

“NUCLEAR RENNAISSANCE” OR NUCLEAR NIGHTMARE?

By Bob Guild, Chapter Chair

The December 2006 meeting of the SC Governor’s Nuclear Advisory Council was a veritable love fest for the initiates in attendance. New nuclear waste dump Czar Steve Creamer winged into town on the glibly-named “Energy Solutions, Inc.” corporate jet to proclaim that a “nuclear renaissance” was just over the horizon for us lucky folk in little ‘ol South Carolina. He and his associates just bought up both the Chem-Nuclear rad waste landfill in Barnwell and its erstwhile competitor, the “Envirocare” dump in the high desert of Utah. After lots of hearty congratulations, the Council members and nuclear industry suits who filled the state capitol meeting room got down to business. Mr. Creamer told of the golden opportunity for South Carolina to capitalize on our hard-earned reputation as the nuclear waste dump of the nation, by expanding into the nuclear waste dump of the entire world!

Creamer, who rose from the ranks of Utah’s version of South Carolina’s Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) to join the industry he once “regulated”,- came to town to tell us that the “nuclear renaissance” heralded by the Bush Administration’s “Global Nuclear Energy Partnership” would mean “Billions” (yes, with a “B”) for us in SC. We would get the opportunity to be the world’s center for “recycling” nuclear waste, not just from the bomb plant at the Savannah River Site (SRS), as we’ve done for over 50 years, but from an expanded commercial nuclear power industry *world-wide*, which would bless us by sending all its nuclear waste here!

What Mr. Creamer didn’t say is that such nuclear “recycling,” or spent fuel reprocessing, is the very same activity that has generated some 36 million gallons of high level nuclear waste which continues to leak from cracked and corroding steel tanks over shallow aquifers near the Savannah River at SRS. Attempts to use this same technology at the Allied General Nuclear Services facility in Barnwell were halted in the 1980’s by both Democratic and Republican administra-



Nuclear waste transporter on the road to Barnwell

tions because of nuclear weapons proliferation concerns. Our own DHEC describes this high level reprocessing waste as the greatest environmental hazard facing South Carolina. Even now the Sierra Club is challenging DHEC’s proposed OK for the government to abandon some 2.3 million curies of this nuclear waste in a shallow landfill in South Carolina instead of sending it to a deep geologic repository in the western desert.

Ironically, Mr. Creamer’s company markets our own Chem-Nuclear dump for the most dangerous Class B and C nuclear waste from power plant cooling systems and decommissioned reactors. The Barnwell landfill has already contaminated the adjacent St Paul’s Church property and continues to leak a plume of radioactive Tritium into shallow groundwater for over ½ mile to the waters of Marys Branch Creek which flows to the Savannah River. At the same time “Energy Solutions” solicits only the most benign Class A nuclear waste, like boots and gloves, for its dry desert Utah facility where groundwater lies far beneath the surface and rainfall is a mere fraction of what we experience. And he calls this idea an “energy solution”?

For additional information on Sierra Club’s 2006 Energy Resources Policy, go to:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/energy.pdf>

on the Chapter’s challenge to the Barnwell nuclear waste dump, go to <http://southcarolina.sierraclub.orgChemNuclearProposedOrderFinal%20Word2.pdf>

on the Bush Administration’s proposed nuclear revival go to: <http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/gnep/agnep.pdf>

and on nuclear waste threats at SRS go to http://www.ieer.org/sdfiles/vol_12/sda12-2.pdf

Chapter Director Dell Isham met with former U.S. Senator John Edwards in Forest Acres, South Carolina recently. On December 30 Edwards announced in West Columbia, South Carolina that he was a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Edwards had an outstanding environmental record as a Senator and is making global warming a cornerstone of his race



Steelworkers Sue Giant Cement

If you live anywhere in North America and have some really nasty stuff and want to get rid of it, you can always send it to South Carolina.

The United Steel Workers International Union thinks the public has the right to know what is being sent, stored, used, and burned in our state. They allege that Giant Resource Recovery-Harleyville, Inc. and other associated Giant Cement corporations have been withholding this information from the citizens of Alabama, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. They are suing Giant for violation of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act.

