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PRAIRIE DISPATCH

No. 28 Vol. 1

Newsletter of the Sierra Club, Cimarron Group

Feb-March 2005

Now is the time to get involved...

View from the chair by Olivia Waldkoetter

First, let me introduce myself. I am Olivia Waldkoetter and I am your new chair. I invite you to come to a monthly meeting or an outing and tell me all your hopes and dreams for the Sierra Club. I am looking forward to it.

Let's face it, the election is over and we have four more years to deal with a president that does not protect or respect the environment. So, what do we do? We have to do something! My answer is to get informed and get involved. Our website is a great place to get accurate information on Oklahoma's key environmental issues. Learn and discover what issues you are passionate about and then...do something about it. Good things are happening. Let's work together to bring about change. There are lots of opportunities within our group: come to our monthly meeting; join a committee (legislative, political, conservation, social, etc.); host an event; go on an outing; chaperone an inner city outing; check out our website; buy our coffee; buy our merchandise; work on trail maintenance; and have fun in the process. Just let someone know that you are willing to serve and we will find a place for you.

The Cimarron group has accomplished a lot over the years. We have over 1200 members in our group alone. We have won many battles. There are local battles that we can still win. There is still much we can

accomplish. We can make an impact on our environment but the group needs you to step forward, get informed and get involved. Like me, you will be glad you did.

e-mail Oliva at olivia_waldkoetter@yahoo.com

Next Meeting: February 21st, 7:30pm

Warr Acres Community Center
4301 N. Ann Arbor

(Between Meridian and MacArthur Blvd.)

We meet the third Monday of every month, except December

Please Join Us!

February Program

Join us on Monday, February 21st - as we enjoy a presentation from Beth Schaefer Caniglia (Ph.D. Univ. of Notre Dame). Beth is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Oklahoma State University. Dr. Caniglia has launched a study to examine the influence of science on public opinion with regards to development of the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer in Southern Oklahoma, and will share results of her first round of interviews. Dr. Caniglia's study was sparked by Senate Bill 288, which was passed by the State Legislature in May 2003.

see March program, page 5

CONSERVATION CORNER

by James Martin, conservation chair

As the conservation committee begins a new year, we continue many of our prior campaigns and add a couple more.

One recycled topic is Lake Atoka. Oklahoma City, which controls the watershed, will soon issue contracts to log that old growth cross-timbers area. Our committee will consider strategies that encourage city officials to suspend those contracts pending appeals to establish a national park.

This month, we heard Pat Downes of the OKC Riverfront Redevelopment Authority make a presentation on the Oklahoma River Project. The city is creating an inner city amenity along the river, including trails, skateboard rinks, trees and wetlands. The committee will be looking for ways to make the Oklahoma River more amenable to living things, including those of the two-legged variety.

Also, we resume the Environmental Justice campaign and will meet with representatives of LULAC. Shifting focus to communities not normally engaged with the Sierra Club is a way of expanding our membership and activist base. We will also consider hands-on events which highlight the environment.

In addition, on the agenda are some housekeeping items, including

see Conservation Corner, page 5



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Club Members to Vote on Directors, Immigration Limits

Fifteen Candidates Compete for Five Slots—Article by the National Sierra Club Election Team

Another potentially contentious Sierra Club election is upon us. This year, not only are 15 candidates running for the board of directors, there are three ballot measures, two of which would alter rules for future elections, and a third about whether the Club should adopt a policy on limiting immigration into the United States.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization that depends on members to make important decisions about its governance. “Democracy works,” says Club President Larry Fahn, “but only if everyone participates.”

Voting in elections at all levels of the Club is both a privilege and a responsibility of membership, he says, and the Club requires a free flow of views on policy and priorities in order to function effectively.

Members will elect five representatives to serve three-year terms on the 15-member board, which oversees staff and volunteer activities, sets conservation priorities, and approves the annual budget. The candidates are listed below.

The Population Ballot Question asks members: “Shall the Sierra Club policy on immigration, adopted by the Board of Directors in 1999 and revised in 2003, be changed to recognize the need to adopt lower limits on migration to the United States?”

The Club board of directors recommends a “no” vote on this question.

The two other ballot measures propose changes to the by-laws that affect the election. Bylaws Change #1 would remove the requirement to provide space for write-in candidates on the ballot. Bylaws Change #2 requires one year of continuous membership in the Sierra Club in order to run for the board. (Currently, members can file a petition to run for office on the same day they become a member.)

