

Oklahoma Sierran

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November 2005



The Lake Atoka Forest . . . by Dave Dyer

The Lake Atoka Forest of southeastern Oklahoma, a remaining, rare fragment of the Ancient Cross Timbers Forest ecotone, has stood for eons. The Forest straddles North Boggy Creek at the western edge of the Ouachita Mountains uplift. Through the centuries, the Forest and its bird and wildlife inhabitants have existed in a state of grace; an undiluted, pristine ecosystem functioning without human intervention. The Caddo Indians, a hunter-agriculture people, arrived later and lived in the Forest with minimal impact. The Caddo culture had emerged by 900 A.D. in the area.



Hernando de Soto's expedition entered the region in the early 1540s but did not reach this area. European explorers and traders began making their way into this area of southeastern Oklahoma, first in a trickle and then in a stream. In the 1830s the Trail of Tears, the forced removal of Native American tribes to Oklahoma, began and the Choctaw Nation eventually resided in this area. The European westward migration continued into this region.

Human impact on southeastern Oklahoma became pronounced in the 1800s and into the 1900s. Logging of the great forests of southeastern Oklahoma began during this period. An increasing population with numerous settlements and intense natural resource extraction began taking a toll on the area. The interior of the Forest, with "draws, hollows, and holes," was bypassed primarily due to inaccessibility. North Boggy Creek is rough country and other timber was much more easily harvested.

In the more accessible areas, the legendary Texas Road and the Butterfield Overland Stage Route skirted the fringes of the Lake Atoka Forest. Even the Lake Atoka Forest did not completely escape the human footprint. Still there remained deep in the interior those secluded, quiet wild places rarely seen by human eyes. These special places continue the cycle of life each day, year, and century as always and have been long before a human set foot there.

During the 1950s, the North Boggy Creek

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Pathways to Local Food Systems . . . by Bob Waldrop

(Taken from Waldrop's presentation at the Peak Oil Community Solutions September 2005 conference in Ohio)



FORM AND FUNCTION FOLLOW THE FOOD—What's important about this is the food – where does it come from? How is it produced? How does it get from producer to consumer? Everything depends on that. In the "agribusiness" system, food follows form and function. Tomato varieties are selected not because they taste good, but rather because they can be harvested while still green by machines, shipped long distances, and then gassed to turn red. Taste and nutrition are secondary issues.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS GROW OUT OF PERSONAL CHOICES—The place to start is with your own kitchen, your own food choices, your own diet. Personal and household choices about where and how we spend our grocery money and kitchen time are fundamental to the design of the local food system.

WE START SMALL OR WE DON'T START AT ALL—Nobody can revolutionize their household diet and local food economy overnight. But everybody can find someplace to start. Where that starting point lies is less important than the fact that a person just gets started.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER—Supermarkets gather knowledge for customers. You don't have to research what is available, you just look on the shelf. Thus, one of the most important local food structures is an information directory. The Oklahoma Food Cooperative began initially as a simple directory on the internet. That directory grew out of my own personal research into local sources for basic foods.

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Olivia Waldkoetter Chairs Chapter Nominating Committee

The Oklahoma Chapter Executive Committee has appointed Olivia Waldkoetter to Chair the Nominating Committee for this year's Executive Committee elections. December 31, 2005 has been set as the closing date for the election.

Executive Committee members whose terms expire this year are Jim Bevers, David Franklin and Paul Moore.

Members are encouraged to submit names for consideration by the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee's selection will be announced on Nov. 14th and then posted on the Chapter Web Site.

Any member of the chapter, not selected by the Nominating Committee, may be placed in nomination with a written petition signed by 15 members of the Chapter along with a letter of consent by the nominee. Any petitions and letters of consent must be presented to the Chapter Chair on or before November 21st, 2005, to be included on the ballot. Ballots will be mailed on December 3, 2005. The election will be closed and the ballots counted at midnight December 31, 2005.

The Nominating Committee can be contacted by calling 405/821-2304, writing to Nominating Committee—Sierra Club, P.O. Box 60644, Oklahoma City, OK 73146, or by e-mailing the Chair of the Committee: Olivia_waldkoetter@yahoo.com.