The Sierra Club and the Steel Workers are working cooperatively throughout the country wherever they have common interests. "While we want to protect the environment, they are also protecting their members. We appreciate them consulting with us before they filed their lawsuit in October," said Dell Isham, Director of the South Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Giant Cement in Harleyville, South Carolina is the 10th largest recipient of hazardous waste in the country, burning more than 100,000 tons of waste per year. Hazardous waste is shipped to Harleyville from as far away as Tijuana, Mexico.

The Steel Workers claim that Giant Cement repeatedly failed to report accurate information to state and federal regulators about the identity and quantity of toxic chemicals over the last five years. Daily fines authorized under the Right-to-Know Act could calculate into the billions of dollars, reflecting the seriousness of the violations.

The reporting requirements are intended to assist emergency responders. A facility in Apex, North Carolina recently exploded into flames forcing 17,000 citizens to flee. Firefighters, police, and emergency personnel had no records of the chemicals on site. Dozens were injured with breathing difficulties, vision impairment, and internal bleeding.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Giant facilities have also been in violation of the Clean Air Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. In the last three years Giant facilities have been subjected to more than 40 enforcement actions by state and federal regulators.

South Carolina Dept. of Health and Environmental Control records show an average of two recorded violations per year since 2000, usually followed by a warning letter or small fine.

United Steel Workers District Director Connie Entekin said, Giant is "putting union members and our communities at enormous risk. There has to be a heavy penalty to hold this company accountable and prevent other companies, in the cement industry and elsewhere, from doing the same."



Giant Cement in Harleyville, South Carolina, has numerous environmental violations

Emergency Action Needed on Net Metering

Dear Fellow Sierrans,

I am asking for your help, and I am asking for it today. When you finish reading this, please pull out pen and paper (or fire up your computer) and compose a letter to the South Carolina Public Service Commission (PSC).

You have all heard about global warming. Those who have read more deeply about this ecological crisis have come to the realization that we are standing on the brink of a catastrophe of mind-boggling proportions. To put it in a nutshell, the changes global warming will bring about could be as severe as what happened 65 million years ago when an asteroid struck our planet (the dinosaurs went extinct).

Depressed? You should be. The next step is to do something about it. This is where net metering comes in. If enough Sierrans write to the PSC before February 1 we can bring about a change that will allow us to begin kicking the fossil fuel habit.

Net metering allows consumer-producers of electricity to hook up to the existing electric grid. In doing so, it provides three important incentives for consumers to generate their own renewable energy (solar or wind).

They do not have to store the electricity they produce in batteries, which must be replaced periodically (i.e., very bad for the environment).

A grid-connected system typically costs \$3,000-\$5,000 less to install than an off-grid system. Excess electricity (up to a point) can be sold back to the public utility, further reducing the consumer's costs.

The Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act (PURPA) was passed in 1978, in the midst of the energy crises that ripped through industrial world economies. Faced with predictions that the price of oil would rise to \$100 a barrel, Congress acted to reduce dependence on foreign oil, to promote alternative energy sources and energy efficiency, and to diver-

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Legislative Report

By
Cary D. Chamblee, Lobbyist

When the new two-year legislative session begins in January we expect a number of conservation issues to be considered. Some, like regulatory takings, will require us to play defense and others like energy legislation to help in the fight against Global Warming will require plowing new ground and requires a strong offense. I have outlined eight legislative issues below that I expect to take center stage among conservation related legislation.

Smart Energy Solutions – Global climate change, which is caused by the accumulation of greenhouse gases, chiefly carbon dioxide, is threatening our planet and putting many plant and animal species under stress. We expect to see significant support this session for measures that support energy conservation and the development of sources of energy that reduce our reliance on petroleum, natural gas and coal. There will likely be support for enhanced efforts and more emphasis on informing the public of this looming problem; for research in new and improved technology; and for conservation and other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Regulation of Surface Water Use – South Carolina has little control over the use of surface water. This has caused problems in the budgeting of water among competing users of our state's surface water and ensuring that some is left for wildlife and fisheries and future human needs. Also this lack of regulation is causing problems as we try to negotiate with our neighboring states on the use of water from rivers that are shared. Sen. Wes Hayes of Rock Hill has appointed a committee of stakeholders that is attempting to develop legislation for introduction in the next session.

River Shacks – Floating fishing and hunting shacks are showing up in ever increasing numbers on rivers along the coast, in the Upper Santee Swamp and as far inland as the US 601 bridge over the Congaree. At last count there were more than 160 of these shacks littering seven rivers. These floating shacks are unsightly, unsanitary and an improper use of public property and public waters for the private enjoyment of a few. Though most are unregistered and ille-

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gal there is no current method to rid our state's waters of this growing scourge. Legislation will be needed to remove and dispose of them.

