



JOURNAL

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE CLEAN POWER PLAN

LESLIE FIELDS AND ALEJANDRA NÚÑEZ

On August 3, 2015, the EPA released its final Clean Power Plan, the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from existing power plants. The standard includes important, hard-won environmental justice provisions, and this post provides an overview of those elements of the plan, as well as next steps and tools for communities.

Power plants are the largest source of carbon dioxide in the United States, the pollution that is throwing our climate into chaos. Power plants also emit conventional and toxic air pollutants that contribute to respiratory and heart diseases, as well as premature death. The Clean Power Plan will lead to significant climate and public health benefits for all, including minority, low-income, and indigenous communities.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, which requires EPA

to make environmental justice part of its mission, the final rule includes a host of provisions to ensure that the rule benefits communities that have long borne the brunt of fossil fuel pollution—minority, low-income, and indigenous communities. It provides tools to help ensure that these communities do not experience disproportionate pollution and health impacts from fossil fuel-fired power plants, and it creates avenues to ensure our most vulnerable communities share in the public health and economic benefits expected from the Clean Power Plan.

EPA conducted unprecedented outreach before and after issuing the proposed rule in June of 2014, engaging environmental justice, faith-based, public health, and community organizations. Sierra Club worked with environmental justice partner organizations and submitted comprehensive comments that echoed communities' asks and concerns. It's clear from the final

rule that EPA listened, considered, and integrated environmental justice considerations in the Clean Power Plan in accordance with its recently finalized "Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice During the Development of Regulatory Actions."

Environmental Justice Considerations in the Final Rule

In the final rule, EPA did three things:

1. Proximity Analysis: EPA conducted a proximity analysis using its newest screening tool EJSCREEN, which found that a higher percentage of minority and low-income communities live near power plants when compared to the national averages. The rule also encourages states to conduct environmental justice analyses of their own as they develop their state implementation plans (SIPs), and to evaluate the SIPs' actual impacts on low-income and minority communities during

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ST. LOUIS RIVER: NEW THREAT FROM POLYMET

LORI ANDRESEN AND ELANNE PALCICH

As PolyMet's proposed copper-nickel sulfide mine continues to push its way through the environmental review process, more environmental issues are being brought to light.

Due to the threat of PolyMet's proposed copper-nickel sulfide mine, American Rivers listed the St. Louis River as one of the top 10 Endangered Rivers in the U.S. in April. The mine pit and processing plant would be located upon the headwaters of the St. Louis River watershed, which empties into Lake Superior at its estuary near Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin.

During the ten years following PolyMet's Environmental Assessment, the Sierra Club North Star Chapter has supported a moratorium on sulfide mining in the water

rich environment of northeast Minnesota. The copper-nickel mineralization of the Duluth Complex — a rock formation that underlies northeastern Minnesota between Lake Superior, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and Lake Vermilion — is highly disseminated and low grade, with less than 1 percent metals. Mining this rock formation would result in 99 percent waste rock, including the fine ground tailings. Both waste rock piles and tailings leach toxic, heavy metals and acid mine drainage (AMD) into surface and ground waters.

The Sierra Club mining committee has been studying PolyMet's mine plan since it was proposed, and we came to the conclusion that water modeling for the proposed mine

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St. Louis River Photo Credit: Lori Andresen

FROM THE CHAPTER DIRECTOR

Margaret Levin



As we go to press, major news is affecting Minnesota's environmental outlook: President Obama rejected the Keystone XL pipeline expansion, demonstrating U.S. commitment to climate action.

And, the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed PolyMet sulfide ore mine has been released for public comment, amid growing concern about the risks of long term pollution.

Minnesota is primed to make major decisions that will shape our environment and economy for years. But as we saw during the 2015 state legislative session, anti-environment officials are already conspiring with polluters to attack protections for our air, water, lands and climate.

We expect and deserve better. Thanks to your involvement and support, we can achieve important goals in 2016:

- Accelerate the transition from dirty coal to clean energy, including finalizing Xcel Energy's proposal to retire Sherco Units 1 & 2
- Strengthen efforts to stop PolyMet, Twin Metals, and other proposed sulfide ore mines near Lake Superior and the Boundary Waters
- Expand transit and bicycling options across the state
- Halt the expansion of tar sands pipelines to safeguard local communities and our climate

In addition to that critical work, the North Star Chapter continues to focus efforts on:

- Building a diverse and inclusive movement that represents all Minnesota communities and reflects their environmental concerns
- Expanding our network to 50,000 activists who are informed, engaged and ready to take action
- Developing new ways of engaging volunteers and committees
- Bringing more youth and adults outside, with our local Outings and Inspiring Connections Outdoors programs that connect people to natural places

Minnesota's environmental challenges can be daunting, but with your involvement and continued support, we can make a critical difference.

This is an historic era. The Clean Power Plan promises important steps forward, and the United Nations Conference on Climate Change will soon determine whether the world's nations are ready to act.

Thank you for trusting us to represent your environmental values!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Levin".

MONTHLY VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

Please see northstar.sierraclub.org or call the office at 612-659-9124 for more information. It is strongly recommended that you confirm meeting dates, times and location as changes may occur.

Most meetings are held at the Chapter Office at 2327 East Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. If a regularly scheduled meeting falls on a holiday, please contact us for rescheduling information.

Refer to contact list on page 13 for more information.

Beyond Oil and Tar Sands: 4th Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.

Clean Air and Energy Committee: 4th Tuesday of the month, 6:30 p.m.

Executive Committee: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7:00 p.m.

Forests Committee: 2nd Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m.

Land Use and Transportation: 1st Monday of the month, 6:00 p.m.

Mining Committee: 3rd Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m. – Meets by phone, contact Chair.

Wetlands and Water Committee: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30 p.m.



