

Orange-Chatham Group Sierra Club

<http://nc.sierraclub.org/ocg/>

P.O. Box 1303, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

A Future Worth Creating

By Liz Cullington, Chatham Alliance for Sustainable Energy, and Dave Keesee, OCG Sierra Club

On May 14 at Central Carolina Community College, OCG Sierra Club and Chatham Alliance for Sustainable Energy sponsored a talk on creating a sustainable transportation system. Dave Erb, an automotive engineer from Asheville, surveyed various fuel and vehicle choices and outlined steps for kicking our fossil fuel habit.

If our vehicle fleet continues to consist mainly of internal combustion engines, can we grow fuel for them that would decrease the need for petroleum? Corn has been largely discredited as a feedstock for fuel.

Even the most optimistic numbers indicate that producing energy equivalent to current U.S. gasoline usage would require 1.6 billion acres of cornfields. That's 70 percent of the entire United States, including Death Valley, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and downtown Detroit. Even were such a diversion of land from food to fuel possible, it would be immoral to deprive large populations of nourishment.

Switchgrass and other cellulosic sources can't fulfill the need, either. Nor can biodiesel from soybeans, rapeseeds, or "waste" vegetable oil. Though growing liquid fuel does not release prehistoric carbon to the atmosphere, the balance between the amount of energy required to produce it and the amount it returns isn't favorable. Biofuels can't do the work.

Erb highlighted electric motors as better alternatives, as shown by the railroads, which have used diesel electric hybrid locomotives for years. So how could we power the electricity grid, which would now also power our vehicles?

Even if the grid is powered by coal, electric cars produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions than petroleum-fueled vehicles. But there are better ways. Solar power can run a large proportion of the grid through photovoltaics (PV). Even using the most generous assumptions for biofuels and the most conservative ones for PV panels, PV would produce far more power per acre. In addition, PV electricity production does not require irrigation or compete with food for arable land and can be located on rooftops, light poles, and brown-fields.

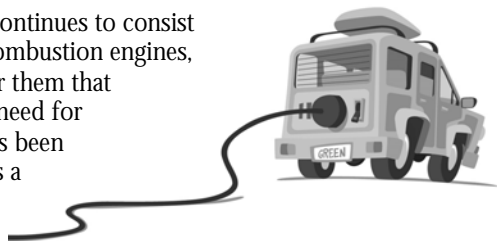
Erb advocates distributed generation involving small generators spread throughout the grid rather than our present centralized system. Since transition won't come all at once, Erb recommended four steps to sustainability:

1. Reduce vehicle miles traveled;
2. Use vehicles more productively, e.g., by carpooling;
3. Electrify most vehicles;
4. Diversify and improve the grid with non-combustion renewable energy.

Steps one and two could accomplish 80-90% of the goal of fuel and emissions reduction. Step three could cut remaining fuel use in half. The current price of oil has encouraged all three. Finally, we need to work for distributed generation of renewable power for the grid.

In the meantime, there are mistakes to avoid: Since they cannot meet U.S. demand, liquid fuels should not be receiving so much federal funding. By subsidizing liquid fuel alternatives and vehicles, including hydrogen, we are putting too many resources into the smallest part of the puzzle and are starving other solutions. Hydrogen should be avoided because of problems with storage, the necessity of building a new nationwide infrastructure, and the likelihood that its success would be tied to the resurgence of the nuclear industry.

We were grateful that Dave Erb came from Asheville (in his hybrid electric car, of course) for an engaging and informative evening.



Group Events

Attention all members: Recently we have tried meeting in various places and at various times of the month. Starting in September we will return to monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday at 7 p.m. at a new location: Binkley Baptist Church. To get there, take 15-501 toward University Mall in Chapel Hill. If going north, turn left at the first light after Estes (Willow Dr); if going south, turn right at the second light after the Days Inn (Willow Dr). Take the first left off Willow to reach church parking. Please attend and share your ideas for future speakers and programs.

