



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

PRAIRIE DISPATCH

No. 28 Vol. 3

Newsletter of the Sierra Club, Cimarron Group

Summer 2005

Betrayal of Trust in OKC Water?

by James Martin, conservation chair

Residents of Oklahoma City haven't had to think too much about their water. When you turn on the tap at your kitchen sink, shower or watering faucet, you expect water to flow immediately and that it is safe enough to drink. You don't have to think about it. It is something you trust.

To provide a reliable supply of safe drinking water, Oklahoma City created the Water Utilities Trust to oversee the construction of a reservoir and pipeline from Boggy Creek – now Lake Atoka. The pipeline extends over 100 miles to Lake Stanley Draper, and provides about half of the city's daily water needs.

In an extended use of foresight and eminent domain, the Trust also oversees the nearly ten thousand acres of old growth forest in the Lake Atoka watershed. This is common practice to a lot of municipalities, now buying up as much land as possible around their water resources. It is generally understood that the best way to protect a body of water, is to safeguard its watershed. Much like the filters you can attach to your kitchen faucet, natural watersheds provide filtration to the whole reservoir. There is no better watershed filtration system than a natural forest.

In this regard, Lake Atoka is exceptional. Its watershed is a remarkable mix of cross timber oaks common to central Oklahoma, and short leaf pine common to the southeastern

United States. It is home to deer, squirrels, woodpeckers and salamanders, and, from the perspective of the timber industry, a lot of wood.

Following at least one assessment by an industry forester, the Trust decided to log Lake Atoka. The official position is that logging would prevent erosion that fills the Lake with muck and makes its water turbid. While no one disputes that the lake is turbid, lake visitors have not seen evidence of erosion in the forest.

Indeed, a report commissioned by the Lake Atoka Reservation Association (LARA), which includes the City of Atoka, Oklahoma City and the Water Utilities Trust, attributed the turbidity to soil carried down Boggy Creek – hence the name, "Boggy Creek." Other studies have attributed it to pumping action within the lake, which exposes raw mud flats when the water level is down. The dried mud is washed or blown into the water. Neither source would be reduced by logging.

Logging would not only remove the natural protection of the forest, but also requires the cutting of roads for trucks and equipment - the kind of disturbance that creates erosion and further turbidity. Thus, the action creates the very conditions the Trust claims it would prevent.

see Lake Atoka, page 2

Special Next Meeting:
June 20th 7:30pm
Martin Park
Nature Center

Our normal meeting is the third Monday of every month at the Warr Acres Community Center
4301 N. Ann Arbor

(Between Meridian and MacArthur Blvd.)

June Program

The June program will be held outdoors at Martin Park Nature Center, on Monday, June 20th. Neil Garrison presents on Flora: Fact, Fiction, Fancy and Fun. Neil is the staff naturalist at the park and a long time Sierra Club member. Martin Park, located near Mercy Hospital at 5000 W. Memorial Road, is a 140-acre nature park that combines recreation, education and wildlife.

July Program

Monday, July 18th, escape the heat by coming to our Ice Cream Social and picture sharing party. Bring photos of your favorite outing to share; maybe from some place cool? Pun intended! ☺ Come enjoy an evening with friends, and a chance to virtually explore some great places.

August Program

Our August program will feature Kalyn Free, read about it in the "view from the chair" on page 2.



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

August Meeting Features Kalyn Free

View from the chair by Olivia Waldkoetter

The sierra club is a group of volunteers. We continue to need volunteers for various jobs in our local group. We take time out of our busy schedules to go to meetings because we care about the environment. We need financial support right now. Any donation would be appreciated.

As we move into the summer months I want to encourage everyone to get to a meeting. We have a some great meetings planned for the summer. In particular , I wanted to give you more information about the topic of our August meeting and I hope it peeks your interest.

Have you ever thought about what makes tires black? It is fine pieces of carbon referred to as carbon black. A carbon plant super heats waste oil from a refinery to produce ultra-fine carbon black particles. These are then used to strengthen the rubber in tires; it's the ingredient that makes tires black.