Oklahoma Club Members Attended the Sierra Summit in Early September

by David Franklin

Among the thousands of Sierra Club members that descended upon the Moscone Center in early September for the first ever national Sierra Club Summit were some Oklahomans there to represent your interest in the national direction setting process. Over seven hundred delegates from chapters across the US met early in the week to help set the priority campaigns for the club in 2006 and beyond. Back when I first joined the club in 1992, I was told by a friend and long time member

Nancy Smart and Dave
Dyer wait to hear Al Gore
speak at Summit



that the Sierra Club was the "biggest group of individuals that you will find." In other words, while we may be a club, we have a diverse set of interests and certainly don't suffer from "group think"; we tend to have passionate opinions on a variety of issues. This is both the strength and weakness of a group like the Sierra Club. Our national efforts are made up of the grass roots membership, with a "national purpose, local action" approach.

There is strength in that nothing is done at the national level without an initiative being taken by a volunteer. At the same time, we run the risk of running off in multiple directions. This summit was an attempt to focus our efforts nationally. I enjoyed being a part of it, and I appreciate being a member of an organization where the grass roots elect the board and set directions, rather than a national board in Washington telling me what to support. This is unlike a lot of the other big national environmental organizations who govern top down.

The national priority campaigns selected by the way, were "Building a New Energy Future" and "Environmental Justice." This is not to say that we won't continue to work diligently on the other issues, such as water quality, wildlands protection and other important issues, but environmental justice focusing on clean water, clean air, healthy communities and other community issues, along with energy, were selected by the delegates to receive the most attention. Regardless of my opinion on these choices, I appreciated the chance to make my voice heard.

Later in the week, thousands more members came in for a variety of sessions on topics such as healthy living, working with youth, communicating our message and buying organic. Also, we had a large number of exhibitors showing off everything from hybrid cars from Ford, Toyota and Honda, to socially responsible investing opportunities, to organic foods to books. There was also a section called the "Sierra Showcase" where groups and chapters from across the US showed off

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Staples® Computer Recycling Event Celebrates November 15 America Recycles Day

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local school district. All donors will re-
ceive a Staples coupon good for \$10 off
their next product purchase of \$40 or
more in store.**

Event runs Nov. 12 – Nov. 20.

Sierra Club Builds Environmental Communities . . . by Nancy Smart

Saturday, Oct. 15 was an unseasonably warm day in Oklahoma City. The prospect of working up a sweat couldn't dampen the spirits of the twenty-two dedicated volunteers representing the Sierra Club and our partner organizations in the "Walk for Water", The Concerned Citizens of Coal and Atoka Counties, Nurses Against Mercury, and The Little Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes.

Walkers gathered at the new offices of the Oklahoma Sierra Club in the historic Gold Dome at 9:00 Saturday morning. After introductions and greetings, volunteers enjoyed coffee and donuts as they listened to member James Martin and long time Lake Atoka defenders Bob Jackman and Jim Cox give a brief history of the water issue facing those who use the water or enjoy the shores around Lake Atoka. They heard tips on talking effectively to people at their doors from OK Chapter Chair Tom Libby, partnered up, and set out for Oklahoma City neighborhoods to educate and activate citizens.

After knocking on 420 doors, walkers gathered for lunch at the home of Sierra Club members Mark Derichsweiler and Susie Shields. One hundred thirty-one signed postcards asking for a re-thinking of the proposal to log the shores of the Lake supplying 1/3 of the city's water were brought in ready to mail to

OKC's mayor. In the process, over one hundred fifty new contacts were made. After unwinding and sharing experiences, walkers took away a feeling of satisfaction with a job well-done, a sense of hope, and any remaining postcards to have signed by their own family and friends.

Other News of Oklahoma's Building Environmental Communities (BEC) Program . . .

The DVD, "Oil on Ice" was shown to 8 people at a Norman House Party in mid-August, and was followed up with letters to legislators.

Norman's mayor is Oklahoma's only one, so far, to sign on to the "U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement". Plans are being made to commend him and invite him along with all interested members of the public to a showing of the DVD, "Kilowatt Hours" at the Norman Public Library. The DVD presents ways that energy usage and costs can be brought down easily by individual citizens, companies, institutions and municipalities.

(Nancy Smart is a member of the Red Earth Group's Executive Committee and chairs the Oklahoma Chapter's Building Environmental Communities Steering Committee.)