Discussion with Ellie Kinnaird
Wednesday, September 10, 7-9 p.m.
Binkley Baptist Church

State Senator Ellie Kinnaird, currently serving her sixth term, will discuss environmental issues in the 2008 election. Before being elected to the North Carolina Senate, Kinnaird served as mayor of Carrboro. Over her career, Senator Kinnaird has been a passionate defender of our environment and has won many awards for her public service.

Transportation Discussion
Wednesday, October 8, 7-9 p.m.
Binkley Baptist Church

Local experts will discuss transportation issues. \$4 a gallon gas! Offshore drilling! Traffic accidents! More conflict due to oil! Learn about solutions. Please try to reach the meeting with the least energy possible. Bring your hybrid, all-electric, bike, skateboard or carpooled vehicle. Try the bus or your legs. There will be a special door prize for the person who arrives with the smallest carbon footprint!

Executive Committee Meetings
Second Monday of each month, 7-9 p.m.
Carolina Meadows Activities Center

Meetings are held in the second-floor conference room. Contact Judith Ferster (see reverse) for more information.

Serve on the Executive Committee

Please contact Loren Hintz (see reverse) by Sept. 17 if you are interested in running for OCG ExCom. Under national Sierra Club rules, ExCom is the decisionmaking body for our group. ExCom meets once a month, and every person on the committee is expected to serve as chair of a local committee or hold a group leadership position. This is a great opportunity to help your local group!

Join OCG's discussions online

Want to share ideas, events, news and knowledge with other OCG members? A new forum/discussion group list is being created called NC-OCG-FORUM to help make that happen in a quick and informal way.

To sign up, do one of the following:

- 1) Go to <http://lists.sierraclub.org> then to NC-OCG-FORUM and sign up on the webform there.
- 2) From your e-mail account, send the following message to LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG, leaving the subject line blank and placing your first and last names in the appropriate positions:
SUB NC-OCG-FORUM YourFirstName YourLastName

This list is for discussions relating to OCG Sierra Club members—outings, events, sharing ideas for conservation and the like. It is not an official OCG Sierra Club communication and it will be open to readers outside of the Sierra Club. Post and read with that in mind.



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Outings

Sierra Club outings are open to all. Outings are educational unless designated as a social (S). All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Ongoing Service Outing

3rd Saturdays on the Bolin Creek Trail: This is a long-term habitat restoration project, and we need many more volunteers. It's hard work, but very rewarding. The difference is visible immediately, and the effect is long-lasting. We meet at the Greenway entrance on Bolinwood Drive, just off Hillsborough Street in Chapel Hill. Please contact Bill Bracey at arboret@mindspring.com or 942-9937.

Current Outings

The North Carolina chapter of the Sierra Club is forming an "Atlantic Alliance" with nearby chapters and is interested in receiving feedback on proposed collaborative outings. Please visit <http://nc.sierraclub.org/outings/o080.html> to read about these proposed future outings and express your interest!

AUG 31 (Sun) Many of Durham's urban neighborhoods are shaded by large street trees planted more than 70 years ago. Now many are dying of old age and pollution stress, have been massively pruned, or even removed. How can we replace our urban trees? An easy, urban nature hike of 2 miles. For information con-

OCG takes a stand on local issues

The full versions of these statements can be found on the OCG website.

Orange County Waste Transfer Station

OCG ExCom was pleased when the Orange County Commissioners decided to reconsider the siting of a solid waste transfer station at the current landfill near the Rogers Rd. neighborhood, a historically Black community that has been adversely affected by the landfill. The OCG opposes the siting of the transfer station near the Rogers Rd. neighborhood and supports criteria that would remove communities like Rogers Rd. from the list of potential sites.

Glen Lennox Neighborhood

One goal of Sierra Club is to promote livable communities that reduce urban sprawl. Recently a proposal was submitted to redevelop the Glen Lennox apartment complex. We are pleased that the developer withdrew his proposal.

The OCG believes it is important to preserve the Glen Lennox community for a number of reasons. The neighborhood is home to many old deciduous trees, and is pedestrian and bike-friendly. Its proximity to UNC and moderate cost allow people to live, work, and study in Chapel Hill. The OCG supports the creation of a Neighborhood Conservation District, which will work to preserve this community. Careful consideration should be given to any future development.

tact Bob Healy (HWG) at healy@duke.edu.

