

Oklahoma Sierran

Volume 7, Issue 1

January-March 2007



Inside this issue:

View from the Chair	2
BEC Report	2
Venues for National Club Resources	2
Keith Smith Memorial	3
Carrie Dickerson Memorial	4
Chapter Directory	6



The Differences/Similarities Between North and South America *by Larry Edmison, Conservation Chair*

I am not a very experienced world traveler; in fact I have only left the United States (other than border visits to Mexico) on two occasions. My December visit to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands was a very thought provoking trip for me, and I want to share some of my observations. I hope they cause you to reflect on problems we all face on this planet and what we can do to try to fix some of them.

First some context: Ecuador has many well built roads and highways as well as some very primitive mountain trails; this is true of our own country. However, in Ecuador, traffic laws are viewed as suggestions and painted lines on the highway are merely for decoration. I have traveled a great deal in the U S and my experiences as a pedestrian in Boston amply prepared me to deal with traffic in Quito, Ecuador and other urban areas we visited, but nothing could have prepared me for the thrill of the Ecuadorian bus drivers on their two and four lane highways (I can barely imagine what their performance on the dirt roads must be like). The chance to see the Andes by road was at times frightening, at other times inspiring, and at times disappointing. More on the disappointments in a moment.

Ecuador has large cities like Quito and Guayaquil, with many modern buildings and

malls; not unlike the U S, until you start to see police armed with machine pistols as you walk the plazas and streets, shop owners with "billy clubs" strapped to their belt, or soldiers in groups at major intersections or being trucked from point to point. On the other hand, I never felt a personal threat or fear in the walks and cab rides we took around Quito or elsewhere. I have certainly felt more fear when on foot in parts of Washington DC, New Orleans, and other major U S cities; so perhaps appearances may be different but the problems are much the same!

Another significant similarity is that Ecuador has adopted the U S dollar as their currency. This makes shopping a much simpler process, unless like me you don't speak Spanish. Without my wife to translate I would have been in lots of trouble from time to time. It was also interesting that Ecuador is actually east of Oklahoma and was on Eastern Standard Time (the Galapagos are on Central Standard Time), which eliminated the problem of jet lag that accompanies so many trips.

We were warned by our tour company and by the B&B owner not to drink any water that was not bottled and to use bottled water for brushing our teeth. This is of course different than in most U S Cities; *(Continued on Page 5)*

Food and the Climate Crisis: What You Eat Affects the Sky *by Mike Tidwell, Director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network*

The typical American diet creates nearly as much carbon dioxide as the typical car! But it's easy switch to a climate-friendly way of eating. Learn more at www.chesapeakeclimate.org

Few of us realize it, but the food we put in our mouths each day dramatically affects the global climate. The typical American diet requires the staggering equivalent of 400 gallons of oil each year. That, in turn, generates, nearly as much planet-warming carbon dioxide as the average U.S. car creates.

We all know cars cause smog and contribute to global warming. But our chicken nuggets? Our winter strawberries? Our Häagen-Dazs fudge swirl? You betcha. Our country derives almost all of its energy from fossil fuels - oil, coal, and natural gas - whose use generates millions of tons of CO2 annually. And nearly one fifth of that energy is devoted in some way to food.

How? Well, let's start with fertilizer. Virtually all of our food crops - those directly consumed by humans or diverted to meat production - are raised with petroleum-based fertilizers. We actually extract the nitrogen we need for plant stimulation from various petroleum products. This alone takes up 30 percent of our energy budget for food.

Then there's our complementary use of petroleum-based herbicides and pesticides, as well as diesel fuel and gasoline for combines, tractors, and other farm machinery. We also need fossil fuels to irrigate our crops before harvest and often to dry the same crops after maturity.

Our nation's great consumption of meat, eggs, and dairy products amplifies all of these energy needs many fold since roughly 80 percent of all corn and other grains grown in this country go to feed animals, not people. Not only does our annual per *(Continued on Page 8)*

**View
from
the Chair**

The Power of A Simple Idea *by David Franklin*



I moved recently. One of the consequences of moving is realizing how much junk you have. I had notebooks full of homework and class notes from my undergraduate classes, and I graduated in 1989!