Conservation Bank – The SC Conservation Bank, in its first three years, has funded the protection of more than 74,000 acres statewide. A small minority of House members make annual attempts to remove the bank funds or to take the funds for their pet local projects. The Sierra Club will be watching this fund closely to assure its continued future.

Maintaining Community Rights – The Sierra Club supports the rights of local communities and local governments to decide how their communities will develop through zoning or other local ordinances that protect property values and the public welfare. We have seen recent attempts by big developers to influence the legislature to take these local rights away and cast these local decisions as a regulatory taking. Big developers, like Burroughs and Chapin of Myrtle Beach, are behind this move and according to a recent editorial in *The State*, so is Howard Rich, the same New York developer that has funded the regulatory takings measure in numerous states in the last year. The Sierra Club is working closely with a large and ever growing number of conservation organizations, local chambers of commerce, local realtors and others to stop further attempts to take away local rights. This coalition, named **Citizens for Community Protections**, will be working to defeat any attempt to take away the rights of local citizens to make decisions about the future of their community. This will perhaps be the biggest conservation issue this year.

Water Quality – South Carolina's surface water suffers from many forms of pollution, including fecal coli form and mercury contamination. Legislation related to storm water, septic tanks, wastewater permits and pollution warning signs is needed.

Transportation Planning – Political influence, in this state, instead of objective evaluation, often determines important transportation decisions. This is leading to waste of public resources, environmental degradation, and an erosion of public support. Several powerful committees are studying this issue and legislation to reorganize the DOT is likely.

Isolated Wetlands – Isolated wetlands that are not protected by federal law have inadequate protection under state law. The Sierra Club favors legislation to correct this gap in the protection of our states remaining isolated freshwater wetlands.

The Sierra Club needs volunteers to contact their legislators or to come to the Statehouse to help in our lobby efforts.

If you have questions, advice on an issue, or wish to help in the Sierra Club's lobby efforts, please email me at chamblee@gmail.com.

sify the electric power industry.

One of the most important effects of the law was to create a market for power from non-utility power producers, which now provide 7% of the country's power. Before PURPA, only utilities could own and operate electric generating plants. PURPA required utilities to buy power from independent companies that could produce power for less than what it would have cost for the utility to generate the power, called the "avoided cost".

PURPA has been the most effective single measure in promoting renewable energy. More than 40 states have adopted regulations requiring electric utilities to provide net metering to qualifying customers. South Carolina is one of the only states that has not done this.

The deadline for public comment to be received in the PSC office is Feb. 1, 2007 (i.e., postmark your letter no later than January 29).

Send your comments to:
Attention: Charles L. A. Terreni
Chief Clerk/Administrator
South Carolina Public Service Commission
101 Executive Center Drive
Columbia, SC 29211

Sincerely,
Steve Johnson, Member, SC Chapter Smart Energy Committee

Announcements

Partake in the John Bachman group's fun-filled Organic Wine Tasting and Silent Auction Event 6:30 to 9 p.m. Friday evening, February 2nd at the wonderful Jasmine House, 2208 North Lake Drive, near Irmo. Fundraising is for the water conservation projects in Lexington and Richland Counties. Tickets are \$25 each, or \$30 at the door. Contact either Pam Greenlaw, pmlgrnlw@yahoo.com 736-2977 or Susan Grey, sgrey1026@aol.com 419-3823.



Mapquest and other websites that offer drivers directions are great -- if you have a car. But now there are websites for public transit riders. HopStop.com and BusMonster.com are helping bus subway and rail riders in some cities get from here to there.

LAND USE LAWS

By Alison Ford, Coordinator, Citizens for Community Protection

Citizens for Community Protection is a broad-based state coalition that supports a community's prerogative to enact and enforce reasonable land use laws. The coalition is actively gathering support from local governments, Chambers of Commerce, Home Owners Associations, historic preservation societies and conservation groups to fight regulatory takings legislation which is sure to be re-introduced in 2007.

In 2006, the SC House of Representatives considered a bill, H 4503, which would have brought all future planning and zoning to a halt. Under H 4503 local governments would be required to either pay cash compensation to private property owners who claim new zoning rules prohibit the highest economic use of their land, or waive the rules and regulations.

