

Fresh Air



April Meeting on Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer

The topic of the April 28th meeting is the Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer. The aquifer is the source of water for Turner Falls, the Blue River, Pennington Creek (site of Slippery Falls Boy Scout Camp) and the springs of the Chickasaw National Recreational Area, formerly Platt National Park, in Sulphur. Noel Osborn, Water Resources Geologist with the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, will update us on the status of the study of the aquifer currently being conducted by the OWRB. We'll also view a new educational video titled "The Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer - A Treasure Threatened", produced by the Chickasaw Nation and narrated by Dennis Weaver. The video illustrates how the aquifer works and what will be lost if large-scale municipal pumping from the aquifer is allowed to proceed. Join us at 7:00 p.m. for refreshments and socialization. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m.

The Group meets monthly at the state office. Access to the office is from the blue door to the right of the back entrance to the Outlet. It is handicapped accessible. Parking is available behind the Outlet or in the lot across the street off University Boulevard. Guests are welcome.

First-Ever Sierra Club National Convention & Expo

The passion, persistence and the purpose of the conservation movement will be on full display at the first-ever Sierra Club National Environmental Convention & Expo later this year. The event, taking place in San Francisco from September 8-11, is expected to draw thousands of Sierra Club members, supporters and friends to focus on the future of personal and political activism, and on solutions that further the organization's mission to "Explore, Enjoy, and Protect" the planet.

"The strength of the Sierra Club is that we have 750,000 friends and neighbors working to protect their communities all over the country," said Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club. "In addition we are inviting anyone who wants to be an active participant in shaping the future of our movement and its influence on consumers, conservationists, policy-makers and politicians to attend."

Highlights of Sierra Summit 2005 include:

- **Nationally Known Speakers:** **Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Arianna Huffington**, linguist **Dr. George Lakoff**, Chez Panisse chef **Alice Waters**, and comedian **Bill Maher**.
- **Hands-on Workshops:** 60 workshops designed to inspire and motivate arranged in seven tracks: Outdoor Adventure, Engaging Youth & Students, Visionary Solutions, Natural Heritage, Working Smart, Environmental Expression & Art and Living Well
- **Outdoor and Green Expo:** Over 150 exhibit booths will be featured, and range from the most modern energy-saving devices to information on how to invest in environmentally-responsible corporations. Also included in the exhibition hall will be the "Sierra Showcase" -- where the depth and breadth of the Sierra Club's work nationwide will be on full display.
- **Outings:** Explore and enjoy the San Francisco Bay Area with Sierra Summit's menu of outings, hikes and tours.

"The power of the environmental movement has always been the passion and devotion of people who work at the grassroots level to protect our air, water, and special places in combination with visionaries who can see and can lead our nation to a brighter future," added Pope. "It is especially important to bring all of these people together at this difficult time in our nation's history."

The Sierra Summit 2005, September 8-11 in San Francisco, will be a milestone in the history of the environmental movement. For more information go to www.sierrasummit2005.org.

Lands at Risk

It's summertime and Americans from coast to coast are heading to the great outdoors, leaving behind the stress of the workplace for the vast expanses of wild places that comprise America's extraordinary public lands system.

Americans love the outdoors and have long treasured the natural and scenic beauty of our lands and supported the preservation of the wilderness that is our American heritage and has shaped our American character. Hunters, hikers, boaters, anglers and families all seek the recreation and solitude that these landscapes provide. Increasingly, these places – from the forested hills of the Southeast to the rugged peaks of the Rockies to the towering ancient forests of the Northwest and Alaska – offer an escape from the frenzy of modern life, not to mention unparalleled recreational opportunities, clean water and wildlife habitat.

Regrettably, America's wildlands are facing an unprecedented threat from Bush administration policies that are threatening to destroy these special places and reverse decades of progress on public lands protection. Since taking office, the Bush administration has opened up an area larger than Texas and Oklahoma combined to logging, mining, and oil and gas drilling – including some of the most environmentally sensitive places – stripping protections from 10 percent of America's public lands. A recent issue of Sierra magazine catalogued this assault.

With each of these proposals – whether to ramp-up oil and gas exploration in the Rocky Mountain region, allow unfettered access for road-building and off-road vehicle use, or ultimately remove protection for hundreds of millions of acres of U.S. lands managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management – the administration is allowing irresponsible corporations to benefit at our expense. By dismantling important environmental protections and pursuing development in previously unspoiled areas, the Bush administration is exploiting the public's land for private gain.

Healthy Forests Initiative: In the wake of the 2002 fire season, the Bush administration introduced the ill-named “Healthy Forests Initiative” which proposed increased logging across the landscape under the guise of “fuel reduction.” Last fall, the administration, Congress and allies in the timber industry exploited the public fear of wildfires to pass the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

This policy has also set the tone for forest management across the country, where logging – including the cutting of old growth and large, fire-resistant trees – now trumps recreation, clean water, restoration, and real community protection.

Undermining Wild Forest Protections: The Bush administration announced its changes to the landmark Roadless Area Conservation Rule which will exclude the Tongass and Chugach national forests in Alaska – a full 1/4 of the original rule's acreage – and forces Governors to petition the Forest Service to not construct roads in or otherwise develop inventoried wild roadless forest areas.

The proposed rule replaces the landmark Roadless Rule, leaving all 58 million acres of inventoried roadless areas in the United States open to road building, logging, and resource development. Until a state governor petitions for protection, management of inventoried roadless areas would be based on the individual forest management plans, which often require no special protections.