The North Star Journal

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The Sierra Club North Star Chapter, a 501(c)4 non-profit organization, is the leading grassroots voice working to preserve and protect Minnesota's environment. Since 1968 we have involved volunteer leaders to act through environmental advocacy, community organizing and outdoor exploration. We are committed to becoming an intercultural, anti-racist organization and partnering with communities and organizations to eradicate all forms of oppression.

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Ads and checks (made out to Sierra Club North Star Chapter) should be sent to the editor at the Chapter office. (See address above under postmaster information).

The North Star Journal welcomes submissions and photographs on environmental and related issues. Articles of less than a thousand words will be given preference. E-mail submissions only. We reserve the right to edit all copy for clarity and concision. Photos can be color and should be a jpeg format of 5x7 size at 300 dpi. Please send all submission materials and requests to the editor.

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PLASTIC BAGS,

WHAT A WASTE

The Minneapolis City Council is considering an ordinance to regulate the use of carry-out bags in retail establishments. Many of our nation's largest cities have already implemented their own bag bans in efforts to mitigate the flagrant waste inherent in the use of these products. The United States annually discards 100 million plastic bags, the production of which consumes more than 12 million barrels of oil. In addition to banning plastic bags, the proposed ban goes a step further by requiring a 5-cent fee, kept by the restaurants and retailers, for a typical large paper bag.

While this may seem harsh, a few exemptions make it more realistic. Customers using vouchers or electronic benefit cards would be exempt from the paper bag fee. Bags without handles that are used to carry produce, meat, or other food items to the point of sale in the store will not be included in the ban. Examples of this include bags used for dry cleaning, newspapers, door-hangers, and packages of bags such as garbage bags.

The environmental impacts of these items extend far beyond the significant oil inputs required for their production. As litter, plastic bags remain in the environment for years. Encouraging the use of reusable bags reduces the negative impacts of single-use bag production, including carbon emissions, water use and air and water pollution.

Each year, Minnesotans discard 87,000 tons of plastic bags. In Minneapolis, plastic bags have become a significant problem whether they end up on the ground or in a waste treatment facility, exacerbating problems in our solid waste landfills and contributing to adverse air quality when burned in an incinerator. Recycling these bags would create seven million dollars worth of new plastic for factories each year as well as offering a real opportunity for the creation of new jobs; however, less than 10 percent of plastic bags are currently being recycled in Minnesota, with much of our recyclable

plastic going out of state. Our waste can and should be processed locally.

Local processing would offer many economic benefits to our state's businesses. For example, Master Mark uses plastic pellets made from milk jugs, detergent bottles and grocery bags to make deck boards and lawn edging sold to Menards, Ace Hardware, True Value and other retailers. The plastic pellets used to manufacture these products are currently purchased from out-of-state and cost half the price of virgin plastic. Master Mark would like to manufacture these pellets themselves.

Many retailers, including Cub, Target, Lunds/Byerly's and multiple local co-ops and grocery stores currently accept clean, dry plastic bags for recycling. Plastic bag drop-off locations can be found at plasticfilmrecycling.org. A typical grocer in the metro empties drop-off bins 10 times per day. The Recycling Association of Minnesota also sponsors the It's in the Bag drop-off program for plastic bags across Minnesota, which accept even more kinds of plastic film such as cereal bags and salt bags. Find a location near you at RecycleMinnesota.org. While this infrastructure offers the concerned consumer the opportunity to see a more sustainable end to their plastic products, many of the economic benefits to this end accrue beyond state lines. While the proposed ordinance could go a long way towards ultimately curbing the amount of single-use bags used in the city, we can also take steps towards keeping those economic rewards for recycling within our state.

Would you like to help the Sierra Club develop its policy and determine its actions regarding the proposed ordinance in Minneapolis? Activists are needed. To volunteer contact Vicki Munson, Chapter Coordinator, at vicki.munson@sierraclub.org.

SOLSTICE PARTY

VOLUNTEER CELEBRATION AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Sunday, December 13,
4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

**Dodge Nature Center Farm
Education Building**

1701 Charlton Avenue in
West St. Paul

Join us for the Annual Solstice Party to recognize the recipients of the 2015 North Star Chapter Volunteer Awards -- celebrate the season and our work together! Friends and family are welcome.

Main dish provided, please bring an appetizer or dessert to share.

Enter at Farm Education entrance on Charlton (do not use Marie Avenue entrance). Park in the lot and walk up hill to the Education Building.

RSVP to north.star.chapter@sierraclub.org

Support the Minnesota Chapter

While your membership dollars are crucial to support the Sierra Club's local, regional and national campaigns, you also have the option to donate directly to the North Star Chapter. 100% of your additional contribution to our Chapter stays here in Minnesota – to work locally on issues that you care about! Sustaining and tax-deductible options available.

**Visit northstar.sierraclub.org/donate to give online,
or contact us: 612-659-9124 or
margaret.levin@sierraclub.org.
Thank you for your generous support!**



SIERRA CLUB
NORTH STAR CHAPTER

OUR YEARLONG ADVENTURE IN THE WILD BEGINS

AMY FREEMAN



Photo Credit: Ellie M. Bayrd

The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters is devoted to gaining permanent protection for the Boundary Waters from proposed sulfide-ore copper mining on the wilderness edge. In support of these efforts, explorers Dave and Amy Freeman are spending A Year in the Wilderness to raise awareness about the threat and share the beauty of this national treasure in all seasons. You can witness their journey through blog posts like the one below and follow their journey at www.savetheboundarywaters.org/wildernessyear. Sign the petition to protect the Boundary Waters here: www.savetheboundarywaters.org/sign-petition.

September 25, 2015

What a whirlwind of activity! The past few days have flown by as we wrapped up all our final preparations, then packed our bags and took part in several farewell gatherings. The first day of fall lived up to expectations. After a week of gorgeous weather, September 23 was rainy and chilly. That didn't stop 80-some hearty souls from showing up for the launch of A Year in the Wilderness at River Point Resort and Outfitting Company. I'm continually impressed by the dedication of the folks we meet, devoted to protecting the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from sulfide-ore copper mining.