The implications of H 4503, if it were to have passed, would be far-reaching and irreversible. Citizens for Community Protection is dedicated to stopping the passage of this type of harmful legislation and ensuring all South Carolinians have the right to determine the face of their community.

For more information on the coalition and the effort to defeat takings legislation in the 2007 legislative session, contact their grassroots coordinator, Alison Floyd, at 803-771-6468 or Alison@citizens4cp.org.

Candidates Endorsed 78 Percent Win

The South Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club endorsed 29 Democrats and 12 Republican for local, state and national office in the 2006 General Election. Seventy-eight percent of endorsed candidates won; 20 of the 29 endorsed Democrats and all the endorsed Republicans.

New legislative officer holders, endorsed by the Sierra Club, include Carl Gullick, Bakari Sellers, and Kit Spires.

Congressional Candidates

District 1:	Randy Maata (D)
LOST	
District 2:	John Spratt (D)
WON	

Statewide Candidates

Governor:	Mark Sanford (R) WON
Lt. Governor:	Robert Barber (D) LOST
Attorney General:	Henry McMaster (R) WON
Dept. of Agriculture:	Emile DeFelice (D) LOST

State Representatives

#7	Mike Gambrell (R-Anderson) WON
#11	Paul Agnew (D-Abbeville) WON
#12	Anne Parks (D-Greenwood) WON
#13	Lewis Pinson (R-Greenwood) WON
#31	Harold Mitchell (D-Spartanburg) WON
#35	Keith Kelly (R-Spartanburg) WON
#41	Creighton Coleman (D-Chester) WON

Transportation Going Nowhere

By Dell Isham, Chapter Director

Government should be accountable, efficient, and operate in the public interest. The South Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) fails on all counts.

A few years ago the Sierra Club evaluated all of the state departments of transportation. The resulting grade for South Carolina, not surprisingly, was an "F" because the department sees itself only as a "highway department."

The state legislature has been so dissatisfied with the services provided by the DOT that they have repeatedly refused to consider an increase in the fuels tax rate to support the department. We now have the third lowest gas tax in the nation as our transportation system declines.

The recent Legislative Audit report revealed millions in squandered taxpayer dollars, an all too cozy relationship with contractors, and no rational planning process.

When the chairman of the Transportation Commission found fault with the direction of the department, the director felt secure enough to criticize him in public both verbally and in writing.

The department has neglected alternative modes of transportation. It has failed to take advantage of the millions of federal dollars in "flexible funds" available for non-highway transportation projects. Certainly public transit, bike lanes, sidewalks and inter-city rail deserve funding along with air pollutant highway transportation.

The department has neglected the environment. The filling of wetlands for highways has caused flooding on the Coast. They oppose eliminating the Congaree River causeway on Highway 601, which is damaging wildlife habitat. They support building new highways through a Heritage Trust site and over pristine areas of the Waccamaw River. Everywhere in the state their lack of planning has caused sprawl, congestion, frustration, and pollution.

The department has neglected the "fix-it-first" philosophy. They would rather build now and worry about maintenance costs later. The evidence of this shortsighted policy is revealed throughout the state.

These problems will not be corrected until the structure of the decision-making process is changed. Six regional legislative caucuses each choose one of the Transportation Commissioners, the theoretical policy-making body for the department. This structure gives legislators the illusion they are in control. The truth is, no one is in control.

The governor can only appoint the commission chair. Of the seven commissioners, this is the only person answerable to someone else.

A bad governance structure has resulted in substandard service. The public deserves better. It is up to the legislature to change it.

"Editors Note: On December 19th, Department of Transportation Director Elizabeth S. Mabry was offered early retirement by the Transportation Commission and she accepted. Her last day as director was December 31, 2006."



EXCOM REELECTS OFFICERS; SET CONSERVATION GOALS

The executive committee (excom) of the Chapter met for a final time in 2006 on December 2nd and reelected all of the incumbent officers -- Bob Guild, Chair; Eric Thompson, Vice Chair; Erika Hartwig, Secretary, and Jim Robey, Treasurer.

The results of the at-large excom election were also announced at the meeting. Guild and Ollie Johnson were re-elected and Erica Langenbahn was elected to her first term. Alonzo Frazier did not run for reelection but was honored for his years of dedicated service, as was Barb Postles who resigned as newsletter editor after serving 12 years in that position. Priscilla Preston was appointed to take her place.