Using less stuff is a subject for another column . . . what got me thinking about today's topic is a rubber band I hadn't looked at in a while. A collection of rubber bands actually. Not just any rubber bands, but those special commemorative ones. I have a couple of Lance Armstrong Foundation "Live Strong" bands, the ones that started the whole thing. I also have one from the American Heart Association, one from my church and one from the American Democracy Project (a campus program at UCO where I teach). My nephew has so many I can't keep track.

My collection of rubber bands started in the summer of 2004 when a fellow cancer survivor, Andrew Molenda, approached me about sponsoring him in a bike ride to raise money for cancer research. As a cancer survivor, I've always had a soft spot for this type of charity, and ended up sending money to both the Lance Armstrong Foundation (and getting a box of rubber bands in the process) and to Andrew. Unfortunately, Andrew ultimately lost his battle with cancer in February of this year. You can read about this Tulsa resident at

<http://www.andrewsride.com/>.

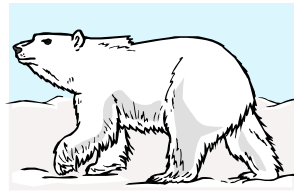
But this column is not meant to be a downer, that's not what Andrew was about. I wanted to talk about the power of simple ideas. Yes, Lance Armstrong is a celebrity. But his idea of using rubber bands to convey a simple message of living strong even if you are battling cancer, took off in the popular mindset of American culture. By the end of 2004 it wasn't just cancer survivors and family members wearing them — politicians, celebrities, and people on the street began to wear the bands. The Lance Armstrong Foundation has raised over ten million dollars for cancer research and spawned dozens of imitators. Not bad for some rubber bands.

Today, through the work of a steady drumbeat of messengers, from the Sierra Club to Al Gore, from scientists to local meteorologist Gary England, the simple idea that global warming is real and happening right now is beginning to catch hold. No longer is it just environmentalists wearing the global warming rubber band so to speak, but now politicians, celebrities and people on the street are beginning to realize that this is real. As I type this, a 25 mile wide ice shelf has broken off in the Canadian Arctic. A week ago the US Interior department moved to list polar bears as "threatened", a step on the way to being listed as "endangered". Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne stated, "... we are concerned

the polar bear's habitat may literally be melting."

The problem with simple ideas that become fashionable, such as the rubber bands, is that they fade. The Lance Armstrong foundation has moved on to hats, shirts, and other mainstream ways to raise money in addition to regular bike rides. I know that I only wore my rubber band around my wrist for a few months and then tossed it in a drawer. It is the job of each of us, as people who are out to save the planet, to make sure that the simple idea that we must do something now doesn't fade.

We can't let the notion of saving the earth get tossed in a drawer. Yes, there is the die hard 15% of America that will think about the environment all the time, but we need to get the remaining 60% who say they are pro-environment to do something about it. There are lots of things you can do to be involved in the Sierra Club, from legislative lobbying to leading outings, from hosting DVD viewing house parties to working on a conservation project. It all helps to keep the simple idea, that we must work to explore, enjoy and protect the planet, in the minds of Americans.



Building Environmental Communities *by Billie Brown*

The Oklahoma 2006 BEC program was successful in its outreach to over 600 volunteers through Earth Day events, tabling and educational movie nights. One of the BEC Goals was to create demand for a comprehensive water study; the study will start in 2007 and take five years to complete. We formed a water coalition with look-a-like environmental organizations and participated in the Hunter Angler Activity Day at Tishomingo Wildlife Refuge fish hatchery. The Save Lake Atoka water campaign continued to stop the clear-cutting

BEC will be winding down, and we are looking for interested individuals to help with our Cool Cities and Global Warming/Smart Energy Campaign. We appreciate all that Nancy Smart did during her term as BEC Chair, and are now seeking a new chair. 2007 plans include continuing our movie nights, but these will no longer be held at a regular time each month. Please watch our website for announcements of films.