Thank you to everyone who showed up and everyone who has pitched in to help make this project a reality. Thank you to the Koschak family for hosting the launch event at their resort. Thank you to the many businesses and individuals that have donated equipment, food, clothing, time and money. Thank you to the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters for the hours and hours of work that you've put in behind the scenes—doing everything from sending out press releases to seam-sealing our tent.

Also, a special thank you to the folks who offered to bring in homemade treats on various resupply missions. Multiple people asked about our favorite kind of chocolate (dark) and we have received offers to deliver homemade granola, chicken chili made with heirloom beans, and dehydrated vegetables grown in peoples' gardens.

On Wednesday, folks launched canoes and kayaks to paddle the first couple miles with us on the South Kawishiwi River, from River Point to the Highway 1 bridge. A sense of finality settled in as we crossed under that bridge, leaving behind our friends and family. During our two-mile paddle with that flotilla of 40 people in canoes and kayaks, people were

laughing, telling stories, offering last minute advice and even singing. The serenade of "Happy trails to you" brought a tear to my eye.

Three more miles and then we reached the Boundary Waters. Those initial portages were quick and easy. And the rain held off, despite the thick blanket of clouds

We saw several bald eagles as we paddled; one even perched on top of a white pine, surveying the water below. My favorite eagle sighting happened shortly after landing at our campsite. A bald eagle flew low overhead, directly over us and then out over the river.

We're in a five-star campsite. It has a perfect canoe landing spot, sloping granite allowing for optimal sitting and thinking right near the water's edge. We found a good space for our tent and the view from the fire grate is panoramic.

In the days leading up to our departure, I've been relishing my final opportunity to do some things—like my last chance to eat out for a year, last shower for a whole year. People have actually pointed some of these things out to us ... last chance to sleep in a warm bed under a roof, last salad loaded with locally grown vegetables. The thing is, I'd rather focus on what there is to look forward to out here. Sure, we are making some sacrifices by being out here for a full year, but in many ways we are pretty darn lucky to have the chance to observe this place in all seasons.

We're really looking forward to sharing our observations and stories with you throughout the year. Please share A Year in the Wilderness with your friends and family, and encourage them to check out all the great information compiled on the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters website in order to learn more about the threat, the science behind our concerns, and what you can do to ensure that this special place is permanently protected from sulfide-ore copper mining within the watershed.

Dave and Amy Freeman were named Adventurers of the Year by National Geographic in 2014.



Clean Power Plan Celebration: Photo Credit Jamie Long

On September 1, U.S. Representative Keith Ellison hosted a Clean Power Plan Celebration with Senator Al Franken and Minnesota House Minority Leader Paul Thissen in Minneapolis. The event was attended by 180 people and celebrated the Clean Power Plan with poetry, music and comedy. Local community leader and Sierra Club North Star Chapter Executive Committee member Louis Alemayehu provided moving poetry. Community Power ally Lee Samelson brought humor with puns about the fossil fuel industry. Rep. Keith Ellison played guitar joined by Minnesota State Representative Frank Hornstein for a Bob Dylan cover. Other officials in attendance included State Senator Jim Carlson, Representative Ray Dehn, Representative Jim Davnie and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency staff. In addition to the performances, several groups shared presentations on the Clean Power Plan, including Fresh Energy, Youth Environmental Advocates of Minnesota, MN 350, Sierra Club, MN Interfaith Power & Light, and St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church.



On October 14, community members and organizations came together from all walks of life to talk about a just transition to a renewable energy option in the state of Minnesota. The program at CWA Local 7200 in Minneapolis included celebration, music and climate justice stories. The People's Climate Movement - Minnesota is dedicated to prevent the worst consequences of global warming and building a fair economy sustaining a living environment while promoting good jobs, social and economic justice.

implementation. Finally, after states have written their plans and begin implementing them, EPA will assess any localized emission increases that result and will work with states to mitigate any adverse impacts on communities.

- 2. Meaningful Participation Requirement:** The final rule requires states to ensure meaningful participation from communities in the SIP development process. The initial deadline for states to submit their plans is September 6, 2016, and any states seeking an extension beyond that deadline must still submit initial plans by September of next year that demonstrate how they have engaged low-income and minority communities, and they must also explain how they intend to ensure their continued involvement as they develop their final plans.
- 3. Distribution of Benefits:** Under the final rule, energy efficiency continues to be a major option for meeting the carbon reduction targets, and EPA has offered specific incentives for the benefit of low-income communities. Under the Clean Energy Incentive Program (CEIP), EPA proposed to give sources double credit for energy efficiency projects in low-income communities. EPA has also committed to work with other federal agencies to provide information on programs to help low-income communities gain access to renewable energy and energy efficiency (for example, the newly-created National Community Solar Partnership, a multi-agency initiative to increase access to solar for low- and medium-income consumers), and has offered examples of state programs that other states can use as models.

State Plans Must Address Communities’ Concerns

EPA has taken a big step forward in integrating environmental justice in rulemaking by opening the door to community participation in the Clean Power Plan SIP development process. But this is just the beginning of a long road. As Kim Wasserman of Little Village Environmental Justice Organization in Chicago recently pointed out, communities will need to fully express their concerns and, in partnership with the environmental community, must work vigorously with state agencies developing the SIPs to ensure the plans avoid any disproportionate impacts and actually benefit vulnerable communities. State plans will have to address the following issues, among others:

- 1. Increased Use of Fossil Fuel-Fired Plants:** Communities are concerned about the potential for air pollution hotspots associated with the increased use of coal plants and natural gas plants that could take place during the implementation of the rule. EPA’s proximity analysis is the first step to identify power plants that may raise pollution concerns in the communities located in close proximity to those plants. States should model emissions of conventional air pollutants (e.g. sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides) from those plants as part of their planning process, and those results should be combined with geographic information systems (GIS) software to identify the populations affected by the pollution from those plants beyond the studied radius.