The top four conservation and legislative priorities for 2007 were adopted as global warming, regulatory takings, water quality, and the protection of isolated wetlands. Additional priority issues are water withdrawal permitting, transportation planning, land preservation, nuclear waste, and the elimination of river shacks.

Other items reported at the meeting were:

Fundraising is slightly behind 2006.

Adjusted newsletter advertising rates to meet costs.

Training was reported as the greatest need expressed by groups.

National agreed to the chapter's request to speed legal appeals procedures.

Membership grew by 6.5 percent from last year.

The fastest growing group is the Winyah Group.

Of the 41 endorsed political candidates 32 won their races.

Continued on page 5.



NEW SIERRA CLUB RADIO!

The Communications Team is pleased to announce the launch December 16th, of "Sierra Club Radio," a weekly half hour radio program that will be broadcast in the San Francisco Bay Area and available nationally on the Web and via podcast. Sierra Club Radio is designed to help us meet the mounting demand for "green" news -- information Americans can use as consumers, as citizens, as neighbors and parents to make responsible choices and to connect to the growing environmental community.



The program, produced by Sierra Club staff and hosted by Club publicist Orli Cotel, will feature Sierra Club content -- including lifestyle tips from Sierra magazine's Green Life editor Jennifer Hattam and Mr. Green, Bob Schildgen; in-depth interviews with Sierra Club Books authors and contributors to Sierra magazine; and political observations and commentary by Executive Director Carl Pope. The program will also highlight stories from our conservation work, our grassroots fieldwork, and our partnership work -- especially our hunter/angler and faith outreach efforts. In addition, Sierra Club Radio will feature in-depth conversations with a wide range of environmental experts and activists, artists, and authors inspired by nature.

Sierra Club radio is broadcast every Saturday at 3:30 pm on the Quake radio (960 am) in the Bay Area. The program will be available on the Web and via pod cast the following Monday at www.sierraclub.com. Please check it out and let us know what you would like to hear on Sierra Club Radio. If you have story ideas, please send them to orli.cotel@sierraclub.org, and put "Sierra Club Radio story idea" in the subject line.

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EXCOM GOALS, continued from page 4

The meeting schedule for 2007 was set by the excom. It is as follows:

- February 3 in Columbia
- May 5-6 in Sumter County
- July 21 by conference call
- October 13-14 in Aiken County
- December 1 in Columbia

Dell Isham
Chapter Director
South Carolina Chapter
dell.isham@sierraclub.org

OUTINGS

January 13, 2007: Henry's Knob Group

We'll make our annual trip up nearby Crowder's Mountain. This is a strenuous hike, so wear good hiking boots or comfortable shoes with traction. Bring lunch, hot chocolate and water. There's a great view waiting at the top for our lunch break. Meet at Oakland Avenue Presbyterian parking lot in Rock Hill at 9:00 am. The parking lot is on Park Ave., below the Wesley Foundation. Or meet us at Crowder's Mountain State Park at 10:00 to begin the hike. **RSVP** to Jewel Reavis, 803-448-4578 or gowild@comporium.net.

Rated: Strenuous

January 13, 2007: Foothills Group

Chimney Top North Carolina. Beginning at the High Hampton Inn we will hike up Chimney Top Mountain. The trail is only 1.5 miles each way, but the last half mile is very steep, making for slow going. Also we will have to scramble over a few outcrops. The reward is a 360 deg. view of the southern Appalachians from atop this 4,618 foot peak. Whiteside Mountain is close by and resembles a medieval castle from this vantage point. Rating is strenuous, distance is 3 miles. Bring lunch and water, dogs are welcome. Meet at the Ingles @ routes 123 and 130 @ 9:00AM. For more info contact Mark Williams @864-882-6511

January 20th, 2007: Pee Dee Group

Jeffries Creek Preservation Project Awareness Tour (Florence, SC) The Pee Dee Group has adopted Jeffries Creek as an official Sierra Club sanctioned project. Anne Stoeckmann will be our guide to help explain what preservation activities are taking place. Optional 1 hour paddle from Naturally Outdoors up to the rail trail depending on water level and interest level. Canoes/recreational kayaks are available at Naturally Outdoors. Note that Creek Fest – held in March – is the annual fundraiser for this project. Time: 9:00-11:00 a.m. Jeffries Creek Park, Florence (meet in the parking lot on Wisteria--the Florence Country Club side) Bring binoculars.