Carbon black itself might not seem harmful; it is pure carbon the basic building blocks of nature; but frequently other toxic chemicals are attached. Carbon black contains a constituent called polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are a known carcinogen to humans. These particles contribute to heart disease. chronic bronchitis and asthma. last year, California listed carbon black as a cancer causing agent.

Oklahoma has had a carbon plant operating near Ponca City Oklahoma since the 1950s. Continental carbon company's original owner, Conoco built the plant in 1953 on former Ponca Indian reservation land. At that time the people living on the land were assured that the plant would not cause any problems.

Over the last 50 years, the company has been sold many times. It is now owned by China Synthetic rubber corporation (csrc). Through their

public relations representative the company has stated that there is no link between carbon black and health problems in the community. However, both The Ponca tribe and the City of Ponca City does not agree with this.

The families that live there have seen there animals turn black from all of the carbon black being emitted into the air. Residents of the area complain of a sickening smell coming form the plant. According to the EPA they are smelling Carbon disulfide. It is a waste gas that smells like rotting radishes.

Several months ago the Oklahoma dept of environmental quality discovered piles of carbon black drifting and exposed to the air and carbon laden waste gas escaping through corroded pipes. The plant was pumping nearly twice the legal limit of carbon dust into the air.

The Ponca Tribe and the city of Ponca City have both filed lawsuits against the CSRC. At our August meeting you will have an opportunity to learn more about this from Kalyn Free. Kalyn is representing the Ponca tribe in a class action lawsuit against CSRC and you should recognize Kalyn because we supported her in her candidacy for the 2nd congressional district seat. I think it is important to show our support as she tackles this issue in court. See you at the next meeting!

Lake Atoka

Continued from cover...

Citizens of Atoka and Coal Counties have for years fought the logging proposal. To them, Oklahoma City is intrusive and, apparently, not very bright. Local activists – the “Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes,” – environmental groups and members of the scientific community have managed to delay the logging until now. They have cited studies by foresters, biologists, birders, historians and archeologists, each with his or her own reason to save the forest.

But for Oklahoma City, it is all about the quality of water. If you drink the water that comes from Lake Atoka, then you are a stakeholder in this project. If you buy water from Oklahoma City, perhaps it is time to consider where your water comes from and at what cost.

I invite you to find out for yourself. Join the Cimarron Group on a Conservation Outing to Lake Atoka, on June 25th. (see outings, page 3)

After your visit, you can call the Water Utilities Trustees and tell them about it. Tell them you are losing trust in Oklahoma City's water.

Some members of the Water Utilities Trust are:

- Mick Cornett 405-297-2424
- Willa Johnson 405 297-2569
- Jim Couch 405 297-2345
- Marsha Slaughter 405 297-2422

For more information, contact james_e_martin@yahoo.com, or visit the Conservation Corner at: oklahoma.sierraclub.org/cimarron

July 30th: Pool Party!

Draw yourself up a cold one and take a dip in the pool!!! Yes, folks, it will soon be time for our annual Swimming Pool Summer Social, Sat, July 30th. Feel free to bring your favorite dish to share and lawn chair to relax in. Wine, beer, water and swimming pool will be provided. Again this year it will be held at Becky & Neil Garrison's home - 12601 N Cemetery Rd - between Yukon & Piedmont off Highway 4, turn west on 122nd, north on Cemetery Rd. - 373-0309.

October 1st: Garden Party!

"Garden Party"-Fall Social-Sat, October 1st, “come and go” from 4:00-9:00pm. It would be fun to come in a cool summer dress or Hawaiian shirt and enjoy the fall breeze. We'd love to have you join us!!! This year Susie Shields and Mark Derichsweiler have generously offered to host this Social in their new home. Location and more details will be in our September issue. Bring a dish to share. We'll enjoy playing volleyball in the adjacent park.