Oklahoma Sierrans Walk for Lake Atoka *(See photo below)*

Two dozen Sierra Club members and friends gathered at the Oklahoma Chapter's new office in Oklahoma City's Gold Dome for the 2005 fall Building Environmental Communities event. The "Walk for Water's" objective was door-to-door distribution of post cards for Oklahoma City citizens to sign in the Club's assistance with the Campaign to Save Lake Atoka.



Pathways to Local Food Systems . . . (from Page 1)

BE WILLING TO EMBRACE CHANGE—A local food system is about distributing basic foods; it does not look like Wal-Mart. Don't expect the "convenience" offered by (Continued on Page 3) manufactured foods. While the process is not always easy, the change that the "permacultured kitchen" brings to your household is uniformly positive. The food will be more nutritious, it will taste better, and you will feel better about your work in the kitchen.

EAT WITH THE SEASON—Real life has rhythms and seasons, and so does food. We have learned by sad experience that by extravagant expenditures of energy and oppression we could have summer salads in winter, but what does this willingness to oppress third world farmers say about our personal and social moralities? As the seasons change, winter food from the local food economy will be different from summer food.

BE TEMPERATE IN YOUR SELECTION OF FOODS—The virtue of temperance is the practice of balance – not too much, not too little, just the right amount. A local food system offers a wealth of regional tastes and food delights, but without lusting for the gluttony of the on-demand "agribusiness" food system. Be wary of eating foods that are unsustainably harvested, such as ocean fish, and products with a high degree of environmental degradation and social injustice in their production, such as non-fair trade certified coffee and chocolate.

PREPARE YOUR MEALS FROM BASIC INGREDIENTS—The permacultured kitchen in a local food system offers meals prepared from basic ingredients. Not everybody has these skills in the beginning, but people can develop better food preparation practices so that using basic ingredients fits into the urban life-style.

DEVELOP THE ORGANIZATION AND SYSTEMS OF YOUR KITCHEN—Look at the whole system, and see it as an organic whole rather than just a jumble of disparate elements. (The entire text of the remainder of Bob's handout can be found on the Sierra Club website at: http://www.oklahoma.sierraclub.org/chapter/sustainable_agriculture.htm)

USE ENERGY AND RESOURCES FRUGALLY. WASTE NOT, WANT NOT!

LEARN HOW TO PRESERVE AND PROCESS FOODS AT HOME OR IN COMMUNITY KITCHENS.

BUY LOCALLY PRODUCED FOODS.

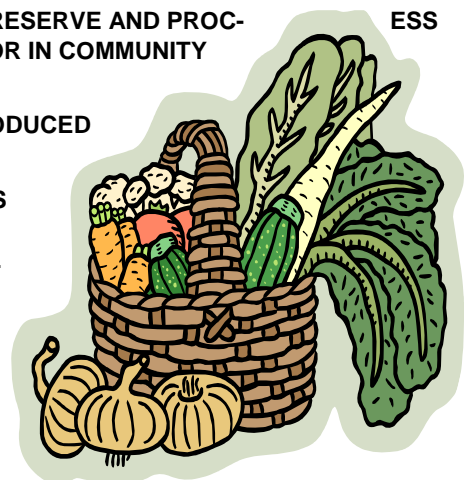
NEVER BUY MEATS FROM CONFINED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS.

PRACTICE FOOD STORAGE AND DESIGN FOR ECONOMY.

GROW AT LEAST SOME OF YOUR OWN FOOD.

LOOK FOR A VARIETY OF STRUCTURES.

DON'T LET THE PERFECT BECOME THE ENEMY OF THE



Summit Recap . . . (from Page 2)

some of their efforts from conservation to outings. I must confess, seeing how successful some of these other chapters are makes me a little jealous, in a good way. Member Martha Holland, there as a delegate, commented on how much she enjoyed the breakout sessions on healthy living and made a point of attending as many as possible.

We also were treated to a recap of the results of the study conducted by the Kennedy School of Government on what it is that makes some chapters and groups more effective than others. It's interesting that it isn't money, or numbers of members, but is instead the quality of the volunteers. Of course, more money and members help, but that's not the key. The National Sierra Club will work over the next year to implement the suggestions the researchers made to increase our volunteer effectiveness.