Sierra Club will work hard to ensure that states replace retiring coal plants with clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The final Clean Power Plan actually provides an opportunity for significantly greater development of renewable energy than the proposal anticipated, both during the compliance period and potentially before compliance begins, through the proposed CEIP.

- 2. Cumulative Impacts:** Community and environmental justice groups have long advocated for EPA to consider cumulative impacts of other pollution sources, which the Clean Power Plan does not address. Many fossil fuel-fired plants in the United States are located in the same areas where other large industrial facilities are sited. Basic environmental justice screening and mapping tools, such as EPA’s EJView, allow users to identify these environmental hazards for further study. Many of those facilities contribute to nonattainment of other Clean Air Act standards. States should model these facilities together with the coal plants and natural gas plants of concern to communities, so that appropriate emission standards are set under those Clean Air Act rules and the Clean Power Plan. Communities should push states to take a multi-pollutant approach to plan development, as EPA has suggested in the final rule.
- 3. Cap-and-Trade:** Of great concern to environmental justice communities is that EPA has allowed cap-and-trade programs (including “trading-ready” programs) for compliance. Community participation and the environmental justice analyses will also be critical to ensure that dirty power plants that cause disproportionate impacts on communities are not allowed to trade without restriction. There are several ways to integrate environmental justice considerations in the design of trading programs.
First, states (or regions) must enact stringent caps, which will remove incentives to increase the use of fossil fuel-fired plants.
Second, as EPA has noted in its “Tools of the Trade” guidance, states could delineate those zones with unacceptable pollution concentrations (hotspots) and forbid or severely restrict the flow of allowances into those zones; in other words, power plants with the potential to cause hotspots should not be allowed to purchase allowances that permit them to continue polluting.
Third, if allowances are auctioned, states should use a portion of those revenues to finance investments in renewable energy and demand-side energy efficiency for those communities most affected by fossil fuel pollution.
- 4. Waste-burning:** Waste-burning for electricity production is another big worry for communities because, in several states in the country, it qualifies as a renewable source. In recent weeks, the Partnership for Policy Integrity released an analysis that showed that the proposed rule treated all waste burning—including fossil-fuel derived materials such as plastic and tires—as carbon neutral.

The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives warned that burning waste-derived fuel is not only worse for climate than coal, but it also creates disproportionate impacts by exposing communities to mercury and other toxic pollution. The final rule still allows the use of waste, but only the biogenic portion of municipal solid waste will be eligible for compliance.

The rule also acknowledges that these sources are not carbon-neutral, and therefore, state plans seeking to include biogenic waste must consider their characteristics and climate benefits. EPA will review the appropriateness and basis for states’ determination to include these measures, and not all of them will be approvable. EPA is currently taking comment on these issues in its proposed Federal Implementation Plan (FIP). Sierra Club will comment on this issue and will advocate for EPA to take communities’ concerns into account.

- 5. Environmental Racism:** Many environmental justice groups asked EPA to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by states that receive funding from the agency to develop their SIPs. In the final rule, EPA has encouraged anyone who believes that any of the federal non-discrimination laws has been violated by any recipient of EPA funds to file an administrative complaint with EPA’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

There is, however, much work to do to improve EPA’s administrative complaint process. In August, the Center for Public Integrity released an analysis that found that, in processing nearly 300 environmental discrimination complaints filed in the last twenty years, EPA’s OCR has never made a formal finding of civil rights violations. The federal government, however, is taking steps in the right direction. In July, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announced that its 2016 enforcement report will focus on civil rights violations relating to environmental justice. Sierra Club will continue to work with its partners to advocate for modifications to the administrative complaint investigation and resolution process in a manner that ensures effective enforcement of Title VI complaints.

In conclusion, the environmental justice provisions of the Clean Power Plan are a tremendous step forward for EPA, local communities, and the nation, but they are only as strong as the state plans that will now be developed. Sierra Club and our many allies will be working hard in the coming years to ensure the implementation of the rule benefits communities most affected by fossil fuel pollution. Our success will depend on the involvement and dedication of community leaders and advocates from coast to coast. Join us!

Leslie Fields is the director of the Sierra Club’s Environmental Justice and Community Partnerships Program. Alejandra Núñez is a staff attorney for the Sierra Club’s Environmental Law Program.

BIG VICTORY IN MINNESOTA WILL RETIRE COAL, RAMP UP WIND AND SOLAR

MARY ANNE HITT



would be a clear winner for Minnesotans' health, air, water and climate. For her part in this broad effort, Michelle Rosier earned a spot on Midwest Energy News' recent "40 Under 40" list of emerging leaders in the Midwest accelerating the transition to clean energy.

This move by Xcel is yet another example of the powerful results grassroots activism can deliver. In 2014, Beyond Coal supporters reached out to the Becker City Council (Becker is the town where the Sherco plant is located) and the local union to have a dialogue about a possible future Sherco transition, and Beyond Coal has advocated for worker and community engagement in the transition plan. The units will retire in 2023 and 2026, and between now and then, Xcel expects to phase out some workers via retirement and natural attrition, others will have the opportunity to relocate within the company; however, it's critical Xcel works with the local union to ensure a just transition for the workers. Sherco's retirement plan also includes a proposal to put 50 megawatts of solar power at the coal plant's location to help continue to support the city's tax base – a move that the amazing leadership of local leader Rose Thelen helped paved the way for.

"As someone who has lived 20 years within six miles of the Sherco power plant, I am heartened to see that we as Minnesotans are prepared to continue building a clean energy economy that will benefit everyone," said Thelen. "With a committed utility company, engaged labor and plant workers and allies in the environmental movement, we are already seeing our communities' potential being tapped and opportunities being provided for growth. It is important to me and to folks in Central Minnesota that our next steps include a transition plan that positions us for success."

