

Oklahoma Sierran

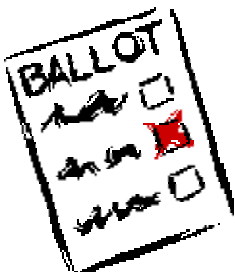
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Watch for your Oklahoma Chapter Executive Committee ballot coming soon!

2008 Oklahoma Legislative Outlook

By Charles Wesner, Legislative Committee Chair

The 2008 Legislative Session will soon be underway. Last year big hog and big chicken and their allies introduced a flurry of bill that would have rolled back regulations that protect, clean air, clean water and wildlife from the wastes generated by confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). They were stunned by the rebuff they received when legislators heard from their outraged constituents. This didn't just happen without a lot of work by the Sierra Club and environmental leaders in the state.

Well, they are back and this session promises to be one of the smelliest. A partial lineup of the polluters include; the Poultry Federation of Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma; Seaboard Farms; Seaboard Foods; Tyson Foods; Oklahoma Pork Council with four lobbyists; Monsanto; Oklahoma Farm Bureau with five lobbyists; and American Farmers and Ranchers with two lobbyists. On the other side, representing the environment and the public interest, Billie Brown of the Sierra Club.

As daunting as this is, we have a big factor in our favor – public opinion. Despite their titles, our opponents don't represent rural Oklahoma or the majority of Oklahomans, most of whom have a family history with the land.

While defending the public good against these bills that weaken CAFO regulations, the Sierra Club is strongly backing a bill that would strengthen protection by phasing out swine waste lagoons. A similar bill was passed into law in North Carolina that would provide incentives to hog operators to implement effective technology for waste management systems.

The Club is actively working to pass several energy efficiency bills including a "Green Buildings Bill" that would require new public buildings meet cost effective energy saving standards. Another bill, based on a Texas bill passed last year, would set energy efficiency standards on single and multifamily homes, lighting standards in public building and energy efficiency standards for heating and air equipment and home appliances.

It is clear that other states have already taken energy and climate change seriously and have taken the lead. Will Oklahoma be the last state to take responsible action or be a leader? Not if our 3,000+ members statewide sign-up for our Chapter Legislative Program Action Alert distribution list to help!! See "Armchair Activist" on Page 2 to find out exactly how to do that.

Hybrid Tax Credit

By Ellen C. Pogemiller and Professor Michael S. Givel



With continual concern regarding high levels of air pollution and rising concern regarding global climate change, hybrid cars that are propelled by an electric motor and gasoline engine represent one important green approach to reduce air pollution emissions and also increase fuel efficiency. Since 1990, Oklahoma has provided tax credits for residents to purchase hybrid cars.

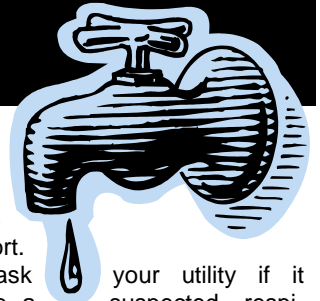
The Oklahoma legislature has amended this tax incentive several times. The current incentive, scheduled to expire on January 1, 2009, provides a very financially rewarding one-time tax credit on the sticker price of the hybrid. This is supposedly calculated by determining the extent of propulsion of the hybrid solely by the electric motor times 50% of sticker price. If an exact basis is not determined the lesser of 10% of the cost of the vehicle or \$1500 is the tax credit. Unfortunately, the Oklahoma Tax Com-

mission, has not issued a clear and user friendly rule delineating the methodology to calculate the tax based on electric propulsion. This has essentially, but not entirely, blocked the implementation of the higher tax credit based on electric propulsion for hybrids.

Currently, there is legislation being drafted for the next Oklahoma legislative session to make sure that hybrid tax credits can easily be obtained through a user friendly methodology. The bill will encourage Oklahoma residents to purchase fuel efficient vehicles that emit a considerably less amount of harmful air pollutants including those that effect global climate change. Future information early in 2008 will be publicly disseminated when this bill is introduced to urge state senators and representatives to support this important legislation for green hybrid cars.