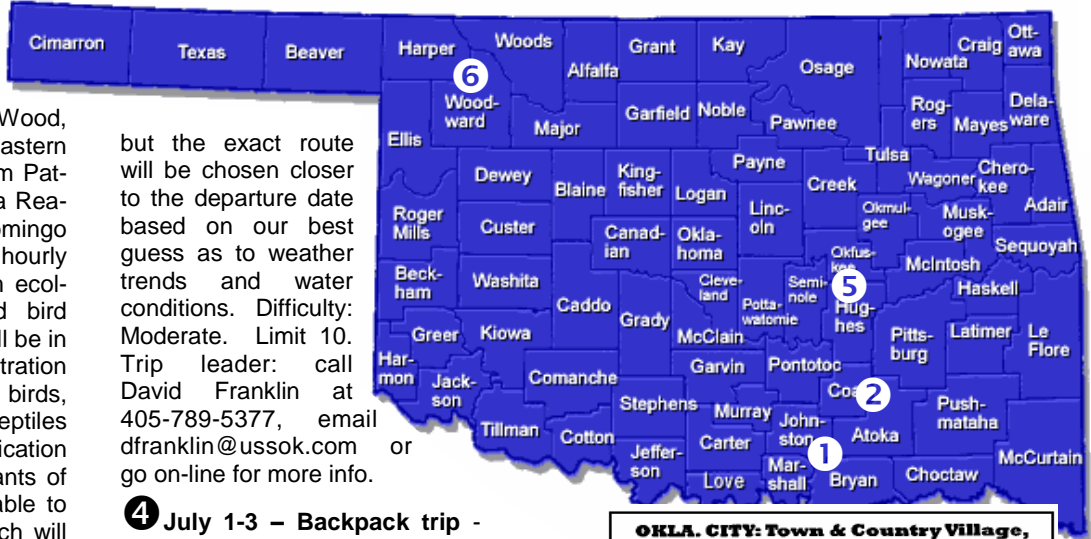
Get Outdoors

1 June 18. Ancient Crosstimber Ecology. Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge. Join us for guided field activities in the ancient crosstimber environment of the 16,500 acre Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge. Dr. Doug Wood, professor of zoology at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Dr. Tim Patton, professor of zoology and Jona Reasor, wildlife biologist at the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge will lead hourly field trips at the refuge on stream ecology, plant/tree identification and bird identification. All of the activities will be in the field and will include a demonstration of mist-netting and banding of birds, seining in Sandy Creek for fish, reptiles and amphibians and actual identification of wildflowers, trees and other plants of the area. All participants will be able to attend all three field activities which will be repeated throughout the day. You'll have a good chance to see Pileated Woodpeckers, Painted Buntings and numerous other birds. Blanchard's Cricket Frog, S. Leopard Frog, Diamond-back Watersnake and Cottonmouth Moccasin are likely to be sighted. Wildflowers such as Indian blanket, Missouri Primrose, Wild Indigo, Passion Vine, and Rose Mallow should be blooming. Native shrubs such as Buttonbush and Deciduous Holly will be identified. This is a great opportunity to spend the day in a beautiful area with expert biologists. Lunch (hamburgers or, with advance request, veggie burgers) will be provided by the Red Earth Group of the Sierra Club. The hikes will be easy. These activities are suitable for adults and children. Bring sunscreen, insect spray and water. Field activities begin at 10 a.m. and will be completed by 2:30 p.m. If you own a kayak, a trip on Pennington Creek will follow. Those who don't want to kayak can swim. Advance registration required. Contact Earl Brewer at 580-371-3595 or tbluedog@swbell.net.

2 June 25 – Lake Atoka Outing (see cover story). Meet in the NW parking lot at Oklahoma City Community College at 9am to arrange car pooling. The drive takes about 3 hours. There'll be a short day hike and plenty of food. For more info email james_e_martin@yahoo.com

3 June 27-30- Backpack Southern Utah (Travel June 25 & 26 and return on July 1 & 2) Join us as we meander through slot canyons and ancient Indian ruins. Will be in the Grand Gulch area

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



but the exact route will be chosen closer to the departure date based on our best guess as to weather trends and water conditions. Difficulty: Moderate. Limit 10. Trip leader: call David Franklin at 405-789-5377, email dfranklin@ussok.com or go on-line for more info.