January 20, 2007: Cathcart Group

Savannah National Wildlife Refuge Hike. Non strenuous hike to be led by Bill Hamel. 9AM. Allyn Schneider. (843) 837-2018.

January 20th, 2007: Lunz Group

Coastal bird watching trip to Huntington Beach State Park. About six mile hike along the beach. Fabulous opportunity to view northern birds in our southern climate. We'll watch for rabid birders and hope to see cormorants diving, Loons swimming, purple sandpipers piping and a host of wonderful waterfowl and sea gulls. Possible side trip to Brookgreen Gardens for a quiet winter tour of the sculpture gardens. Could be an overnight car camp if there's interest. Call Starr Hazard (843-881-8902) or e-mail hazardes@bellsouth.net

January 27, 2007, William Bartram Group

At 9 A.M. from the Unitarian Universalist Church parking lot in Spartanburg we will leave for a winter's hike on the Cottonwood Trail in Spartanburg. We will walk the full length of this lovely trail, much of it along the banks of Lawson's Fork Creek. Rated moderate. Non-members are welcome. Hike goes rain or shine. For those who wish to go after the hike, we will head down to the former Sandwich Factory for some hot soup and a sandwich. Phone Jack Seitz, (864) 948-1080 (H), 597-4589 (O) for more details.

January 27, 2007: Foothills Group

Foothills Trail – Sloan Bridge to Upper Whitewater Falls
Sierra Club member Mark Williams will take us on a hike to enjoy the spectacular Upper Whitewater Falls, just across the border in North Carolina. Measuring the series of cascades from top to bottom, they are higher than Niagara Falls (but, of course, have a lot less water). It is a 5.5-mile hike east from the Sloan Bridge Picnic area, passing near the top of Grassy Knob and just south of Round Mountain. During the winter the trail offers several spectacular vistas. Rating: moderate-strenuous. We will park cars at each end of the trail to avoid having to hike both ways. Meet at the Seneca Ingles on routes 130 and 123 at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch and water. Call leader Mark Williams at 864-882-6511 for details. Dogs are welcome

February 3, 2007 Lunz Group

Day hike at the Donnelley Wildlife Management Area, in the Ace Basin Six to eight mile walk along the dikes of an old inland rice impoundment, and through beautiful hardwood and upland pine forests. Call Bill Turner at 571-3503.

February 10, 2007: Foothills Group

Sierra Club member Mark Williams will take us to the top of one of the prettiest little hills in the state. Due to the high elevation of the park, very little climbing is necessary to reach the peak. The knob is wooded, but once the leaves are down, it affords some charming views of the foothills and piedmont. Four miles round trip, rated easy. Meet at the Seneca Ingles @ routes 130 and 123 at 9:00 a.m. Bring water and lunch, dogs are welcome. Call leader Mark Williams at 864-882-6511 for details.

February 24th, 2007: Pee Dee Group

Caesars Head State Park/ Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area – Hike to Raven Cliff Falls (Greenville County, SC – see link below for park details) A network of easy to strenuous hiking trails in the Mountain Bridge Recreation Area links Caesars Head and Jones Gap state parks. For all the scenic waterfalls in South Carolina, only a few qualify for postcard status, and Raven Cliff Falls is one of them. This 400-foot waterfall always provides a great picture taking opportunity. This hike is 7.7 miles (shorter less strenuous route available). See for more information and directions. <http://www.sctrails.net/Trails/ALLTRAILS/Waterfalls/Ravencliff.html><http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/park-finder/state-park/1648.aspx>. Travel time: 4 hours from Florence, SC. Time: 10:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. Meet in parking lot at Raven Cliff Falls trailhead on US 276. Requirements: Dress for the weather, hiking boots, lunch. Reasonable physical health. PARTICIPANTS MUST CONTACT OUTINGS LEADER FOR THIS TRIP IN CASE PLANS CHANGE.

February 24' 2007: Foothills Group

Sunrise Rock @ Caesars Head. Meet @ Ingles @ routes 130 and 123 at 9:00AM. Bring water and lunch, dogs are welcome. Call Leader Mark Williams at 864-882-6511 for more info.