Steps to Conquering Bottled Water Addiction

by Susie Shields, Environmental Education Chair



PART I—WATER FILTERS

In the last issue, I wrote about the problems with Americans' addiction to bottled water and encouraged you to purchase a filter if you feel your tapwater is unsafe or if it tastes bad to you. The truth is that city water is highly regulated and monitored for quality and bottled water is not. It can legally contain many things we would not tolerate in municipal drinking water.

If you are considering this option, but are having trouble selecting the

water filter that is right for you, here's what you can do. To start, check your water utility's "Consumer Confidence Report," which must be mailed to you each year before July 1 by law. The report details where your drinking water comes from, what contaminants have been found in it, and how contaminant levels compare to national standards. You can also call your utility and ask for a copy, or visit <http://yosemite.epa.gov/ogwdw/ccr.nsf/Oklahoma?OpenView>.

For help reading the report, visit National Sanitation Foundation's (NSF) website: http://www.nsf.org/consumer/drinking_water/index.asp. Some experts also recommend looking for a filter certified by NSF, a nonprofit organization that conducts safety testing for the food and water industries. NSF

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Choices
Matter!**

tests and certifies water filters to ensure that they both meet NSF safety standards and are effective at removing contaminants as claimed by the manufacturer. Underwriters Laboratories and the Water Quality Association also offer similar certification, based on NSF standards.

While your report can tell you what's going on with the water in your area, only a test of the water coming out of your tap will tell you what you and your family are drinking for sure. To find a state-certified lab to test your water (which will charge a fee) visit the EPA's Safe Water website or call the EPA's Safe Water Hotline at 800/426-4791. If your water comes from a private well, it's not regulated at all by the EPA, so you should have your water tested annually in late spring (when pesticide runoff will be at its worst), and anytime you notice a change in your water.

Water filters come in a dizzying variety, from plastic pitcher filters and built-in refrigerator filters, to faucet and under-the-sink filters, to whole-house models that combine a variety of media types and treat all of the water in your house. What type you want depends on your needs.

If, after examining your Consumer Confidence Report (or, preferably, your current and several past reports), you find that your water regularly tests better than EPA levels, you may just want a filter that can remove the chemicals your local utility uses to treat the water.

These chemicals may or may not show up on your report.

Call and ask your utility if it uses chlorine, a suspected respiratory and neurological toxin, or chloramine, a suspected blood and respiratory toxin. Chlorine combines with organic elements during the water treatment process to produce carcinogenic by-products.

If you only have **one or two contaminants**, a smaller unit, such as a countertop or under-the-sink filter, may meet your needs. To find a filter certified to remove the contaminants you're most concerned about, visit the NSF's online database.

Finally, if you find your water has **serious safety issues**, consider a multi-stage filter that can tackle a variety of contaminants. Many combine a variety of filter types. These types include (problems they work best for is in parentheses): adsorption (organic contaminants & chlorine—may improve taste), distillers (inorganic contaminants like heavy metals, nitrates & hardness—some bacteria-no chloramines), filter membranes (particulates, most bacteria, cryptosporidia & viruses), reverse osmosis (bacteria-only returns one-third of the water volume), ultraviolet treatment (bacteria & viruses—not chemical pollutants). (Continued on Page 3)

ARMCHAIR ACTIVIST ALERT — Please email Governor Brad Henry <http://www.governor.state.ok.us/message.php> ("Message to Governor" page)

*Dear Sierra Club Members and Friends—Feel free to personalize this message when you submit it to Governor Henry. Please take action immediately if at all possible, as the new Legislative Session will be starting the first week in February and we need a show of support for our goals. Thank you for your action!!! — To sign-up for our electronic alerts asking you to contact your legislators (generally only around five alerts are distributed each year) about bills introduced at the Oklahoma Legislature, go to our website: <http://oklahoma.sierraclub.org/chapter/listserv.html> — sign up for **List#3—Oklahoma Alerts***

Dear Governor Henry,

I would like to encourage you to make our great state part of the Two-Percent Solution needed to curb global warming. Scientists say that to stabilize global warming, we need to cut our carbon emissions 80% by 2050—or two percent a year—starting **NOW**. We all have a role to play if we are to succeed. Personally, I pledge to reduce my carbon emissions by taking the following action (or actions): Put your own pledge here, or, omit this part if you choose. (Examples include driving a hybrid, carpooling, walking & biking more, adding insulation to home, etc.)