I am now transitioning into becoming Chapter Director and will be taking over the lobbying this year. We are looking forward to a good year, though we know it will be a challenge with the loss of Keith Smith who served as our lobbyist for the past nine years. (See Page 3 for more information about Keith.) **We will need support from our membership more now than ever before.**

Venues for National Club Resources



The November/December 2006 issue of the Planet is the last. However, the stories, grassroots victories, and leader profiles that have filled the Planet's pages for 13 years will live on in other venues -- in *Sierra*, chapter and group newsletters, e-mail publications like the *Insider*, and a new Web feature called GRASSROOTS which you can find at WWW.SIERRACLUB.ORG/GRASSROOTS. More and more of our activist work has migrated to the e-mail and Web arena. These communication vehicles allow us to save money, save trees, and talk with our leaders in a more timely and targeted way.

The Sierra Club Take Action Center provides action buttons for current conservation priority areas such as America's Wild Legacy (grizzly bear protections, support ESA, ANWR, etc.), Safe and Healthy Communities and Smart Energy Solutions as well as other current actions such as the future of U.S. family planning.

We also encourage you, if you haven't already, to sign up for the monthly electronic Sierra Club *Insider* where we will be promoting Grassroots features, as well as the latest environmental news, green living tips, and more.

Farewell to Everyone's Best Friend! Keith Blayne Smith (1954-2006)

The Oklahoma Chapter appreciates the words of Kalyn Free, a lifetime member of Sierra Club, for sharing her comments (right and below) delivered at Keith's State Capitol rotunda eulogy appropriately held on World AIDS Day, 12-01-06. Many of us are still in shock at this sudden loss of such a great friend to so many ...



We mourn the passing of Keith Smith, but we also celebrate the victory of an Oklahoma and an America that are more just because of Keith's life. We celebrate what he taught us about the strength of the human spirit, about each of us, about the power each of us has to lift our voices in one chorus. In his daily life and in his tireless advocacy, Keith taught us all that simple, consistent acts of passion and perseverance can be a catalyst for change.

Keith fought for each of us here today. But perhaps, more importantly, he fought for those who are not in this Rotunda, for those who didn't have a voice. Keith was many things to us; he was a friend, an advocate, a warrior, a fighter of all our progressive causes.

Keith was a patriot. What he did for each of us in these very halls was a daily example of a true American servant. Here he fought for what he believed in: an Oklahoma in which everyone gets a fair shot and the opportunity to be heard, an Oklahoma where the Constitution is revered as the guarantor of the rights of the oppressed. In his life and in his service, his activism and his compassion, Keith invoked all of us to act.

We will keep alive Keith's dream of a better life for Oklahomans and a more just vision for America — an Oklahoma and an America where young children are loved and respected regardless of their lifestyle or the color of their skin, where our civil and constitutional rights are secured, where the air we breathe and the water we drink is held sacred and protected, where corporate America is held accountable, where politicians are responsive to the interests of those who they are elected to serve — not corporate shells!

We will all work to keep Keith's dream, his passion, and his memory alive as we go forward to continue his work. In our constant struggles and in our respective roles, we can all be thankful that Keith will never cease to inspire us. On those late nights in the office and those long days when it seems like we need nothing short of a miracle, we will go on knowing we've got a great man on our side in the Heavens above. His victories often seemed to border on the miraculous, and maybe, just maybe, Keith will send down just a few more miracles to help us along the way.

Keith and I shared many passions, one of those being our respect and love for the environment. As a lifetime member of the Sierra Club, and on behalf of my fellow Sierrans, we are deeply grateful for Keith's work for our environment. The Lorax is my favorite book, which reminds me so much of Keith. With apologies to Dr. Seuss, I will close with a poem that I dedicate to Keith, our Lorax.

- A DVD of Keith's entire memorial service at the Capitol is available for \$15. Contact Randy Poff at 405-722-5600.
- Sierra Club donations may be sent to: Oklahoma Sierra Club, Attn. Keith Smith Legislative Fund, P.O. Box 180, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-0180.

KEITH SMITH — OUR LORAX

By Kalyn Free

In that place called the Capitol where the politicians all meet
Lived a man who was different, so kind and so sweet.
He worked and he played in a profession quite crazy,
He was so many things, but certainly not lazy.
From North Villa Avenue, he plotted and planned,
He fought for us all, our water, our land.

Who was this man who has won all our hearts?
What did he do, before he vanished these parts?
His name was Keith Smith and he spoke for the trees,
He spoke for the trees, because the trees have no tongues,
He spoke for us all, at the top of his lungs.
He would tell politicians, "You are crazy with greed,
It's civil rights, health care and a living wage we all need."
Some of them listened and some took heed,
But others were blinded by big money they thought they did need.

