Arkansas Sierra Club! We've spent the year working tirelessly for clean air, water, and energy in The Natural State: and we are winning. As detailed in the rest of this newsletter, we've forced a strong Regional Haze plan for Arkansas that will improve visibility in our parks, we're on our way to shutting down multiple dirty coal-fired power plants, the clean energy industry is booming in Arkansas, and—in the middle of all that—we co-hosted the first Arkansas Environmental Policy Summit.

Will you support our work as we work for more environmental victories next year?

Your Arkansas Sierra Club plans to aggressively continue working to retire more dirty power plants while making way for wind and solar projects across the state. This work is rewarding and meaningful, but it takes your help to fund our efforts.

Invest in the financial strength of your Arkansas Sierra Club by making a gift at www.sierraclub.org/arkansas. You can make a one-time gift or spread a larger gift out by making an automatically recurring monthly pledge. Each dollar you give stays right here in Arkansas to fund our work in The Natural State.

THANK YOU



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