I am asking you to help by making clean power more available to state residents, increasing the energy efficiency of both existing and new state buildings, purchasing new state cars that go farther on a gallon of gas, and promoting technologies that help us create a clean energy economy and hundreds of new jobs.

National Energy Bill Signed into Law

By Benton Howell



Breaking Bottled Water

Addiction (Continued from Page 2)

On December 19th, President Bush signed legislation to promote energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gasses.. The bill is one of several introduced on behalf of the Democratic Leadership in the House as part of its "100 hours" package of legislative initiatives conducted early in the 110th Congress. It has been through a year of partisan combat and stalemate, but finally enough compromises were agreed upon to get it passed.

Title I proposes to reduce certain oil and natural gas tax subsidies to create a revenue stream to support energy efficiency and renewable energy. Title II would modify certain aspects of royalty relief for offshore oil and natural gas development to create a second stream of revenue to support energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Title III of H.R. 6 creates a budget procedure for the creation and use of a Strategic Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Reserve, under which additional spending for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs can be accommodated without violating enforcement procedures in the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended.

Title IV is for use of cost-effective and environmentally Sustainable Public Buildings – with the subtitle A: Public Buildings Cost Reduction - Public Buildings Cost Reduction Act of 2007 .

The stated purpose of the bill is to "reduce our nation's dependency on foreign oil" by investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Specifically, Section 301 (a) of the bill would make the revenue in the Reserve available to legislation to "(1) to accelerate the use of domestic renewable energy resources and alternative fuels, (2) to promote the utilization of energy-efficient products and practices and conservation, and (3) to increase research, development, and de-

ployment of clean renewable energy and efficiency technologies."

Recent lobbying by solar industry proponents has resulted in the extension and improvement of the solar investment tax credits for this bill. The solar Investment Tax Credits (ITC) provisions in the legislation are as follows:

- Eight-year extension of the 30% business ITC under Section 48 (Sec. 11003);
- Permit corporate and individual taxpayers to claim the ITC against the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT);
- Waiver of the public utility exception to the ITC (i.e., permits investor-owned utilities to claim the ITC for solar investments);
- Elimination of the existing \$2,000 maximum dollar limitation on section 25D residential solar ITCs (Sec. 11006); and
- \$2.4 billion in bonding authority for the issuance of Clean Renewable Energy Bonds. (Sec. 11004)

Section III of this bill, which is the Renewable Fuel Standard, calls for regulations to be promulgated to ensure that motor vehicle fuel and home heating oil is sold or introduced into commerce, not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, that meets the following requirements:

Renewable fuel - Starting with 8.5 billion gallons of renewable fuel in 2008, and increasing to 36.0 billion gallons in 2022; and **advanced biofuels** - Starting with 3.0 billions of gallons of advanced biofuels in 2016, and increasing to 21.0 billion gallons in 2022.

It should be noted that all of Oklahoma's congressional delegation voted against this bill.

Editor's Note: This article was written before the compromise was reached, so the first paragraph was changed to reflect this. Some of the details outlined by Benton in the remainder of the article may have changed before the compromise. From Benton: Some parts of this article were derived from an article by written by Fred Sissine, Specialist in Energy Policy (Resources, Science, and Industry Division).

Many specific water filter reviews are summarized online at www.consumersearch.com, including the tests done by Consumer Reports. Do the research to see which filter will suit your needs.

