

Northeast Ohio Sierra Club November & December 2013 Newsletter

Events:

November 16, 10 AM. Bike Ashtabula

Bike 21 miles or 2 hours in Ashtabula, Ohio and see Lake Erie, Conneaut Railroad Museum, covered bridges, vineyards, and nature. Call Dennis Plank for more information 216-939-8229 dennislakeerie@aol.com.

November 20, 7 PM. Pub Night in Lorain

This month we're reaching out to our members on the far west end of NEO. Join us at Jackalope Lakeside (301 Lakeside Ave. in Lorain) to find opportunities for environmental activism in Lorain County. Or just come to meet other members! Refreshments provided. Free and open to the public!

November 30, 10 AM. Walk Hinckley Reservation Metropark (Buckeye Trail)

Walk 6 miles or 3.5 hours and see birds, vulture habitat, Hinckley Lake, the Rocky River, the Buckeye Trail, and nature. Call Dennis Plank for more information 216-939-8229 dennislakeerie@aol.com.

Northeast Ohio Sierra Club Endorses Candidates for November 5 General Election

Sierra Club's long history of activism includes political support for environmentally progressive elected officials. A Sierra Club endorsement recognizes a candidate's strong history of leadership on environmental issues, and backs the candidate's commitment to environmental causes. By endorsing elected officials at the local level, Sierra Club seeks to encourage local leadership in the implementation of conservation and sustainable strategies, as well as to communicate to our members which candidates demonstrate a track record for, and show the greatest potential for, harmonizing our cities and communities with nature. Northeast Ohio Sierra Club, in coordination with the Ohio Chapter of Sierra Club, is proud to endorse the following candidates for office in the upcoming General Election on November 5:

Laura Gorshe for Euclid City Council Ward 8

Currently a City of Euclid Planning & Zoning Commissioner, Candidate Gorshe brings with her experience in greenspace planning and sustainable energy partnerships, and a vested community interest in improving Euclid's stormwater infrastructure.

Nicole Dailey Jones for North Olmsted City Council President

Councilwoman Jones has and pledges to continue to work hard to increase the efficiency of public transportation options in the outer ring suburbs, and to bring in financial support for brownfield redevelopment.

Sean Brennan for Parma City Council President

Councilman Brennan's support for watershed stewardship organizations such as the West Creek Conservancy and Friends of Big Creek have paved the way for some of the region's most impressive and ambitious restoration projects and educational opportunities.

Larry Napoli for Parma City Council Ward 6

Councilman Napoli, who has headed City of Parma's Environmental Standards Committee for the past ten years, has been instrumental in advocating for a federally funded neighborhood-level raingarden project protecting West Creek.

Michael P Byrne for Parma Heights Mayor

With his "Greening of Parma Heights" initiative, Mayor Byrne has worked tirelessly to improve the city's waste programs and to bring in grant money for creating and connecting greenspace, planting trees, and improving transportation options within the city.

Susan Infeld for University Heights Mayor

Mayor Infeld is actively engaged in a number of regional efforts to reduce solid waste, increase multimodal transportation options, introduce greenspace to her community, prioritize land use, and improve air and water quality.

The Northeast Ohio Sierra Club Political Committee is looking for members who are interested in joining the committee and/or volunteering their support for one of our candidates. Committee members may work with endorsed candidates during their campaigns and while in office, and take part in the endorsement process for future elections. Volunteers may contribute in any number of ways to promote our candidates and environmental issues, including phone banking, flyer distribution, writing letters to the editor in support of candidates, hosting campaign parties, or bringing food or drinks to campaign or volunteer events. We are especially looking for members who reside in candidate districts. This is a great way to get involved in local politics and make sure that our issues receive attention! If interested, please contact NEO Sierra Club Political Chair Jessica Ferrato at sierrawater@zoho.com.

The Beast is Dead: On the final demise of the Ridge Road incinerator.

By Randy Cunningham, Chair – Coal and Energy Committee NEO Sierra Club Group.

In September, the City of Cleveland finally threw in the towel on its proposed Ridge Road incinerator. Words cannot express the joy of a campaign well fought, and well won. The campaign against the proposed Ridge Road Incinerator had all the elements to it. It inspired a neighborhood-based rebellion against a boondoggle of a proposal pushed by City Hall. The passion of the rebellion surprised everyone. In a conversation I had with my councilman, retiring Ward 16 Councilman Jay Westbrook, he said that it had been at least 20 years since he had seen an issue generate as much interest and backlash as this one had. The campaign was a dream come true for advocates of environmental justice, since the neighborhood that was in the bull's eye of emissions from the incinerator had all the demographics – working class to poor, with large minority communities. What added an incentive for me is that I was not fighting for some distant rain forest, I was fighting for my own neighborhood. The proposed incinerator would have been a 10 minute walk from my house – practically within sight of where I live.