March 3, 2007 Lunz Group

Day hike at Bonneau Ferry
Bonneau Ferry is a newly preserved tract of some 10,000 acres on the Cooper River, saved in part through the efforts of the Nature Conservancy and the State Conservation Bank. The property encompasses over 13 miles of riverfront, and includes the remains of the Coming Tee plantation house, built in the early 1700's, and an old rice mill. Call Bill Turner at 571-3503.

March 17, 2007 Lunz Group

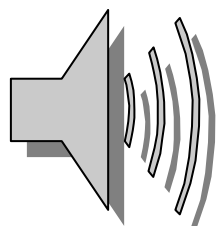
Bicycle trek around the Bear Island Wildlife Management Area
We'll ride at a fairly leisurely pace along the scenic dikes and marshland impoundments of Bear Island. There is no other place with higher concentrations of wildlife than this refuge in the heart of the Ace Basin. Participants should be prepared to pedal for two or three hours, though it will be possible to shortcut the trip if anyone wishes to return early. Call Bill Turner at 571-3503.

March 17' 2007: Foothills Group

Wildflowers at Station Cove Falls
This is the Upstate's premier location for spring wildflowers. Station Cove Falls which is part of Station Falls State Park. Distance, three miles, rated easy. Meet at Seneca Ingles at 10:00AM. Bring water and lunch. Call leader Steve Johnson at 864-654-3360

April 14, 2007 Lunz Group

Rimini Swamp canoe / kayak trip -
A breathtakingly beautiful place in the spring, Rimini is like no other place in South Carolina. Come see where Rep. Clyburne wants to build an \$80 million bridge, in the name of economic development. There will be some upstream paddling and maneuvering through tight passages, so this trip is not recommended for beginners. Call Bill Turner at 571-3503.



SPEAKER'S BUREAU 2007

The South Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club wants to spread the word on exploring and protecting our wild places on the earth, practicing and promoting responsible use of the earth's resources, and educating the public on the environment. Public education is a primary purpose of the Sierra Club. To meet this challenge two dozen of your fellow members have stepped forward to participate as the chapter's speakers' bureau. If you need a program or belong to an organization that needs a speaker, please look to the following as your resource for public education. Contact speakers individually to make arrangements."

Name	Topic	Phone & Email
Amy Armstrong	Wetlands, Environmental Law, Coastal Ecology	803-466-9696 amy@scelp.org
Dennis Chamberlain	Public Lands, Artic National Wildlife Refuge	864-331-3069 wdchamberlainlaw@greenvillelaw.net
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Tom Manning	General Environment	864-646-5171 tcmann@bellsouth.net
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Nena Rice	Archeology	803-799-6458 nrice@sc.edu
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Eric Thompson	Air Quality, Global Warming	864-297-6015 ericarol66@yahoo.com
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CONTRIBUTORS RECOGNIZED

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Continued from page 3

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OPINION

Editor,

Olin Corp. is a chlorine manufacturer located directly on the Savannah River in Augusta, Georgia. Olin uses mercury in the manufacture of these chemicals. It is an obsolete method that contaminates, unnecessarily, Georgia and South Carolina waters alike. Oceana, an ocean advocacy group, and Savannah Riverkeeper have partnered to stop Olin's pollution. Each year, beyond the regulated limits, Olin loses seven hundred pounds of mercury!

Lauren Smith, working with Frank Carl, the Savannah Riverkeeper, sampled sediment from the Olin drainage canal. Mercury levels are considered toxic at 500ppb. In some parts of the canal, Lauren's samples averaged 60,000ppb! The canal drains directly into the Savannah, and background samples show that mercury levels in the river double just downstream of the plant. Lauren's experiment was reported to the Georgia EPD, and as a result of her experiment, Olin has been ordered by them to do a site clean-up.

Olin uses many tons of mercury daily in the process of manufacturing chlorine and, in the process, the mercury is heated, increasing evaporation. In fact, Olin cannot account for about 700 pounds of mercury annually. Note: this missing mercury is not counted as part Olin's legal emissions. Indeed the lost mercury is not regulated at all.

700 pounds of mercury can contaminate the river at more than twice the level needed to contaminate all bass in the Savannah River. It is enough to require consumption warnings for catfish and bass. In fact, half of 34 catfish caught downstream from Olin had sufficient mercury levels to trigger fish consumption warnings.

Much of the mercury washes out to the ocean where the ebb and flow of the tide keep it available to fish for a very long time. Ocean contamination significantly affects important commercial species like swordfish and tuna.