Minnesota's clean energy economy is growing with over 15,000 workers today, and the clear commitment by the state and its utilities will ensure additional jobs in clean energy for decades to come. Sherco's coal plant retirements continue the massive trend of moving beyond coal and toward clean energy across the U.S. – and we have thousands of amazing local community leaders and activists to thank for it.

Mary Anne Hitt is the director of the Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign.

Only one day after Sierra Club Minnesota and numerous partner organizations delivered more than 11,000 public comments (pictured is the crew above with the boxes full of comments!) to the state public utilities commission calling for less coal and more clean energy, Xcel Energy announced that it will retire two coal units and accelerate its investments in solar and wind power, retiring 1,200 megawatts (MW) of coal and adding 3,500 MW of wind and solar!

I was impressed, along with many Minnesotans, at Xcel's announcement, which is part of the company's plan to reduce its carbon emissions 60 percent by 2030, because I know just how much work Minnesotans have put in over the years to pressure Xcel and other state utilities to build more clean energy.

"Minnesota Beyond Coal has more work to do to make sure the strongest version of this plan that includes a just worker transition is approved, but the announcement was a major step in the right direction," said Michelle Rosier, senior campaign and

organizing manager for the Minnesota Beyond Coal Campaign. "To put it in perspective, today's announcement nearly doubles the amount of coal burning megawatts announced for retirement in the state over the past decade."

For years, Minnesota Beyond Coal volunteers and their partners (including Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, MPIRG, Clean Up Our River Environment, Union of Concerned Scientists and Conservation Minnesota) have held rallies and house parties, tabled at festivals and farmers' markets, and done an impressive online organizing push – all to gather those thousands of comments demanding more clean energy in the state.

In addition, using the same data and model as utilities use, clean energy organizations (MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, Wind on the Wires, Fresh Energy, Sierra Club and the Izaak Walton League) offered a Clean Energy Plan that showed for the same cost as Xcel Energy's initial plan that didn't include action on Sherco, the two units could be retired, which

“St. Louis River” continuation from page 1...

project is woefully inadequate and ground water testing has not taken into account the fractured bedrock of the area. The scale of mining 99 percent waste rock is too monumental to manage for pollution control, and the value of our clean water is too great to put at risk.

In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency gave PolyMet’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement a grade of EU-3, Environmentally Unsatisfactory-inadequate with many concerns about lack of water modeling. In 2015, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission’s (GLIFWC) analysis of PolyMet’s water modeling for the final Environmental Impact Statement showed that ground water seepage at mine closure would flow north into the Rainy River watershed (Boundary Waters), thus displacing or concentrating pollution within the St. Louis River watershed — and putting pollution into an adjacent watershed.

The operation of a copper-nickel sulfide mine in northeast Minnesota would greatly contribute to the mercury/sulfate load that is already creating a problem in the St. Louis River. Methylmercury, which results from a biochemical reaction including mercury and sulfates, bio-accumulates in the food chain —affecting fish and the humans who eat fish. Already, 10 percent of the babies born along the North Shore of Lake Superior have high levels of mercury in their blood, potentially impacting brain development.

In another bio-chemical process, sulfates become sulfides which attach to wild rice roots, destroying entire wild rice beds in the most polluted areas, or greatly reducing plant yield in other stretches of the St. Louis River. Both fish and wild rice impacts affect the Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, and Bois Forte Bands of the Lake Superior Chippewa nation’s treaty rights, as well as affecting fishermen, resort owners, and local residents. As sulfates, mercury and other pollutants work their way downstream, they impact the health and economy of both the Fond du Lac Tribal nation and the citizens of Cloquet, Duluth, MN and Superior WI.

Of further concern are the loss of wetlands, destruction of wildlife corridors, and loss of public lands within Superior National Forest to a Canadian mining company whose major underwriter, Glencore, is taking a huge market hit, with shares falling approximately 60 percent over the course of the year. How will a company under financial duress manage to treat water pollution at the proposed plant site for at least the next 500 years, as projected in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

In order for PolyMet to open pit mine on protected public land that is now part of Superior National Forest, the U.S. Forest Service is negotiating a convoluted land exchange that would involve the transfer of about 6,650 acres of federal lands from public to private ownership. The Forest Service failed to follow its own authority under the Weeks Act of 1911, which prohibits strip mining on land originally acquired by the Forest Service for watershed and forest protections; the Forest Service could have required PolyMet to develop an underground mine only. Instead, a land exchange would allow PolyMet, a foreign mining company, to destroy nearly 1,000 acres of wetlands and degrade over 6,000 acres of adjoining wetlands — adversely impacting the 100 Mile Swamp and its water filtration system, vegetation, habitat, and ecology.

Solutions to current mining pollution continue to evade our regulatory agencies. If the highly disseminated sulfide mineralization of northeast Minnesota can ever be mined

“safely,” it will have to wait; a synopsis of the North Star mining committee’s position is that we do not have the technology or the regulatory will in place to do so now. Nor have we, as a nation, incorporated the amount of recycling that would negate the need for the extreme mining and extraction of the highly disseminated low grade sulfide ores of Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region.

The iconic beauty and quality of the St. Louis River watershed is at risk for us and for future generations. Our agencies and leaders are ignoring clean water as a valuable natural resource. We have lost respect for the quality and character of Lake Superior itself and forsaken those who will follow.

Minnesotans have been standing up across the state in support of clean water. The citizens of our state have taken issue with pipelines, frac sand mining, and agricultural run-off. But at this very moment, the St. Louis River watershed is at a crossroad. Will we allow sulfide mining to take precedence over our water — or will we put a stop to PolyMet?

Continue to contact your state and national legislators and tell them PolyMet is not compatible with the clean water values of Minnesota and must be stopped.

Take Action

Now, the Final Environmental Impact Statement has been released: a 3,500 page document with only 30 days allowed to respond.

Federal and state agencies are accepting objections from the public on PolyMet’s final mine plan, but only until December 14.

