

My name is Bernadette Richter. I am Executive Director of SOAR Illinois – SAVE OUR AMERICAN RAPTORS.

For 30 years, we've provided medical care and rehabilitation for sick, injured, and orphaned birds of prey – which includes eagles, hawks, owls, falcons and others. In addition, for 28 years, we've sponsored seminars for others interested in raptor management and we often host onsite education programs for scouts, schools, 4-H, and others. We are federal and state licensed falconers, rehabilitators, educators, raptor banders, and breeders of endangered species. We've also been actively involved in many environmental issues, habitat preservation, and endangered species restoration projects. To name a few...

- We worked with the US Dept. of Agriculture Nuisance Control at O'Hare International Airport establishing their raptor removal and relocation project to protect aircraft and passenger safety.
- We successfully bred endangered Peregrine falcons - the poster bird for the environmental movement – and donated them for release across the country to re-establish the species. Since 1985, we've been the primary rehabilitation center for Chicago's peregrines when they need care.
- We worked with the Illinois State Interagency Committee – which included Health, Natural History, Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, Geological Survey, and others - successfully spear-

heading a state and national campaign to ban the avicide use of Fenthion which killed many birds of prey - including endangered species - when they consumed target birds such as starlings and sparrows. We helped develop alternative methods of bird control for Fenthion users.

- We worked with the State EPA, Natural Resources, and other regulatory agencies - alerting them to bird kills and injuries from methane flame torches on landfills in the state. As a result, many landfills are reclaiming their gas.
- We worked with Governor Quinn to save Plum Island from marina and subdivision development at Starved Rock State Park. The island is wintering eagle habitat and Indian burial ground. It is now preserved forever.
- We worked with DuPage County Forest Preserve to save 1700 acres of pristine prairie land from stone quarrying and development, and initiated the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the Forest Preserve. The land was renamed Springbrook Prairie Forest Preserve.

We did all this on a voluntary basis.

And now, we are here to save our 30-year passion - our raptor rehabilitation and education center.

Our bird medical clinic and housing facility is located along the proposed GLB route – approximately 800 feet from our doors.

Given the physically sensitive nature of birds of prey to toxins and noxious gases in the environment, we are greatly concerned for the health of our patients and our non-releasable education birds. We relocated from unincorporated Naperville to rural LaSalle County 15 years ago for these same reasons.

The frequent ground to building vibrations – similar to the rumble of mild earthquakes – is also disruptive to the mental and physical well-being of birds, as it is to many other wild animals.

The noise from multiple and/or long trains will impede our ability to teach our seminars and host education programs onsite. This will result in loss of income to support our rehabilitation efforts.

Ponding or swamping of water due to field drainage issues caused by track and right of way in the crop fields surrounding us will also encourage disease vectors like the Qulex and Aedes mosquitoes - which carry West Nile virus – a brain encephalitis – which kills birds!

We ask the STB to reject the Great Lakes Basin proposed railroad.

Thank you,

Bernadette Richter, Executive Director
SOAR Illinois – SAVE OUR AMERICAN RAPTORS
4257 E. 1650th Rd., Earlville IL 60518
www.soar-inc.org
soar-inc@juno.com
815-312-1206