The board recommends a “yes” vote on the two bylaws changes.

Last year, shortly after the Club election cycle ended, Fahn created the

Sierra Election Reform Task Force, chaired by longtime leader Susan Heitman, and including representatives from various groups within the Club. The task force recommendations led to the proposed bylaws changes.

In addition, the board adopted a new rule giving chapters the opportunity to endorse board candidates and publish their endorsements in their newsletters and Web sites. (This is a one-year experiment.)

Two-thirds of the executive committee must vote to endorse, and the statement of endorsement can only be one sentence: “The [name of chapter] recommends a vote for [name(s) of candidates] in the upcoming election for the Sierra Club Board of Directors.”

Chapters and groups may take positions on ballot questions and publish their recommendations in newsletters and Web sites as editorials. Other published material, such as letters to the editor or official statements by ballot question position coordinators, must be balanced for pro and con views when published. Newsletters and Web sites cannot accept advertising promoting positions or candidates.

Seven of the board candidates were selected by the nominating committee, an eight-member body that reviews aspiring candidates every year and puts forward a slate of candidates. Eight candidates are running as petition candidates, which means that they have collected signatures supporting their candidacy from one-twentieth of 1 percent of members. (That’s 381 signatures for this election.)

Overseeing the election to ensure fairness and resolve disputes are three “inspectors of election” appointed by the board. Chief Inspector Marvin Baker, a retired University of Oklahoma geography professor and member since 1968, says that the board acted in response to calls from grassroots leaders to involve the chapters in a more meaningful way in the election. “Our goal is to make

the elections as fair and participatory as possible,” he says.

Last year’s election controversy generated a spate of coverage in local and national newspapers, even a New York Times editorial. Due to the extensive publicity, more Club members voted than ever before – 171,616 voters, or 22.7 percent of Club members.

To find out more about the candidates and measures, visit sierraclub.org/bod/2005election – which includes a candidate forum where candidates answer questions posted by members.

Club members should receive their ballots in the mail by mid-March. Votes must be cast by noon eastern daylight time on April 25. To vote online, follow the instructions in your printed ballot.

An independent company with long experience in conducting elections for national organizations will count the ballots.

Here are the candidates for director:

- Jim Bensman (petition candidate)
- Joni Bosh (nominating committee candidate)
- Gregory Bungo (petition candidate)
- Jim Catlin (nominating committee candidate)
- Jim Dodson (nominating committee candidate)
- Jim Dougherty (nominating committee candidate)
- Jennifer Ferenstein (nominating committee candidate)
- Richard Fiddler (petition candidate)
- Barbara Frank (nominating committee candidate)
- Christine Garcia (petition candidate)
- Alan Kuper (petition candidate)
- Jim McDonald (petition candidate)
- Chuck McGrady (nominating committee candidate)
- Tony Ruckel (petition candidate)
- Robert Roy van de Hoek (petition candidate)

Get Outdoors

Latest list is always on-line at oklahoma.sierraclub.org/cimarron

1 March 5 – Dayhike The

Narrows trail in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. We will depart at 9:00 AM from the Warr Acres Community Center and stop for dinner at Meers on the way back. Contact trip leader Jay Trenary at jay@lawyer.com or 831-5535 for more information. Rated: Easy. A \$2 required donation to the newsletter fund will be collected.

2 March 12-13 – Service Trip Con-

nor's State Ranch. Join us for a week-end of car camping and light trail maintenance at Connor's State Ranch near Warner, OK. Contact trip leader Olivia Waldkoetter at 821-2304 or Olivia_waldkoetter@yahoo.com for more information. Rated: Easy.

3 April 1-2 – Car Camping/Dayhike

Come to the "Top of Oklahoma" at Black Mesa. We will leave Friday after work, car camping at Black Mesa State Park. Saturday morning we will head up to the tallest spot in Oklahoma, Black Mesa. Contact trip leader David Franklin at dfranklin@ussok.com or 789-5377 for more information. Rated: Moderate. A \$5 required donation to the newsletter fund will be collected.

4 April 10 – Dayhike Dog Run Hollow

Trail in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. We will depart at 9:00 AM from the northwest parking lot at Oklahoma City Community College. Contact trip leader Bill Scimeca at wscim@swbell.net or 879-2040 for more information. Rated: Easy. A \$2 required donation to the newsletter fund will be collected.