The mercury method itself is obsolete and unnecessary. 90% of chlorine manufacturers use membrane cells at their plants. Membrane cells save energy, save the plants money on toxics management and insurance. Only eight chlorine manufacturers in the United States still use the mercury method. The Olin plant is substandard.

Federal legislation introduced by Senator Obama may soon prohibit chlorine manufacturers from using mercury at all, but the bill lacks a sponsor in the house. The Georgia EPD has an upcoming decision to renew Olin's permit. We ask you to contact your state representatives and the Aiken DHEC officials and urge them to take an official position on mercury contamination in the Savannah River. Up to now, South Carolina has been silent on this question. Mercury cannot be contained by the lines on a map, neither can environmental interests be. Call your representatives, write them, and act now for the health of our water, our air and our food supply

Jon Pezold, Community Organizer
Oceana Inc.,

Frank Carl, Executive Director
Savannah Riverkeeper

Biofuels are not the enemy

By Erika Hartwig

Sometimes in our fervor to protect the environment, we lose sight of the bigger picture. Such is the case with alternative transportation fuels like ethanol and biodiesel, also known as biofuels. South Carolina is leading the nation in the number of publicly-accessible pumps for biodiesel and ethanol. In June 2006 the SC General Assembly passed some of the most aggressive state tax incentives for ethanol and biodiesel production and distribution in the country. This great step forward is due partly to the fact that we have a network of experts who have diligently promoted biofuels for over five years as an answer to air and water pollution.

For the first time we are seeing bipartisan support for a renewable fuel in South Carolina and the environmental community, in some instances, has shunned this amazing step forward.

The Sierra Club has stated it does not support the production of ethanol from corn, though it does support cellulosic ethanol. For the first time I disagree with a Sierra Club policy because it doesn't account for the many supplemental benefits we get from natural biofuels as compared to petroleum. The benefits of biofuel over gasoline are extensive.

- **Biofuels are better for air quality than petroleum.** Ethanol reduces net production of carbon dioxide, has 25% less carbon monoxide, 25% less nitrogen oxide, 32% less greenhouse emissions and 25% less particulate matter. Biodiesel produces virtually no sulfur dioxide, reduces net production of carbon dioxide and produces 25% less particulate matter.

- **Biofuels are an answer to global warming.** Natural biofuel feedstocks like corn and soybeans use as much carbon dioxide in their life cycle as they release in your car as opposed to petroleum which has stored carbon dioxide under the ground for millions of years.

- **Biofuels will not result in the next Exxon Valdez oil spill or cause us to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.** Ethanol is 100% grain alcohol. If we spill ethanol on the ground it will naturally degrade. Additionally, by investing in alternative transportation fuels we prevent precious and sacred lands from being exploited and destroyed for oil production like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or the Rocky Mountains.

- **Biofuel tax subsidies are not significant.** Though biofuels are getting support from federal and state tax dollars, the subsidies for biofuels are dwarfed by the subsidies going to oil, coal, and nuclear fuels.

- **The food vs. fuel argument for corn is unfounded.** Ethanol production utilizes only the starch portion of the corn kernel, which is abundant and of low nutritional value. The remaining vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber are sold as high-value livestock feed.

- **Sustainable feedstocks will be available in the mid-term.** In the mid-term, we will be making ethanol from cellulose, not corn, but we can't stifle the industry while it is still young. Cellulosic ethanol may never be a possibility if demand for the product diminishes and research funds dry up.

- **Biofuels are a piece of the puzzle.** Admittedly, biofuels are only a partial answer, just as solar energy is only a partial answer. However, I like to think that biofuels can also extend the life of a gallon of gasoline and hopefully with the right support - completely replace it.

- **Big oil is doing an excellent job of trashing biofuels.** Much of the information we see which opposes biofuels actually comes from reports funded by the oil industry. Because this is such a new issue, oil companies are preying upon the fears of environmentalists and unwittingly we are helping them. I am asking the Sierra Club to please reconsider biofuels as part of the answer to our future energy needs and to not reject them without full consideration.

If you would like to get some factual information about alternative transportation fuels I would highly recommend visiting www.e85fuel.org and www.biodiesel.org.

Editor's Note: For the Sierra Club policy, see <http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/altfuel.asp>

US Department of Energy
Biofuel Pump