"I repeat," cried out Keith, "I stand for those who don't have a voice.
I speak for those who need reproductive choice."
But some of them just didn't care,
They didn't want us all to be treated justly and fair.
So in no time at all, Keith made us a list,
He said "There's some folks at the Capitol at whom I am pissed."

We didn't ask why, we always knew,
If Keith said they were bad, we knew it was true.
He said, "Hit their districts, tell the voters the truth."
He got us their records, he was quite the sleuth.
He told us the ones who were Chesapeake cronies,
And into their districts, we went to their doors.

He was oh so effective in campaigns and such,
He killed bills in committees that hurt women so much.
He knew the Bill of Rights is the Law of the Land,
And our Freedom of Speech, he did demand.
Be it books at the library or prayer in schools,
He didn't bow down to those right wing fools.

But Keith didn't rest, for he had more fights to mount.
He taught us so well, by example he did lead,
But what do we do now, for Keith you have left us in need?
He looks down from above and whispers, "The Seed.
It's Keith Smith Seeds — they're the last ones of all.
I'm in each of your hearts, don't let my work stall.

You are all now in charge of these Seeds.
And love and compassion are what everyone needs.
So plant new lobbyists, it will take at least two,
To do half of the work that I used to do.
Give birth to more activists, groom them with care,
Give them clean water and feed them fresh air.

Grow a forest of Democrats — only real ones to be sure,
Protect them from others, they'll be sure to endure.
Invest in our Party, to the future do look,
You know what to do, you don't need a book.
You've got what you need, you each have a good heart,
You must work together, and all do your part.
I'll be up here watching and pulling some strings,
You know I can't keep out of those politic things.

When the going gets rough and you want to stop,
I'll give you a burst of energy to make that next lit drop.
Remember, unless people like us care a whole awful lot,
Nothing is going to get better, it's really not.
You were all so dear and made my life complete,

I'm in Heaven now, where life is so sweet.
Please don't grieve for me, you've got work to do,
For of the really good activists, there are still too few.
From where I am now, the future I see.
You will help turn the tide in our fair state,
And next year and beyond our wins will be great!"

Saying Good-bye to a True Oklahoma Hero Carrie Barefoot Dickerson (1917-2006)

To know Carrie Barefoot Dickerson was to love her. Carrie is a legend to all of us involved in protecting Oklahoma's environment. Over twenty years ago, the Sierra Club instituted a special award in her honor for total commitment to a state environmental issue which, of course, was first presented to Carrie herself for stopping the Black Fox nuclear power plant in northeast Oklahoma..

Carrie is shown in the photo on this page with Rebecca Jim, the fourth recipient of the "Carrie Dickerson Award for Outstanding Leadership in Conservation" in 2005 for her commitment to the Tar Creek issue. Other recipients throughout the years were Mark Derichsweller for his work on protecting the Ouachita National Forest and Suzette Hatfield for anti-CAFO activism that resulted in Oklahoma legislation.

Carrie's 30-year dedication to safe energy and to the organization she and cohort Ilene Younghein, Oklahoma City, started — Citizens Action for Safe Energy (CASE) — never waned even when her health did. About ten years ago, Carrie published, "Aunt Carrie's War Against Black Fox Nuclear Power Plant," hoping to recoup some of the funds she had dumped into her long battle. Over the past few years, she completed a children's book on windpower and continued to post activist alerts on pertinent energy legislation. Two days before her death, Carrie was trying to find out about the permit application for the proposed new giant coal-fired power plant in eastern Oklahoma.

In 2006, the Oklahoma Sustainability Network (OSN) presented Carrie with their first Carrie Dickerson Lifetime Achievement Award. Ande Reed, who also currently serves as president of the Carrie Dickerson Foundation as well as Sustainable Tulsa, outlined the following points consistent with OSN's mission to justify Carrie's recognition:

- Her dedication to the goal of safe energy, which has benefited many and inspired countless others;
- Her courage, as evidenced by the considerable sacrifice and risk that she endured in order to pursue her goals; and
- The civility and grace which she demonstrated as she did battle with an array of powerful foes who opposed her.