4 July 1-3 – Backpack trip - Backpacking the South San Juan Wilderness Area, San Juan National Forest; Southern Colorado. Outing leader: Tom Libby 405-722-2367 A three day, two night backpack in the South San Juan Wilderness featuring some of Colorado's finest examples of aspen, spruce-fir and ponderosa pine forests along with views from high rocky mountain plateaus. Travel on June 30th and July 4th. More detail on the web. Those who carpool may stop in Santa Fe or Albuquerque for the night before returning to Oklahoma on Monday. Difficulty: Strenuous

5 July 16- Join Dave Schultz and Olivia Waldkoetter at the Woodie Guthrie Festival in Okemah, OK. We will meet in the OCCC parking lot at approx. 4:00 p.m. and carpool out to the festival. Please remember that you can not bring coolers into the festival. Drink and Food will be available from various vendors. We will be back very late. Contact Olivia if you have more questions. 821-2304

6 August 5 & 6-Cabin Camping at the Selman Living Lab. The Selman Living Laboratory consist of 334 acres, two large caves, 230 + wildflower species, 20 species of prairie fish in Salty Creek, an astronomy observatory and more. This will be a rare opportunity for club members to be on this research property hosted by Dr. Caire, Dean of the College of Math and Science at UCO. On Friday night we will enjoy a star watch (clouds permitting) using the observatories on site. Saturday will begin with a plant walk in the morning and a short trip though a section of the cave.

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

Backwoods

**PATAGONIA
VASQUE
MOUNTAIN
HARDWEAR
ASOLO
BLUEWATER
SAGE**

Time permitting, we will spend the afternoon touring Alabaster caverns. Saturday night we will head towards the Whitlaw Ranch to watch the bat flight. Friday night we will be sleeping in air conditioned "bunkhouse" style cabins, returning to Edmond Saturday night. Rating: Easy No cost, but limited to the first 20 participants to sign up. (please don't take up a spot unless you plan on going). Contact trip leader David Franklin at dfranklin@ussok.com for more info. We will carpool from UCO leaving at 3:30pm on Friday and regroup at Alabaster Caverns at 7:30pm to head to the lab.

continued on back cover

Volunteer Directory

Outings, continued from page 3

7 Sept 3-5: Backpack Crest Trail, Lincoln National Forest, NM. Join us on a backpack to a place that has proven to be a favorite among club members. On Saturday we will drive to New Mexico and camp out at the trailhead (just NW of Ruidoso, NM). On Sunday we will enjoy the fall colors as we climb about 1,500 ft out of the forested valley to the crest, and hike through high mountain grasslands to our camp site on a plateau overlooking White Sands National Monument, a total distance of around 8 miles. On Monday we will hike back down about 2½ miles to our cars and head home. Difficulty: Moderate For more information, contact trip leader David Franklin at dfranklin@ussok.com or 789-5377.

Attention all outing leaders and those interested in the outings program!

Join us for a special meeting Sunday, June 5th, from 1pm-4pm to help plan what we offer in our outings program. 1200 East Britton Road. Email wscim@swbell.net or call 879-2040 for more info.

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

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag



My Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
 email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club
 Please charge my Mastercard Visa
 Exp. Date ____/____/____
 Cardholder Name _____
 Card Number _____

Membership Categories	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47

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.



F94Q **W3804** 1
 Enclose check and mail to:
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 52968
Boulder, CO 80322-2968

Join on-line at oklahoma.sierraclub.org

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 Pokorny	728-0832
Member	Jay Trenary	831-5535
Member	Ed Hillock	721-8043

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.

Editorial opinions are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the Sierra Club. Dues, fees and contributions to the Sierra Club are NOT tax deductible. Address correspondence to: EDITOR, P.O. Box 22732, Oklahoma City, OK 73123.

To advertise in the Prairie Dispatch, please contact the Editor. \$7 per column inch with a minimum purchase of 2 column inches.

Senior Editor: Open. Assistant Editors: Kathy Scurlock, David Franklin
 See our website for more info: oklahoma.sierraclub.org/cimarron

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

Non-Profit Org.
 U. S. Postage
 P A I D
 Okla. City, OK
 Permit No. 1156

See us on the web at oklahoma.sierraclub.org/cimarron

PRINTED ON TREE-FREE PAPER MADE FROM KENAF & PRINTED WITH SOY-BASED INK