SEPT 5-7 (Fri-Sun) Cabin Flats - Charlies Bunion Backpacking Trip. The route will avoid the crowds on the AT and at Icewater and Kephart Shelters. We will use the Bradley Fork trailhead out of Smokemont and then follow Cabin Flats Trail to base camp. Saturday we will day hike 0.6 miles back to the Bradley Fork Trail, up Dry Sluice Gap to the AT and then west to Charlies Bunion. Return will be the same route. Approximately 10 miles, rated strenuous. Leader pre-approval plus \$25 refundable-at-the-trailhead deposit required. Contact Jerry Weston (PPG) at 336-856-1431 (before 9:00 pm) or takeahike@earthlink.net

SEPT 20 (Sat) White Water Rafting Trip to the US National White-water Center in Charlotte. Paddle through non-stop class II-IV whitewater on the world's largest man-made recirculating river! A \$10 refundable deposit is required. Our discounted rafting rate is \$58.50 per person for each rafting trip, payable to USNWC, along with an additional \$5.00 per car parking fee. Applications for the trip must be received 10 days prior to the trip—contact Kevin DeBruhl (Medoc) at 252-904-2863 or kdebull@aol.com.

SEPT 27 (Sat) Tree Planting for National Public Lands Day, Greenbelt, MD. Friday Sept. 26th: AMTRAK from North Carolina to the Washington, D.C. Metro, then biking to Greenbelt Park, less than 3 miles. On Saturday the 27th Sierra Club volunteers will assemble at the Sweetgum Picnic Area and begin planting trees. Contact Kevin DeBruhl (Medoc) at 252-904-2863 or kdebull@aol.com to register.

OCT 10-12 (Fri-Sun) Join us the afternoon of Oct. 10th for a 3-day Outing at Greyson Highlands State Park in Western Virginia. This educational basecamp outing will instruct you in the art of backcountry navigation. Our focus will be learning basic map & compass skills, plus an intro to GPS navigation. You will have the chance to hone your new skills during day-hikes up on the mountain. Participants will need to provide a \$25 "refundable at the trailhead" deposit. In addition, other fees may be involved such as parking fees, campground fees, food, and incidental expenses. Contact Chris Plummer (CG) at 919-720-8125 or cplummer@nc.rr.com for sign-up and more information.

OCT 24-26 (Fri-Sun) We will be doing light-duty trail maintenance on London Bald and Old Road Gap Trails out of Appletree Campground. These trails are some of the more remote and less used trails in southwestern N. C. Nothing will be technical—just some small blow-downs, brush cutting and vine cutting. Contact Chris David (CG) at 919-676-8927 or chrisdavid@bellsouth.net.

Watch for additional outings listings on our website.

Orange-Chatham Group Leaders

Executive Committee Members (year indicates end of two-year term)

Loren Hintz (2009) **Group Co-chair and Transportation Chair**
ldhintz@bellsouth.net 933-8987

May Becker (2009) **Group Co-chair** tomatocutter@yahoo.com 969-7439

Dave Keesee (2008) **Treasurer** dskeese@bellsouth.net 933-4879

Judith Ferster (2008) **Conservation Chair** judith_ferster@ncsu.edu
929-6648

Maureen Hayes (2008) **Secretary** mchayes720@earthlink.net 933-3140

Matt Scheer (2008) mws21575@yahoo.com 370-4267

Jean Westbrook (2009) jtwdrw@hotmail.com 542-6212

Other Group Leaders

Jason Baker **Political Chair** jason@jasonbaker.us 338-1506

Pam Hemminger **Calendar Sales** pheimminger@bellsouth.net 942-2273

Max Felsher **Newsletter/Web** max.felsher@gmail.com 929-8937

Paul Jones **Listserv** smalljones@gmail.com 360-7740

Annette Jurgelski **Outings** jurge00111@gmail.com 644-0280

Jamie Bort **Membership** jambort@gmail.com 619-0199



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