The city had the power and the prestige of a popular mayor – Frank Jackson – backing it. It had the usual retinue of experts and consultants that threw facts, figures and lies at us. But we had some resources too. We had the experience, the bitter experience, of neighborhoods that have been suffering from and fighting

against pollution for years. One neighborhood organization that joined the opposition had been fighting against pollution since just after World War II. We had experienced activists who had come up with community organizing movements in Cleveland. We had environmental activists who brought 30+ years of experience in understanding the often obtuse language of regulatory reports, and technical documents. But most of all we had a populace that had already been poisoned enough by pollution, and was determined not to be poisoned more.

We won with raucous public meetings that drew hundreds, with street corner picketing in the bitterest weather, with yard signs and with smart campaigning that put the absurdity of the proposed incinerator on public view. We have to thank Citizen Action, the Sierra Club, Environmental Health Watch, councilman Brian Cummings, Larry Cornet – our technical whiz kid, some of the Occupy Cleveland kids that put a zing into our protests, Sandy Buchanan, Chris Trepal, and Kim, Anne, Susan, Rowena, Claudette, Stu, Steve, Mary Jo, Daryl and too many others to name here. We also must thank the people of the Lee-Harvard area who went through much the same fight twenty years ago, and gave their cross town support for our effort. Thanks to those city councilpersons who expressed their dissent against the project as well. Thank you, former Congressman Dennis Kucinich for your stalwart support.

Activists and activism don't get much respect in American society. We are a little too rowdy, a little too loud, and we do not fit into an era of "go along to get along." But activism is the pulse of democracy – in America and around the world. I hope to never see a day when it is not upsetting the status quo, asking embarrassing questions, comforting the afflicted, and afflicting the comfortable. If anyone doubts the power of activism, take them to Ridge Road in Cleveland and show them where an incinerator that would've poisoned the neighborhood was not built. Activism works.

NEOSC's Water Committee 2013 Recap

By Jessica Ferrato, Water Committee Chair

NEO Sierra Club's Water Committee works with the State Chapter Clean Water Campaign and a number of other watershed partners to train volunteers to recognize and report clean water issues. Join the committee or the Water Sentinel training program to be a part of our network of watershed defenders. For more information, contact Jessica Ferrato at sierrawater@zoho.com.

WATER SENTINELS

In spring of 2012, Northeast Ohio kicked off its Water Sentinel Program by training and outfitting 25 new volunteers to monitor water quality in Northeast Ohio streams. The Water Sentinel Program continued to grow with an additional class of volunteers trained on October 19 at the new Watershed Stewardship Center in Parma.

CLEAN WATER FELLOWSHIP

In coordination with the State Chapter, Sierra Club hired two Clean Water Fellows this past year to work on water issues in Northeast Ohio. In spring, Case graduate student Alexandra Litofsky helped streamline the Water Sentinels Program software and database apps. This fall, Lake County resident and University of Alaska graduate student Eric Nestor will catalogue information and community feedback about ongoing construction projects impacting Mentor Marsh.

LECTURES AND SPEAKERS

Prior to a beach cleanup on July 13th at Mentor Headlands, Sierra Club volunteers enjoyed a naturalist-led

tour of the Dunes, courtesy of Preserve Manager Adam Wohlever from ODNR.

NEO Sierra Club's general meeting for October was held at the Watershed Stewardship Center in Parma, and included a presentation from Bluestone Heights' geologist Roy Larick about daylighting urban streams, a tour of the Stewardship Center and a brief Water Sentinels presentation.

CLEANUPS AND WATERSHED ACTIONS

Northeast Ohio Sierra Club partnered with Drink Local Drink Tap and Friends of Edgewater to support a Trash & Pancakes beach cleanup and breakfast at Edgewater Beach on June 22nd. Volunteers also pitched in with LoCo 'Yaks' Black River Cleanup in May, and a Mentor Headlands Beach Cleanup on July 13th.

Earlier this year, over 200 Sierra Club members responded to an action alert and sent comments to USACE regarding a development permit at an active construction site in a wetland area upstream of Mentor Marsh. Many of the comments requested that a public hearing, more detailed hydrological studies, and onsite mitigation be a part of any permit issued for this site. Sierra Club members and staffers joined CMNH staff, Mentor Marsh naturalists, academics, and concerned citizens in a visit to Rep. David Joyce's office to draw attention to Marsh conservation priorities and to request support.

Meetings:

Executive Committee meets at the Fairview Park Public Library, 7 PM on the following dates:

November 6

December 5

Coal & Energy Committee meets at 4105 Stilmore Rd, South Euclid, Ohio 44121. Please contact Randy Cunningham at (216) 631-3337 for the time and date of the next meeting.

Green Transportation Committee meets on the first Monday of each month at 1 PM in the Linking Employment Abilities and Potential (LEAP) offices at 2545 Lorain Ave. Please contact Akshai Singh for more information: akshai.singh@sierraclub.org. State Transportation calls are on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 PM. Contact Akshai to get on a call, or to connect with any cycling advocacy going on in NEO or statewide.

Rainforest Committee typically meets every month on the third Sunday of the month. Call Michael Melampy at 440-826-2263 for time and place.

Water Committee Please contact Jessica Ferrato at sierrawater@zoho.com for info.