5 April 22-April 24 – Backpack

Ouachita Trail. Celebrate Earth Day among the trees! We will backpack from the Winding Stair Campground which is off of the Talimena Drive to the Pashubbe Trailhead (T.H.). The trail starts with a climb, a drop, another shorter climb, and the rest of the first day, mostly downhill for a total of about 6 miles. We plan to camp by Big Cedar Creek Saturday night. On Sunday morning, we continue hiking smaller "ups and downs" another 4.5 miles to the Pashubbe T.H. About 30 minutes into Sunday's hike, we will cross Hwy 259. We hope to reach Pashubbe T.H. by 1 or 2 p.m. Contact leader Jana Johnston at janaajcpa@hotmail.com or 751-1571 or

assistant leader Olivia Waldkoetter at 821-2304 for more information. Rated: Moderate. A \$10 required donation the newsletter fund will be collected.

6 May 1 – Dayhike

Elk Mountain in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. We will depart at 8:30 AM from the northwest parking lot at Oklahoma City Community College. Contact trip leader Bill Scimeca at wscim@swbell.net or 879-2040 for more information. Rated: Moderate. A \$2 required donation to the newsletter fund will be collected.

7 May 22 – May 27 – Service Trip

Lake Powell, Utah. The Glen Canyon Institute (GCI) is the concessionaire for this trip, and will be providing a boat, guide and an education us about the Lake Powell area for five days. We will clean litter from the beaches half the time and tour half the time. A cooked dinner is furnished on those four nights that we camp in the canyon. The current plan is to spend most of the time in the Escalante River portion of the Canyon. This is probably the most spectacular area. We are committed to go where GCI determines our services are needed. More information about the Canyon can be found at <http://www.glencanyon.org> and <http://www.nps.gov/glca/index.htm>. The fee is \$300 per person, which covers the concessionaire charges, a night of camping before and after the boat trip and includes a \$30 required Sierra Club donation to the newsletter fund. A hard limit of 8 is required because of the boat size. These trips are very popular and the trip leader is having to make commitments far in advance. The fee will be due at the time you signup for the trip. Make all checks payable to the Sierra Club. If we do not have 8 people by April 1, the trip will be cancelled and all money will be refunded.



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www.sierrasummit2005.org

Delegates wanted to
represent Oklahoma!
If you are willing and able to
attend this conference, contact
Tom Libby at
tomlibby@yahoo.com

Bill Tracking & How It Works

By Larry Shepherd

Oklahoma's next legislative session will begin in February, and will continue until the last Friday in May. Actually it is Part I of a two-year session. Part II will occur next year.

Preparation for this session began last month, in December, with the introduction of all the proposed bills. It takes some time to print up the bills so that they will be ready for all the legislators, concerned citizens, and for their web site www.lsb.state.ok.us, by the first day of the session.

It is from all these bills that Oklahoma Chapter Sierra Club's Legislative Committee gleans the bills for our Tracking List that may or will have environmental implications. The Tracking List will include the bill numbers (SB for a Senate bill, HB for a House bill, and there are other designations, too), the titles of the bills, the author(s), bill summaries, and then our stand on the bill. Some of the bills we will 'Support'. With this endorsement, we feel that a bill will have a good impact on our state's environment. Other bills we will 'Oppose'. It could be that it is a bad bill with a negative impact, or gosh, just so many reasons. The third group are those we need to 'Watch'. We may change our stand from one of these to another as a bill goes through its legislative process.

The 'Watch' stand is a tricky one. Many of our legislators will take the first page of existing legislation, change just one word, then introduce it so it will receive a number and be entered onto the congressional docket. We call this a Shell bill, and just like the game, we do not always know what is under it. At any point, the title can be changed, new legislation entered, and it starts the process of becoming law. Or it could be that the bill is just on the edge of having an environmental impact, yet through the process, things change, either for good or bad. Or it may be that we may have concerns about the intention of the bill author(s). So we 'Watch' the bill.

The first Tracking List will be posted

on our Chapter and Group web sites, probably during the first week in February. (If I have your email address, I will probably email it to you.) Then the bills start their hurdle race. They are read before the full House or Senate, assigned to committee, then subcommittee, read and voted on one by one, to finally emerge onto the floor of the full House or Senate for voting. All this occurs in the first three weeks. Last year's Tracking List started out about 23 pages long. At the end of first three weeks, it was down to about 12 pages on the second list.