—by Susie Shields

More information about Carrie:
CarrieDickersonFoundation.com
or [oklahoma.sierraclub.org/
carrie_barefoot_dickerson.htm](http://oklahoma.sierraclub.org/carrie_barefoot_dickerson.htm)

Following are personal remembrances of Carrie from two Red Earth Group Sierra Club members . . .

FROM NANCY SMART

Hearing of Carrie Dickerson's recent passing brought not only a sense that we had lost a tireless fighter in the battle to make living on Earth safer, but also some fond memories. I met Carrie back in the late 70's during the fight against Black Fox Nuclear Power Station. My husband and I were members of the Sunbelt Alliance, a Norman based group involved in opposing the proposed plant.

The Alliance worked to raise awareness and money to help pay the costs of fighting the plant through the legal system. No one contributed as much as Carrie did, though. She researched the risks, sounded the alarm and marshaled the legal forces. Then she gave her all. I remember seeing her at concerts and other money raising events smiling, wearing her hand painted apron and selling chances on quilts she made. She was a soft-spoken mother figure at these gatherings motivated totally by her goal of raising the needed funds to carry on the fight to protect the health of her community. Many of us were less focused, taking part also for the music, camaraderie, and the excitement of facing down the greedy power company which threatened our well-being.

Carrie did not take part when we trespassed on the proposed site of the plant with many being arrested. I understood that she felt her presence there would hurt her standing in court, and that she feared the very fact that others had trespassed might be detrimental to the legal battle. Of course she was older (and wiser) than is the norm for those who choose to throw their bodies at the problem.

In the end her chosen course of action was successful and Black Fox was not built. I know it cost her personally so very much. What she did was for the benefit of thousands who didn't even know of her sacrifices. Oklahomans owe her our gratitude not only for preventing the exposure to radiation that the plant could have meant, but also for the selfless example she set working to promote renewable energy throughout her life.



FROM LU WILLIS

During the Reagan Administration, I served as the chapter's clean air task force chair. During committee hearings on reauthorization of the Clean Air Act, the Sierra Club considered Rep. Mike Synar of Oklahoma and Rep. Billy Tauzin of Louisiana to be swing votes on a key issue. The national office arranged to send Carrie Dickerson and me to D.C. to pressure Synar to vote the right way in a particular committee hearing. This was back when John Dingell was chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee (some things don't change) and Henry Waxman had hair (some things do). Dingell, as protector of the auto industry, was pressuring Synar and Tauzin to vote the wrong way.

Carrie and I shared a room in a budget-priced hotel, courtesy of the Sierra Club. On the way to the committee meeting, Carrie warned me about the many faces of Mike Synar. At the beginning of the Black Fox fight, Synar told her, "Carrie, forget it. You can't stop Black Fox." After the Corporation Commission ruled against Black Fox, Synar greeted her with a big hug and said, "Carrie! We won!" (Carrie had a few choice words about Synar's then-challenger, Drew Edmondson, too.)

At the committee meeting, Carrie and I sat in the center of the front row, where Synar could not mistake our presence and purpose. He voted the right way. He was very gracious when Carrie thanked him for doing so. Later, outside of Carrie's presence, he chewed me out because the Sierra Club had "forced" him to vote against Dingell and he would pay later. — just as Carrie predicted!

The Differences/Similarities Between North and South *(Continued from Page One)*

but on the other hand there are increasing problems in our own country with deteriorating water systems and untreated pollutants in our drinking water. Many people here prefer bottled water to that provided by their city. I don't mean to belittle the huge advantage we have in treated water and other basic elements of good public health over much of South America; I only mean to say we should not be smug and complacent about our "blessings" in this regard.

Quito has terrible air quality problems and I assume, although I did not personally confirm this that many of its waste treatment practices are far behind the so-called "developed" countries like our own. I mentioned how inspiring the rugged beauty of the Andes was to see. It was very interesting to see the volcanoes and the mountain streams and rivers as well as the small communities and their residents, including members of diverse indigenous groups, as well as expatriates from other countries. At the same time I was disappointed to see huge nursery operations (mostly roses and other flowers for export), gravel mines built into the sides of the mountains and in the middle of streams, and most disturbing of all the beginnings of factory style poultry operations just as we find in the Illinois River in Oklahoma.