(The primary source for this article was Coop America's July/August 2007 Issue of Real Money: "The Facts about Water Filters." www.coopamerica.org)

PART II— REUSABLE WATER BOTTLES

After much research into reusable water bottles, the overwhelming consensus seems to be the SIGG aluminum bottle shown here. SIGG bottles are the most eco-friendly choice, being 100% recyclable at the end of their life. They have been proven to ensure 0% leaching of any substance. The lids are made from food-safe #5 Polypropylene plastic.



Since washing your SIGG in the dishwasher may dull the finish, It is recommended you use white vinegar, baking soda or a drop of detergent. It is better to remove the seals before cleaning, as they may leak when becoming worn. For those who leave drinks other than water in the bottle to dry out, SIGG cleaning brushes and bottle clean tablets are available. It is recommended you leave 2-3 cm below the lip unfilled, as residual air improves water tightness and helps the flow. Do NOT freeze water in your SIGG, as it may crack when water expands.

The Cimarron Group is selling Sierra Club SIGGs at group meetings and tabling events for \$15 each. You can order them online at: <http://www.mysigg.com/>.

For those who insist on using plastic bottles, Dr. Evelina Morales, DEQ epidemiologist, told me any plastic safe to use for food or water containers should be labeled on the bottom (inside a triangle) with the numbers 1, 4 or 5 to show that it is certified as safe for food and water.

The jury is still out as to whether the Nalgene bottle hazards we have all heard rumors about (made of Polycarbonate #7, also known as Lexan) could be harmful to human health by leaching toxins into the bottle's contents, especially when heated. The amount of leaching increases as the plastic ages and degrades, so don't use it too long just in case.



Photo: Nancy Smart (right), Chapter Secretary and artist extraordinaire, hands off beautiful mask she made for the Gold Dome Multi-cultural Society's "Une Nouvelle Culture" event to their Executive Director Mary Lou Stokes.



**Explore,
enjoy
and
protect
the
planet**

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A BIG THANK YOU ...



to members of the Cimarron Group Conservation and Executive Committees for hosting the 2007 BEC (Building Environmental Communities) Fall Energy Outreach. During the Oct. 29th Fall Energy Walk in OKC's Central Park Neighborhood, bags containing a compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb and information about

CFLs and other energy conservation actions were distributed to 550 homes. Citizens also received an invitation to the BEC Energy Festival at the Gold Dome held on Nov. 9th. Local food samples and information was provided for attendees at the Festival. To view photos of these events, see pages one and four in the Cimarron Group's Jan.-Mar. 2008 Prairie Dispatch newsletter online. Your hard work is appreciated!!

-Billie Brown, BEC Organizer



New Book Touts Health Benefits of Local Produce

The policy analysts at the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Poteau believe having affordable, high-quality, locally grown food available to everyone will not only rejuvenate family farms but alter Oklahomans' poor eating habits. The Center's new centennial book, "Closer to Home: Healthier Food, Farms and Families in Oklahoma," examines the state's ranking as one of the least healthy places to live in the country. They authors conclude that if state farmers grew more of the food on Oklahomans' tables, families could have healthier diets and small farms would become more financially viable.

Some of the report's key points include:

- Oklahoma ranks dead last in the nation in the percentage of adults who eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day;
- Over one-third of Oklahoma adults are overweight: one-quarter are obese;
- About a quarter of high school students are overweight or obese;
- Only one state outranks Oklahoma in deaths from heart disease, a condition associated with being overweight;
- In 2004, Oklahoma ranked first among the states in the percentage of households with people who are going hungry; and
- More than 20 percent of Oklahoma children live in poverty.

Farmers' markets were created so area farmers could sell food directly to local consumers and, in turn, consumers would have access to fresh, affordable produce. "Closer to Home" is available for the cost of postage from the Kerr Center by calling (918) 647-9123. The book can also be downloaded free at www.kerrcenter.com.



SAVE-THE-DATE!!

MARCH 28-29

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2008 Conference

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www.oksustainability.org