

Roth: We're all children of Mother Nature

Last week, we took a look back at a great national organization, the Nature Conservatory, learning about all of the great things it has done in 2012. This week, I want to look at another fantastic national organization with significant local effects, as well: the Sierra Club.

Recently, I had the privilege of serving as a guest host on KFOR's Flashpoint with Kevin Ogle, former Oklahoma City Mayor Kirk Humphreys and our guest, Bruce Nilles, who serves as the senior director for the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign. Nilles had a chance to share a lot of the work the Sierra Club is doing across the country. In one of its key victories, which is significant for Oklahoma, the club's national campaign has played a significant part in helping retire 124 coal-fired power plants across the country.

As utility companies across the country are retiring their coal-fired power generation, they are headed to the market to find ways to replace generation capacity they are losing. More importantly, they are looking for cleaner forms of fuel to replace what they lose in dirty coal.

The significance of this for Oklahomans is that the country will be turning more and more to some of our Oklahoma-rich native blessings: natural gas and wind. Truth be told, Oklahoma's native fuels can help shape America's energy future for the next 100 years because we have unlocked that much cleaner natural gas and over time have the potential to install significant amounts of native wind.

Also, the Sierra Club has helped successfully advocate for improving fuel-efficiency standards in vehicles, helping to address the effects of the transportation sector on climate change by reducing carbon pollution. Oklahomans are already leading in this area by spurring the nation's largest fuel infrastructure for compressed natural gas. Our state is

leading the country by way of purchasing the largest fleet of natural gas vehicles at a bargain price. This will reduce the costs we pay in fuel, drive up demand for our state's compressed natural gas, and effectively reduce our effects on climate change.

Additionally, the Sierra Club led a very successful effort to help protect attempts by Congress to weaken the Endangered Species Act, helping protect incredibly sacred lands across the country. This includes lands important to Oklahoma. Oklahoma is home to 16 wildlife species that are threatened and endangered. Thanks to the tireless work of the Sierra Club, they will continue to be protected and preserved.

Oklahoma's energy economy has significant synergy with being good stewards of planet Earth. In fact, much like the Sierra Club, as Oklahomans, we are helping our country create a more prosperous, clean-energy future. Perhaps strange bedfellows to some, as many Oklahomans are skeptical of the Sierra Club. But as a state that relies so heavily on its native blessings, we really are brothers of the same mother: Mother Nature.