- Send your comment today! Visit sierraclub.org/minnesota to take action.
- Contact Governor Dayton at (651) 201-3400 and urge him to reject PolyMet.

Lori Andresen is Chair of the Mining Committee. Elanne Palcich is a volunteer leader with the Mining Committee.



Bob Tammen speaks at the Stop PolyMet Rally, October 13 in St. Paul
Photo Credit: Tom Thompson

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MIDWEST MOUNTAINEERING

Youth Interns Go Green, Get Involved

ALLISA BONDY, RUBY SUTTON, SEBASTIAN ALFONZO AND JOSHUA HOUDEK

As you may know, the Sierra Club's Land Use and Transportation (LUT) Committee promotes positive solutions to move Minnesota beyond our dependence on dirty oil. But you might not know who is behind this important work: Some young new volunteers who are part of a generation that wants "greener" transportation options for everyone, not necessarily a driver's license and a car when they turn 16.

University of Minnesota student Allisa Bondy interviewed Central High School students Ruby Sutton and Sebastian Alfonso to learn why green transportation is important to them:

Q: What are your favorite ways of getting around?

Ruby: I like taking the train. This year my family moved near the new Green Line light rail and it made us more connected to both Minneapolis and St. Paul. Having access to better public transportation has allowed me the independence to explore my interests and new parts of both cities.

Sebastian: I'm a big bus guy. Both my parents have jobs, so if I want to get somewhere, I need to do it on my own. In a city with weather and street conditions as unpredictable as St. Paul's, biking is not always an easy option for me.

Q: How did you first get involved with the Sierra Club?

Ruby: Last summer at the Open Streets Minneapolis events I invited people to sign a "Bikeways for Everyone" petition for safer and more accessible protected bike lanes. I also helped plan the 20th Annual Sierra Club Bike Tour last September.

Sebastian: In my sophomore year Joshua [Houdek], the LUT Program Manager, interviewed me for the Move MN statewide transportation funding campaign, now known as Transportation Forward. I had been working on a transportation pilot program with the St. Paul Youth Commission, a city-wide group of young people that tackles youth issues through a social justice lens.

Q: What is most exciting about your volunteer experience?

Ruby: Learning from passionate community members! LUT committee meetings have been an eye-opening experience to see the work people are doing to improve local communities. Through the Sierra Club, I also was able to see Governor Dayton speak at the Minnesota Environmental Partnership's annual meeting, which was very exciting for me, being a big fan.

Sebastian: Being part of organizing the Bike Tour, which let me tell you as a non-biker, was definitely an interesting experience. But watching Governor Dayton speak in person has got to be one of the biggest highlights of last summer. The event was great because I learned about some environmental issues I knew nothing about. The sandwiches weren't bad either.

Q: Why land use and transportation?

Ruby: This issue is important to me because of its environment benefits and impact on social equity. Transit connects groups of people that would otherwise be isolated, and people from different backgrounds. I've felt more connected to where I live by using public transportation, and I

want to improve it for everyone. The LUT committee has helped me learn more about the dynamics of something I use all the time.

Sebastian: I care dearly about transportation because I know how much of a barrier it can be for people. I have honed my canvassing skills and gotten to meet a lot of interesting people at events where I collected signatures. Needless to say, the LUT committee was right up my alley.

If you think the Land Use and Transportation Committee might be right up your alley (or street), contact joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org or 612-259-2447.

LUT meets the first Monday of the month, 6:00pm, at the Sierra Club. Join us!

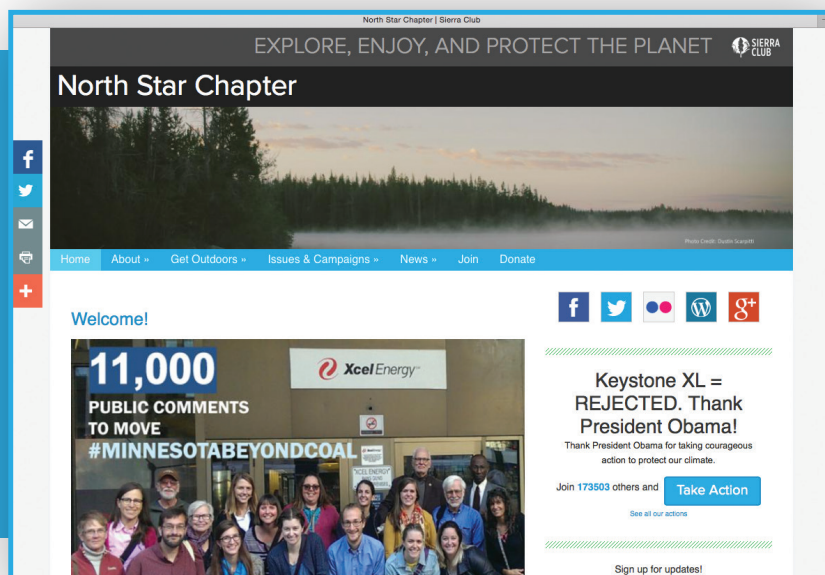
Allisa Bondy is a service-learning volunteer from University of Minnesota.

Ruby Sutton and Sebastian Alfonso are Green Transportation interns from St. Paul Central High School.

Joshua Houdek is the Land Use and Transportation Program Manager for the North Star Chapter.



Green Transportation Interns Katie Cashman, Sebastian Alfonso and Ruby Sutton Meet with Governor Mark Dayton



Visit our new web site at
www.sierraclub.org/minnesota

Check our updated and easy-to-use calendar of events, action alerts, campaign updates and more.

ROCHESTER MAYOR PLEDGES 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY

At a recent climate event in Rochester, Mayor Brede made a public proclamation that commits the City of Rochester to a transition to 100% renewable energy by 2031. Local Sierra Club members laud this ambitious goal, which was announced at the Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy event on October 12.

Ivan Idso, a leader in the local Climate Coalition and chair of the Rochester Sierra Club group was instrumental in urging the Mayor to act.