This brings me to the main points I want to mention in this brief commentary. Ecuador has all of the environmental problems that we face here at home, and with dollarization and increased U S investment it will face even more problems (such as uncontrolled poultry factories). In discussing this with our guides, both on the mainland and on the cruise ship in the Galapagos, and with some of the 18 other passengers on the ship (9 from the US, 2 from Great Britain, 3 from Australia, 2 from the Faroe Islands, and 2 from Norway), it was agreed that much of the trouble stems from a series of governments in Ecuador more concerned with the prosperity of a few, than with the overall benefit of the society at large. Not so different from many administrations in our own country, certainly the current one. Not only do such attitudes and priorities lead to inadequate investment in vital public works such as treatment plants but they also lead to the lack of serious environmental and other regulations that some may view to be a "burden" to private enterprise.

In a more insidious way the environment suffers, because attitudes that ignore the needs of the population lead to or prolong the poverty so prevalent in

many South American countries. When people must struggle day to day to eat, clothe their families, and heat their homes, there is no room in their lives to worry about proper care of the environment. Instead they will "mine" every last resource for any possible physical benefit, overgraze the land and till land that is too fragile or steep for proper use (thus leading to erosion and scars), and spend their waking hours struggling to simply survive. Although we may have less abject poverty than Ecuador, we have many in our society who face the same burdens of struggling to survive and who have no time to worry about the environment and its protection.

Another theme common to the failure to protect the environment, in Ecuador and throughout the world, is the failure to educate the citizenry. This is obviously true when governments fail to promote and teach principles of conservation and proper use and management of our natural resources. Poor environmental management and the lack of an environmental ethic also seem to be a natural result of poor education in general. People who don't have access to good education frequently are less prosperous and spend much of their time trying to survive instead of dealing with social issues; but they are also less likely to have exposure to the diversity of experiences and ideas that seem to contribute to an appreciation for the beauty and value of nature and the importance of a clean environment. Lack of education and poverty hamper efforts to protect our environment and hinder efforts to develop a political will to fund cleanups and to regulate practices. This is true in South America and North America.

It seems clear to me that there are large differences in the environmental problems that face Ecuador and South America as compared to the problems we face in North America (although there are also similarities such as poultry and mining). There are also large differences in our respective abilities to resolve the problems we each face. I am struck, however, by how fundamentally alike, are the principles by which we both need to approach solutions. We both need to foster

Photo of Plaza Grande in Quito, Peru



good education and environmentally friendly prosperity. We also need to provide a full range of age appropriate educational activities and curricula to our societies. We have to work diligently to develop and exercise a political will to manage our resources in a sustainable way.

From the standpoint of what the Oklahoma Chapter of Sierra Club should be doing to help, I feel it is important for us to maintain a strong outings program to expose more people to the beauty of our state and region and to involve new members in our organization. It is important for me as Conservation Chair to do a better job of identifying key issues in Oklahoma and to work with the three groups to involve our members and others in education and activism regarding those issues. It will be increasingly important for us to maintain an active and effective legislative and political effort to shape responsible state government responses to issues and management of the State's environment in general.

In closing let me mention that significant progress has recently been made in the management of the Galapagos National Park, which was first established in 1959 and comprises approximately 97% of the province. (It was interesting to discuss with the Naturalist Guides in the Galapagos how successful the Park has been in enlisting the help of indigenous populations in the Islands and the mainland to protect the Islands...it was said that the "Indians" would not back down during protests against the government). I will speak more about my experiences in the Islands next newsletter. Despite all of the bad news we hear, it is an example (and there are many others) to remind us to remain optimistic and strive to protect this planet of ours.



Explore,
enjoy and
protect
the planet

Oklahoma Chapter
P.O. Box 60644
Okla. City, OK 73046-0644

[www.oklahoma.
sierraclub.org](http://www.oklahoma.sierraclub.org)

