

## Chair's Corner

by Jane Ard-Smith  
Pikes Peak Group Chair



I love New Year's resolutions – the notion that you can change the way you behave by simply changing the date on the calendar and adopting a new attitude is very appealing to me. Of course, the reality is that most of us who engage in this annual ritual return to our old habits in a few short weeks or months. The daily grind of actually changing often proves too much.

In a way, our approach to the environment is very similar to the ritual of New Year's resolutions. When asked, a good majority of folks agree that we need to take care of the planet. We even take some tentative first steps in our own lives – we recycle, take our own bags to the natural food store, and install compact fluorescent light bulbs. Collectively, we support efforts to clean up our air and water or protect the areas that we love.

But the reality is that as individuals and as a society, we find it very difficult to make the big changes that are needed. For example, here in Colorado Springs, we have not invested in renewable energy in any significant way. While plans are underway for Colorado Springs Utilities to buy some wind power – the reality is that our utility currently purchases a virtually insignificant amount of wind.

I've been thinking a lot about why we find the reality of change so difficult. Is it economics? Perhaps – changing into a renewable energy economy will have a cost (although I would argue that the long-term gains will far outweigh the short-term costs). Is it political will? Again, perhaps – those with political influence seem to have a firm grip on our elected officials that is difficult to overcome. Maybe the problems just seem too large – will our local utility's investment in alternative energy have any impact on a global crisis like climate change?

I don't know what the answers are – but I resolve to do my best in 2009 to keep looking.

## REORGANIZATION OF THE STATE'S CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

By Kirby Hughes, RMC Conservation Co-Chair

Our Chapter Conservation team has set upon making some big changes to our efforts around the state where we're currently organized into two sets of "parallel" conservation organizations – one at the Chapter level and another in all the individual Groups (like ours, the PPG). This is a problem because at the Chapter Conservation Committee (ConsCom) level we lack on-the-ground access to the details of specific situations, as well as the support needed to accomplish many important efforts. Alternately, this is a problem for the individual Group ConsComs like PPG's, where we lack *effective* high-level access to the state house and state government (as most of us reside outside the capital), as well as an overview of the problems often common to different Groups.

What we've got at the Chapter level, then, are Chapter ConsCom Chairs charged with overseeing issues within a given topic, such as Water Quality and Habitat Issues. Most Chapter Chairs have small teams of Issue Specialists assisting them – some professional, some concerned volunteers – who address situations within an area of expertise. At the Group level we have Group ConsCom Chairs (Jim Lockhart for the PPG) who manages our ConsCom *team* comprised of volunteers monitoring 6 local issues:

Pikes Peak Massif Issues  
Urban Issues  
Wilderness Issues  
Mining Issues  
Gas Drilling Issues  
Recycling Issues

Jim Lockhart, also our ConsCom Chair  
Jane Ard-Smith, also our Group Executive Committee (ExCom) Chair  
John Stansfield  
Bill Clymer  
Kirby Hughes (also the Chapter's ConsCom Co-Chair)  
Judy Schulman

Our solution to enhance the effectiveness of our conservation efforts is to begin a partial integration of our folks *by conservation topic*, including the Chapter ConsCom Chairs and Issue Specialists, and the 12 Group ConsCom teams, but only as it facilitates better conservation. Using computer e-mailing lists determined by topic, we'll be able to:

1. coordinate better across the state, including state and local issues,
2. assure we have more complete "coverage," with our Chapter Issue Chairs working with Group ConsCom members on specific issues, and have better representation on local issues, with our Chapter folks teaming with local leaders.

We haven't begun this integration yet, as we have some issues to address at the Chapter, but we should begin within several months. Further, we need a good "buy-in" from the Group ConsComs – and we're working on that. Please send your comments and/or questions to [kirby.hughes@rmcsierraclub.org](mailto:kirby.hughes@rmcsierraclub.org). Thanks!