“Present and future generations are relying on our actions right now to create a future less reliant on dirty energy, which allows us to meet the challenge of climate change,” said Idso, who spearheaded efforts to launch the Rochester Earth Fest.

The proclamation, called a “worthy quest” by the editors of the Rochester Post Bulletin, reflects the broad and growing consensus in Rochester that an energy transition is possible, desirable and inevitable. The editorial board gave their blessing to the goal, saying “Climate change often

seems like a big problem with global impact that needs to be addressed by national governments, but Rochester is poised to be among cities willing to prove that’s not true... Rochester faces an enormous challenge, but it’s still one worth accepting.”

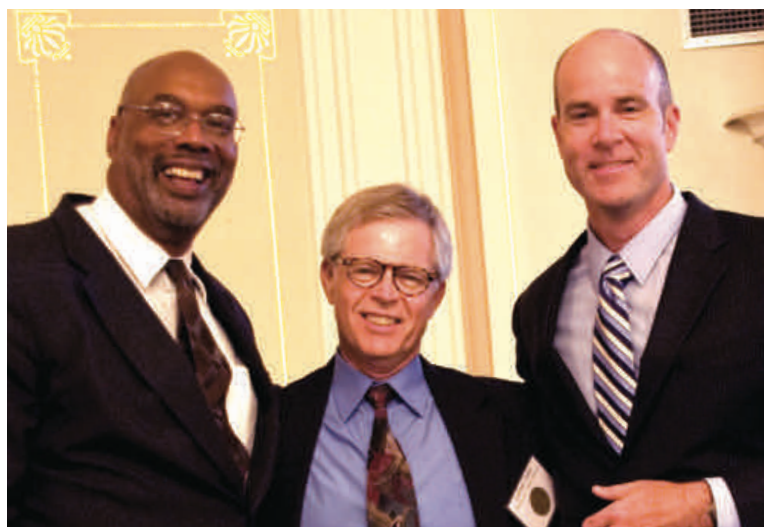
Further evidence of the widespread support for climate solutions, renewable energy and energy efficiency were reflected in the survey results of Rochester Public Utilities’ (RPU) recent polling and focus groups with their customers. Both residential and businesses urged RPU to aggressively reduce greenhouse gases and adopt more clean renewable energy. Solar energy was especially popular.

With major new development planned for downtown Rochester as part of the Destination Medical Center (DMC), with the RPU survey results, with the coming adoption of a new Comprehensive Plan and Energy Action Plan -- opportunities for changing “business as usual” in Rochester are many.



Sierra Club volunteers reach out at the Olmsted County Fair in July

LUTHER DALE RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP, DEDICATION AND SERVICE



Sierra Club President Aaron Mair, Luther Dale, and Executive Director Michael Brune

At the annual Sierra Club awards ceremony in San Francisco on September 12, longtime North Star Chapter leader Luther Dale was honored with the William E. Colby Award.

Luther first got involved in the early 1970’s, when he co-founded the first St. Cloud Sierra Club Group. In 2004 he became active in the North Star Chapter again, working to make the City of Shoreview a green community. He went on to serve as a volunteer

team leader, chapter Executive Committee member, and as Chapter Chair for three years.

While on the Executive Committee, Luther developed an interest in improving the relationship between the national Sierra Club and its chapters. He co-chaired a task force to advance this effort. For over two years, he has been working as a mentor and trainer with chapter chairs from across the country to build capacity and develop leadership.

The William E. Colby Award, which is given for outstanding leadership, dedication and service to the Sierra Club, is named for William Colby (1875-1964), an attorney who served the Sierra Club for more than 60 years and was its third President.

CHECK OUT LOCAL NORTH STAR CHAPTER OUTINGS



Our volunteer-led Outings program gets people of all ages outdoors on local educational outings. The Sierra Club's founder, John Muir, understood the power of outings, and since 1892, outings were the centerpiece in his plan to preserve America's wild heritage. The Sierra Club's mission, to explore, enjoy and protect the planet, reminds us that conservation comes from a personal relationship with nature.

The Minnesota Outings program includes year-round excursions—hiking, biking, kayaking, camping and more—to parks and public lands and waters across the region. Recent activities included hikes at State Parks and nature centers, geocaching, and a weekend trip to the National Forest Lodge in Isabella.

Check out our schedule on [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/MN-Sierra-Club-Outings)! Search for the MN Sierra Club Outings page or go directly to our site: www.meetup.com/MN-Sierra-Club-Outings

For more information on our schedule or to find out how you can become an Outings Leader, contact Chair Greg Allison at greg.allison@northstar.sierraclub.org



A PROUD MEMBER OF



The Sierra Club Foundation benefits from workplace contributions to the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which provides a payroll giving option to support 23 member organizations that protect, conserve and restore Minnesota's environment. To learn more about adding this giving option at your workplace, please contact Margaret Levin at 612-659-9124 or margaret.levin@sierraclub.org.

TAR SANDS OPPOSITION GAINING GROUND — DON'T LET IT SLIP!

TERRY HOULE

It has been a big summer and fall for tar sands resistance, and the good news just keeps coming. Senator Al Franken has authored a letter calling on the State Department to ensure that any increase of tar sands coming across the border is given adequate environmental review. In the case of the Alberta Clipper pipeline, we know that Enbridge has increased the amount of tar sands coming across the border with an illegal reroute. Sen. Franken has sign-on support from other senators on this issue to highlight their call for increased evaluation of the impacts tar sands pipelines have on our water, climate and communities.