Many bills do not make it through the process. Bills must pass both House and Senate. House bills go through the Senate and vice versa. If a bill number is on the first Tracking List but not on the second or later lists, it died somewhere along the way—it just could not jump a hurdle. Bills that are 'Fast Tracked' and sent to the Governor for signing are kept on our list for future record. At any point you can check the 'History' of a bill on the web site listed above. Just be sure to go to the end of the list to find out what each symbol means.

Our Legislative Committee has a meeting at the end of each hurdle race to reconsider our Tracking List. Do we still 'Support' this bill, or has that 'Watch'ed bill changed to 'Oppose', or whatever. After each meeting, the new lists will again be posted on our Chapter and Group web sites (or emailed to you - watch the dating on the list).

This next legislative session will probably be a challenge to us, since so many new faces will be around. Many of the candidates we endorsed got elected -18 out of 23, I think, but there were so many races, we could not consider them all.

If you wish to help us face this challenge, watch the Tracking List, then write your Senator or Representative in support or opposition of the upcoming legislation. How effective we are in protecting the environment where we live can only be achieved with YOUR help. Happy Tracking!

"The ABC's of EE"

Congratulations to the Oklahoma Chapter of the Sierra Club! We were named the "Outstanding Organization" by the Oklahoma Association for Environmental Education at their recent Environmental Education Expo ("The ABC's of EE") held February 3rd at the University of Central Oklahoma. This recognition is given to an organization or corporation with a demonstrated track record in environmental education. It recognizes our sponsorship of major projects and activities in Oklahoma that emphasize sound environmental education and stewardship. Examples of the educational programs we sponsor at the chapter level can be found on the `chapter website` at <http://oklahoma.sierraclub.org> by clicking on "environmental education" on the menu bar. Also, a major part of the reason we were chosen was to recognize the efforts of our Inner City Outings (ICO) program so special thanks go out to Dave Zuconi in Tulsa and Jay Trenary in Oklahoma City for the great work they do in leading this program. Go to <http://oklahoma.sierraclub.org/ico> for more information on the ICO program. Another award winner at the Expo was member Neil Garrison, Naturalist at Martin Park Nature Center, who won for Excellence in Media for his column in the Daily Oklahoman. Great job Neil!

Building Environmental Communities

Across America, the Sierra Club's new Building Environmental Community campaign is asking folks to get the word out by talking to their neighbors - at the grocery store, at the front door, at community outreach events and meetings. Our hope and faith is that we can build a community willing to stand up, speak out, and protect our air, water, and land from polluters. Contact Billie Brown at billie.brown@sierraclub.org or 366-5694 to get on the e-mail list of upcoming BEC events or to learn more about the program.

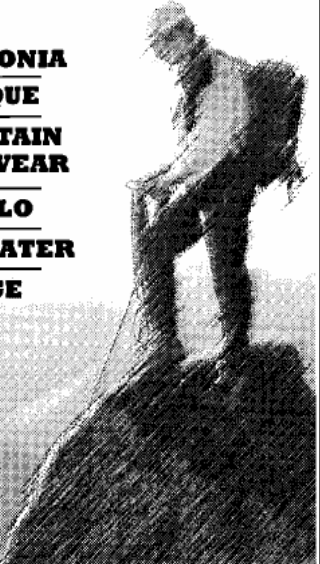
conservation corner continued...

possibly moving our meeting to another night. We think a different night would allow more open-ended discussions, and perhaps new people to join in. Let us know your preferences. For now, we still meet at 6:30 PM before the membership at the Warr Acres Community Center.

For more information, or to help with these campaigns, contact conservation chair James Martin at james_e_martin@yahoo.com or 361-2373.