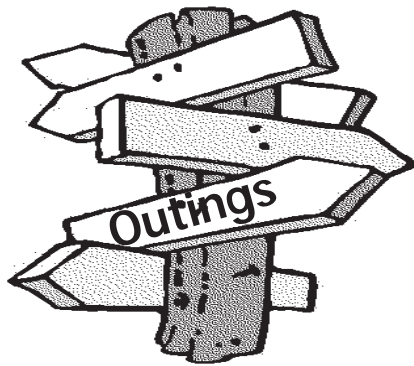
Oil and Gas Leasing: Across the American landscape, the Bush administration is moving to dramatically increase oil and gas leasing on public lands. The administration has directed federal agencies to consider energy extraction as the highest priority use for public lands and is actively assisting industry to expand drilling in several key places. This extraction imperative threatens to scar wild landscapes, pollute streams and destroy important wildlife habitat for species such as the endangered grizzly bear.

Mountaintop Removal Mining: The Bush administration and friends in the coal industry support a form of strip mining known as “mountaintop removal mining.” This practice blasts off the tops of mountains and pushes the so-called “mining waste” into the mountain valleys below, forever burying the headwaters of some of West Virginia's pristine mountain streams. Though the blasting and dumping known as “valley fill” occurs on private (coal company) land, the results extend far beyond its borders, destroying communities and the environment.

Wilderness Threats: The Bush administration entered into a settlement agreement with the State of Utah last year committing to never again allow the Bureau of Land Management to designate Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) on the public lands it manages. This agreement strips away special protections for millions of acres of pristine land across the west. This backroom deal not only stopped future designation of WSAs to protect areas that qualify as wilderness, it also revoked protections for those WSAs established after 1993.

RS2477 Loophole: The Bush administration reopened a loophole in an 1866 mining law known as RS (Revised Statute) 2477 that has state and local governments signaling their intention to file thousands of unsubstantiated claims for federal rights-of way. This long-outdated statute would allow special interests -- including the oil, gas and timber industries -- to bulldoze highways through our most precious Western parks and refuges, and threatens to have a lasting and devastating impact on America's public lands.

National Monument Management: National Monuments provide sanctuary for wildlife, shelter for archaeological treasures and a haven of solitude and splendor for all Americans. But the Bush administration is pushing to maximize mining and drilling, allow unfettered access for road-building and ORV use, and ultimately extinguish any interim protection for millions of acres of Bureau of Land Management lands across the United States.



April 30

Devil's Den - Chickasaw National Recreation Area

Here's a chance to see some of the best features of south central Oklahoma created by the Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer. We'll leave Norman at

10:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 30. Our first stop will be at Davis to eat homemade tamales. Next we'll view Buffalo and Antelope Springs at the Chickasaw National Recreational Area. Our main destination will be Devil's Den on Pennington Creek, one of the most beautiful streams in Oklahoma set in granite boulders reminiscent of the Valley of the Boulders in the Wichita Mountains. We'll hike around Devil's Den, enjoy the rock formations and cool our feet in Pennington. Bring food for a picnic supper. A large ice chest will be available for anything which needs to be kept cold and drinks will be provided by the Sierra Club. Picnic tables are available at Devil's Den, so you don't need to bring a chair. All of what we will see is made possible by the springs of the Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer, which is under a continuing threat from water developers who desire to pump the water of the aquifer for profit to municipal users outside of the area. This outing is limited to 12 persons, so please sign up only if you are sure you can attend. The hiking is moderate, not strenuous, but some balance is required. Advance signup is required. Call Rick Poland at 405-360-5001 or e-mail at rgpoland@swbell.net

May 14

Lake Thunderbird Dayhike

If you want to car pool meet at 8:20 am in the Target parking lot by the recycling center. Alternatively, meet at 9:00 am at the pavilion by the dam. Take highway 9 east to the exit for the dam area (if you come to the casino on the right, you have gone too far). Bring something to drink and a snack for this three hour easy hike. Fee none, invite a friend to come along. Questions, call John Raeside 321-4518.

May 15

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Hike the Dog Run Hollow six mile loop trail. Meet at the Target parking lot in Norman at 8:00 am. Carpooling will be available. Alternatively, meet at the visitor center on the Refuge at 10:00. We will hike through a variety of habitats and this time of year wildlife is very active. Depending on the rain, wildflowers may be putting on a show. Hiking boots are recommended, bring water and snacks. After the hike we will stop to eat at the Riverside Cafe in Medicine Park. The plan is to be back to Norman by 6:00 pm give or take an hour. Fee none, rating moderate, bring a friend. Questions, call John Raeside at 321-4518.

Earth Day Social Event

Saturday, April 23
7:00 p.m.

Sierra Club Office
575 S. University Blvd.,
Norman

(on top of Harold's Warehouse on Campus Corner)



All Oklahoma Sierra Club members and their guests are invited. Please Come!

- The Club will provide the main dish (meat) as well as beer wine and soft drinks.
- Bring a covered dish if you like.
- Live music appropriate for the occasion is planned.
- This is social event, no speakers or program planned.

Giving Back

The seasons of change are always good times to visit nature. Those who took advantage last fall and this spring to use Sutton Wilderness clean-ups as an opportunity to do just that are Haven Tobias, Walter Kelley, Rhett Jackson, Dan Butler, Jane Boren, Shana Murphy, Matthew Johnson, Tom Wakely, John Raeside, Lyntha Wesner, Paul and Elizabeth Buckelew and Judith Wilkins; coffee courtesy House of Poland. Giving back to the community is good any season!

Red Earth Group Officers

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* indicates Executive Committee member

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