In addition to the breakout sessions, the exhibitors, and the direction setting process, we were treated to a variety of keynote speakers, including San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, former Vice President Al Gore and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom spoke about the role of cities in the environmental movement. He stressed that is incumbent upon the cities to move forward on the environment and lead the way, since the White House is not leading. "Cities

consume 75 percent of the world's natural resources," Newsom said, despite taking up such a small percentage of the land mass. So there's plenty that cities can do, he said, and that San Francisco is already doing its part. San Francisco, he said, is committed to reducing global warming emissions to 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2010. The city is home to the largest municipally owned solar project in the world – right there on the top of Moscone Center, where the Summit is happening. And San Francisco already diverts 67 percent of its waste. "Hold us accountable," he concluded. "Don't just listen to our rhetoric. There's so much more that we can do."

Members Olivia Waldkoetter and Nancy Smart, attending as delegates, both commented on the difference between the approach taken by Mayor Newsom and Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett. Where Oklahoma City is focusing on new construction from housing to Bricktown, San Francisco is focusing on making itself a better city to live in.

On Friday, Sierra Club director Carl Pope yielded his speaking time to an unexpected guest, Al Gore. The reason that Al Gore was not expected to attend, was that he was originally scheduled to be speaking in New Orleans to the Fifty State Insurance Commissioners about global warming and hurricanes. However, as our Sierra Club conference was happening less than two weeks after Hurricane Katrina,

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Lake Atoka Forest (from Page 1)

watershed was acquired through public condemnation for a water utility project. In 1959, the City of Oklahoma City had impounded North Boggy Creek and Lake Atoka was formed. The Forest now bordered Lake Atoka and was the property of the City of Oklahoma City. For some years this fact protected the Forest from private logging. Ironically, this fact would also ultimately endanger the Lake Atoka Forest with permanent ecological catastrophe.

Lake Atoka was now a public water supply for the City of Oklahoma City and the Lake Atoka Forest was the immediate watershed. The Forest, remote for centuries, was now accessible by boat. Human impact was increasing due to recreation, hunting and fishing, yet this disturbance was still minimal compared to the surrounding countryside. This impact was also a mere trifle compared to what the City of Oklahoma City has ultimately planned for the Forest.

The fortunes and prospects of the ancient Lake Atoka Forest took an unexpected turn in the 1990s. The owner of the Forest, the City of Oklahoma City, inexplicably determined that the high turbidity of Lake Atoka was caused by the Forest itself! That is, the Lake Atoka Forest was causing sediment runoff from the watershed into Lake Atoka and therefore reducing the quality of the public water supply. Oklahoma City's incomprehensible conclusion and final solution is to log the Lake Atoka Forest to increase water quality. This solution is in direct contradiction to modern watershed management practices and procedures. In fact, watershed management recognizes logging as one of the main causes of erosion and therefore decreased water quality!

A municipality, the City of Oklahoma City, wants to go into the logging business and the Lake Atoka Forest is the objective. Ten years ago, a small group of determined individuals began the defense of the Forest from Oklahoma City's logging attempts. Over the years a Save Lake Atoka coalition grew and other organizations have joined in the defense. Save Lake Atoka states as its objective: "To stop the logging of the Lake Atoka Forest by the City of Oklahoma City and thereby preserve and protect habitat, heritage and history of Lake Atoka

for future generations of Americans."

There is more to the Forest than trees—we often forget many of the diverse and numerous residents. Birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, plants, flowers, and amphibians are part of this wooded continuum. Each performing their function and purpose so that yet another can live. The trees that have stood for ages are the infrastructure for this interrelatedness. An ecosystem that time has proven a success. Yet the Lake Atoka Forest is interconnected to such far away locales as the Andes Mountains of South America and the Boreal Forests of Alaska and Canada.

The permanent residents of the Lake Atoka Forest have cyclical visitors that are an integral part of the annual dynamics and rhythm. These visitors are also truly inhabitants of the Forest and contribute to the vitality – Neotropical migratory birds. These birds include swifts, swallows, warblers, flycatchers, vireos, sparrows – well in excess of 100 species. In spring some of these migrants stop over en route to such distant places as the Boreal Forest of Alaska and Canada. Some utilize the Forest as nesting habitat and stay the summer, contributing their efforts to the Forest. In late summer, these travelers begin their journey back to the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. The cycle of life continues and the interconnectedness affirmed.