OKLA. CITY: Town & Country Village, 122nd & N. May Ave. A (405) 751-7376

Backwoods



PATAGONIA
VASQUE
MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR
ASOLO
BLUEWATER
SAGE

Save This Date

Please join us on Saturday, April 23rd, 5-9pm for our annual Spring Fling!!! This year we will combine this event with "Earth Day" Week celebrations at our Chapter office in Norman. The club is planning events throughout the week and we thought this would be a great way to close the celebrations by inviting all groups to join together for a night of festivities. Feel free to bring your favorite dish to share. Finger foods/snacks will be provided as well as wine, beer and water. Location: 575 S University Blvd, Ste 200, Norman, 73069. Phone: 366-5694

OSN Conference Announcement

Building Bridges to a Sustainable Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Sustainability Network (OSN) is hosting its 2005 conference, "Building Bridges to a Sustainable Oklahoma," on Friday, April 8, from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at the Wes Watkins Conference Center on the OSU campus in Stillwater. This year's event, the fourth annual conference for OSN, will feature L. Hunter Lovins, an international leader in sustainability efforts, as the keynote speaker. Ilda Hershey, Conference Chair, said, "We are most fortunate to have someone of Ms. Lovins' caliber as our keynote speaker, given her busy schedule."

The conference, which will feature sessions on personal, business, community, and design actions, would be of interest to those in business, non-profits, industry, government, construction, education, or community groups as well as anyone interested in taking action toward sustainable solutions for Oklahoma. Visit the OSN website at www.oksustainability.org for registration, agenda and location details about this important conference.

Please Note: This is a non-Sierra Club event announced as a service to our members.

March Program

Join us on Monday, March 21st as we hear from Dr. David Schultz, NOAA. A research meteorologist, Dr. Schultz previously presented a great program on lightning to the group. His March program is entitled "The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon."

National Geographic Adventure magazine rated rafting the Grand Canyon at the top on its list of 100 Greatest U.S. Adventures. In November of 1997, a group of Oklahomans joined with an eclectic group from across the country for a two-week, 225-mile rafting trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. This slide show will illustrate this great adventure experience from the trip.

Enjoy a Guilt-Free Cup of COFFEE!



For Sale at the Cimarron Group meetings the 3rd Monday of every month, and available from sshields@cox.net

Larry Swanson Memorial

By Kathy Scurlock

Larry Swanson, who passed away on Earth Day last year, was a huge supporter of our Sierra Club in OKC and the State Chapter. This fall, several of his friends from his church decided to plant a tree and dedicate a plaque at Martin Park Nature Center as a memorial to Larry. Donations that came in far surpassed the cost of the tree and plaque and the excess was donated to The Nature Conservancy, a group that Larry also supported. Our club, as well as many individual members contributed to this fund. On a warm Saturday morning in December about 40 people gathered at Martin Park in the field west of the parking lot for a Memorial Service to see the big burr oak tree that was planted and remember Larry. The plaque has now been placed near the tree. It is a fitting tribute to Larry, who gave so much of himself to others. The plaque is attractive and the site is so conducive to meditation about Larry and his lifetime commitment to preserving the earth. For those of you that knew him, take time to visit this place.

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

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.



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Boulder, CO 80322-2968

SIERRA CLUB
 Cimarron Group
 Post Office Box 22732
 Oklahoma City, OK 73123

Volunteer Directory

Executive Committee (ExCom)

The ExCom meets on the first Wednesday of every month from 7:30pm to 9:00pm. All Club Members are welcome to attend. Please contact any ExCom member for the current month's meeting location.

Chair	Olivia Waldkoetter	821-2304
Vice-Chair	Bill Scimeca	879-2040
Secretary	Kathy Cunningham	942-6911
Treasurer	Kathy Scurlock	942-6343
Member	Susie Shields	297-0179
Member	James Martin	361-2373
Member	Jeanie Herndon	474-5754
Member	Lois Porkrny	
Member	Jay Trenary	831-5535

Committee Heads

For more information on an activity, contact the respective committee head listed below.

Conservation	James Martin	361-2373
Conservation Vice-Chair	Esther Houser	282-8074
Outings	Bill Scimeca	879-2040
Inner City Outings	Jay Trenary	831-5535
Social	Jeanie Herndon	474-5754
Legislative	Susie Shields	297-0179
Membership	Carolyn Ford	843-2778
Enviro. Educ.	Susie Shields	297-0179
Programs	Olivia Waldkoetter	821-2304
Volunteer Coordinator	Olivia Waldkoetter	821-2304

The PRAIRIE DISPATCH is published for the benefit of the members of the Cimarron Group of the Sierra Club. Group members receive this publication free. Non-members may subscribe at the rate of \$10 per year. Send subscription requests to Andy Scurlock, 3333 NW 20th, Oklahoma City, OK 73107 (Ph:942-6343) or tascurlock@cox.net.

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