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP DIRECTORY

CHAIR: David Franklin, 405/293-9399, <dfranklin@ussok.com>

VICE-CHAIR: Tom Libby, 405/722-2367, <tomlibby@yahoo.com>

SECRETARY: Vacant

TREASURER: Mark Derichsweiler, 405/297-0179, <mderichsweiler@cox.net>

MEMBERSHIP: Martha Holland, 405/946-4962, <marthaholland@sbcglobal.net>

POLITICAL/LEGISLATIVE CHAIR: Charles Wesner, 405/321-2204, <Wesner@okiemail.net>

OUTINGS CHAIR: David Franklin, 405/789-5377, <dfranklin@ussok.com>

CONSERVATION CHAIR: Larry Edmison, 405/321-8292, <larry.edmison@sbcglobal.net>

CONSERVATION ORGANIZER: Billie Brown, 405/ 521-0345, <Billie.Brown@Sierraclub.org>

STATE LOBBYIST: Billie Brown, 405/ 521-0345, <Billie.Brown@Sierraclub.org>

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: Susie Shields, 405/297-0179, <sshields@cox.net>

WEBMASTER: David Franklin, 405/ 293-9399, <dfranklin@ussok.com>

TRAINING COORDINATOR: Vacant

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Susie Shields, 405/297-0179, <sshields@cox.net>

Food and the Climate Crisis: What You Eat Affects the Sky *(Continued from Page One)*

capita consumption of about 230 pounds of meat require an ocean of oil, it leaves us drowning in twice the government's daily recommended allowance of protein.

Once shipped from the farm, of course, much of our food is then refrigerated, processed, and packaged into everything from Pop Tarts to Atkins-approved microwave dinners. This requires - among other inputs - enormous amounts of electricity, which means burning whole mountains of coal. Over half of our nation's electricity, after all, comes from the combustion of pulverized coal.

Finally, there's the runaway explosion in food transportation. Thanks to globalization, artificially low gas prices and massive government highway subsidies, the average kilogram of food nationwide travels at least 1500 miles from farm to plate. That's an increase of 25 percent just since 1980. Indeed, the average prepared meal in the U.S. includes ingredients produced in at least five other countries.

In this modern food transportation system, wasted energy reaches absurd levels. It should be easy now to see that we're basically eating fossil fuels when we sit down to dinner in America, the equivalent of 400 gallons of oil per capita. Yet even people who consider themselves environmentalists, who use efficient light bulbs



and join the Sierra Club, rarely consider the impact of their food choices. A person who drives a trendy Toyota Prius hybrid car, for example, but who maintains a typical U.S. diet heavy on meats and processed foods, is actually generating twice the annual CO2 from his diet than his car.

We are fortunate to have the statewide Oklahoma Food Cooperative, is a great option for buying local, thus eliminating the huge transportation costs. Check it out: www.oklahomafood.coop.

A second important step, beyond buying locally, is to buy organically raised food. Organic agriculture eschews petroleum-based fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, relying instead on manure and plant-based fertilizers and reducing losses to insects by building healthy soils and planting a wide diversity of crops.

On average, organic farms use 37 percent less energy than conventional farms. Also, unlike soils rendered nearly biologically lifeless from petroleum inputs, organic soils are full of plant matter and various biological processes that naturally absorb carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. According to a 23-year study by the prestigious Rodale Institute, one acre of organic crops "sequester" as much as 3,700 pounds per year of CO2, the world's leading greenhouse gas. So organic food consumers fight climate change with every

meal they eat.

The last critical step in the food/energy equation is reducing one's consumption of animal products. Meat, eggs, and dairy products are high-energy, high-impact foods. It takes 40 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef and every kilocalorie of eggs produced in America requires 39 kilocalories of energy. Simply put, America could feed most of Africa with the grains we feed to livestock.

A vegetarian diet also dramatically reduces your risk of heart disease, the nation's number one cause of death. You can choose to make the vegetarian switch gradually thanks to a host of great vegetarian "meats" now on the market, from veggie burgers to soy sausage to chicken nuggets.

Here's the bottom-line good news: By making the switch to mostly regionally raised, organic food - including savory vegetarian meat substitutes - each American can reduce his personal food greenhouse gas budget by at least 60 percent. That's from around 400 gallons of oil equivalent each year to around 160.

With even the oil industry-friendly Bush Administration now openly admitting that fossil fuels are disrupting our life-giving global climate, and with a full 17 percent of U.S. energy use now devoted to food, it's clear we'll never solve the climate crisis with wind farms and hybrid cars alone. We must - and obviously can - cultivate and consume "clean-energy" food, grown close to home for the benefit of the whole world.