We at Save Lake Atoka are determined to stop the logging to prevent habitat loss and ecosystem degradation. We are intent on preserving and protecting habitat, heritage, and history at Lake Atoka. Our vision is for the Lake Atoka Forest to remain one of the "wild places" forever. Only when that day arrives will the Forest continue as a rare, old-growth mixed post oak and short-leaf pine fragment of the Ancient Cross Timbers Forest ecotone for future generations of Americans.

The City of Oklahoma City's attempt at watershed logging may well be the only recorded instance in written history whereby a forest was thought to cause erosion. This unanimous decision

to approve logging by the City Council of Oklahoma City on July 5, 2005 was made without even seeing the Lake Atoka Forest. Certainly not one Council member has ever walked into or through the Forest. By actually walking through the Forest, as I have along with numerous scientists, an obvious conclusion is reached: the Lake Atoka Forest is not causing erosion. Trees don't cause erosion; people do by their man-made ground disturbances.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was carried out between 2001 and 2005 to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and to establish the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and their contributions to human well-being. Approximately 1,360 experts from 95 countries

were involved as authors of the assessment reports, as participants in the sub-global assessments, or as members of the Board of Review Editors. Continued habitat loss and ecosystem degradation were two of the key findings of the Assessment. Deforestation is a primary reason for this. The attempted logging by the City of Oklahoma City, for invalid reasons, is yet another example of the plight we find ourselves and future generations in.

(Dave Dyer is an activist with "Save Lake Atoka," "Indian Nations Audubon Society," and the Oklahoma Chapter of the Sierra Club.)





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Summit Recap (from Page 4)

you can appreciate why he had to cancel. Oh the irony...

Over the past century, said Gore, we have developed a new and unprecedented relationship with the planet as a result of a quadrupling of population and our industrial emissions' influence on the climate. "We have a moral responsibility to deal with the consequences of that new relationship. This is not about scientific debate. It's about who we are as human beings. It's about our capacity to transcend our limitations."

But we have the vision and know-how and technology we need to address global warming, said Gore, but we lack the political will. "But political will is a renewable resource," he said, garnering one of the longest ovations of the morning.

"Katrina should be a watershed in American politics." So was said in one of the breakout sessions by cognitive scientist George Lakoff senior fellow at the Rockridge Institute and author of *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. Like no other event in recent history, the hurricane's damage to the Gulf Coast, and especially New Orleans, has brought issues like poverty, ecology, and pollution into the living rooms of average Americans. "Whoever frames this first wins," he told an overflowing Summit audience today. But he went on to add, "The Bush administration is framing it."

In my opinion one of the most charismatic speakers was Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. He did not mince words in his blistering and passionate attack on the Bush administration Saturday afternoon to standing ovations from 2,500 rapt Sierra Summit participants. "One hundred and ten U.S. coal-burning power plants had been polluting illegally for the 17 years," he said, "and one of the

first things Bush did was drop the Clinton administration cases against the 75 worst plants." But most Americans don't know about this, said Kennedy, because of an "informational deficit" resulting from a "negligent and indolent press." Member David Dyer, attending as a delegate, commented after Kennedy's speech that it was electrifying to hear a clearly articulated vision

after so many mixed messages coming out of Washington. Kennedy delivered a message about the profound need to restore American democracy—not just to save the environment, not just to stop corporate polluters, but to save the very essence of our country.

After a week in a city of "dreamers and doers" as well as "49 square miles surrounded by reality," (as described by Mayor Newsom), it was time to head home to begin once again the work of the Sierra Club. Sure we win some and lose some, but it is exciting to know that we are not alone in our love for the planet. One of the major findings in the research study mentioned above is that individuals join the Sierra Club to be around "like minded individuals" who share their love for the planet. One of the sessions was an "open mic" time for members to come up

and speak on any topic they wanted to communicate to the national board members in attendance. More than anything else, the summit showed that are all passionate about planet. Now let's go out there and explore, enjoy and protect it! —David

(David Franklin is Vice-Chair, Secretary, Webmaster and Outings Chair of the Oklahoma Sierra Club Chapter, as well as interim newsletter editor and sage of the Cimarron Group.)



Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.