Increasingly, the courts seem to be getting involved in the pipeline battles. In September, a district judge heard our case against Enbridge's illegal scheme to expand their Alberta Clipper (line 67) tar sands pipeline without an environmental review or public input. Sierra Club attorney Doug Hayes was at the table for our side in the packed courtroom in Minneapolis, where an overflow room was needed to accommodate all the interested attendees, many of them indigenous leaders from the White Earth Nation, our co-litigant on the case. Additionally, we hosted not one but two press conferences to ensure the media understood why we're bringing the case and why tar sands pipelines threaten Minnesota and our climate. The press conferences resulted in extensive media coverage, including a fantastic op-ed, which ran the same day from 2015 staff lobbyist and past Chapter Chair John Hottinger and scientist John Abraham. We await a decision from the judge, possibly yet this year.

The Sandpiper pipeline, an Enbridge Energy project that would transport crude oil from North Dakota across Minnesota, ran into another hurdle in September when a Minnesota Appeals Court ruled that an Environmental Impact Statement for the project should be done. There has been much dispute on the route: Enbridge preferred going across northern Minnesota, and environmental groups raise



concerns about the route to Duluth/Superior. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved the Certificate of Need for the pipeline in June, so this reversal of the decision is a victory for oil regulation.

In October, both Enbridge and the Minnesota PUC filed separate petitions to the Minnesota Supreme Court on the Sandpiper line, and both Sandpiper and the Alberta Clipper are still pending in the courts. At a recent meeting of the Environmental Quality Board (EQB), the various agency commissioners seemed to understand that there are issues with pipeline regulations and there is much uncertainty about their safety.

This just highlights the need for citizens to keep up the pressure on agencies, government, and our legislature that we want clean energy and to keep the dirty polluting fossil fuels in the ground. We need to continue to show up at meetings, write letters, and call our representatives to say that we want clean energy in Minnesota – to move

beyond oil. We don't want pipelines going through our precious wetlands, crossing our rivers, destroying our wild rice. We want to stop waiting for the next spill to happen. It is imperative that we keep all fossil fuels in the ground and move Minnesota forward with clean renewable energy.

The last legislative session pushed back on many of our past environmental advances. Let's not let that happen going forward.

Call, write, and show up for a clean energy future like your life and that of future generations depend upon it.

For more information and to get involved with the Beyond Oil Tar Sands Committee, contact terry.houle@northstar.sierraclub.org and please attend one of our meetings! We meet the last Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Sierra Club office and there is an option to participate by phone conference.

Terry Houle is a volunteer leader with the Beyond Oil & Tar Sands Committee.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: WANT TO LEARN MORE?

The North Star Chapter has committed to transforming ourselves, by advancing our work on diversity, equity and inclusion, into a multicultural, anti-racist organization, and the national Sierra Club has made a similar commitment. These values are essential to our mission:

- Diversity is a conservation necessity and a social imperative that will enable the Sierra Club to remain a leader of the environmental movement.
- Inclusion fosters involvement of all persons and organizations that share our vision for a healthy planet.

- Environmental equity ensures that everyone has the right to experience nature and access to clean water, clean air, clean soil, and a safe environment.

The Chapter will be organizing a number of important and exciting learning opportunities in early 2016, and we invite you to join us! Trainings and discussions will:

- Increase our collective understanding of why this transformation is urgent,
- Develop awareness and practices to create more inclusive spaces, and

- Expand our skills to build reciprocal and effective partnerships.

For more info, visit: www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/dei

Join our list to receive updates and reserve your space as details are announced. Contact Margaret Levin at margaret.levin@sierraclub.org.

INSPIRING CONNECTIONS OUTDOORS VOLUNTEER LEADERS: **Meet Jeff Cepek and Kris Koch**

JUSTIN RANDALL



The Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth and adults to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world. Jeff Cepek and Kris Koch are two incredible volunteers who make the ICO program in Minnesota possible.

While the patchwork has changed with each generation, the cloth that makes up the Sierra Club's outdoor programs today was cut from the tailcoat of John Muir himself. During the Club's founding days, this long-legged luminary and patron saint realized that the most effective method for spreading his love of wild lands was simply to help others experience them first hand. This approach engendered legislative victories that spread our nation's burgeoning public lands system like wildfire, endowing future generations with the internationally-renowned ecosystems of Yosemite, Yellowstone, and many others.

While the hand that ignited the torch is now gone, passionate leaders across the nation continue to carry it.

Jeff Cepek

Jeff Cepek of Edina is one of these leaders. Growing up in Chicago — an urban youth himself — he relished early camping trips in the North Woods. "I always looked forward to our trips as great adventures," he said. "Those trips gave me perspective and a sense of the larger world around me." Following a move to the Twin Cities, Jeff sought to engage his passion for nature and the outdoors by becoming involved with the North Star Sierra Club chapter. After working on issues like smart growth and green jobs, Jeff discovered a passion creating experiences for youth like the ones he treasured while growing up in Chicago.

Jeff's energy, spirit and contagious love for the outdoors paired seamlessly with his patience and listening skills. After a few outing trips, Jeff discovered his own version of the truth Muir stumbled upon a century ago. "A simple walk through

the woods fosters a trust between me and the youth we serve, which builds confidence," Jeff said. His favorite part of sharing his passion for nature and the outdoors happens when participants' "eyes light up as they discover what inspires them!"

To Jeff, the most important environmental issue is the protection of wild places. Through the Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors program, Jeff found a way to combine his passion for the protection of wild places with his desire to share the experiences he treasured with a new generation. In doing so, he is contributing to a century-old legacy of engagement that dates back to the birth of the American conservation movement.

Jeff's talents have made him a welcomed addition to our Inspiring Connections Outdoors program. His wilderness walks inspire the same smiles, confidence, trust and perspective that he experienced on excursions in the woods with family and friends as a child. To the benefit of our city's youth and the natural world, Jeff has come full circle. All involved thank him.

Kris Koch

Kris Koch has been with ICO for more than a year, but he brings a lifetime of experience to the table. He began working with youth in a structured way when he was one himself, a student driven to help out at his high school's rec center. "I was pretty young then, but I still learned how to keep the peace among those younger than me," he said. This early lesson has proven invaluable on ICO trips.

That is just one part of the puzzle. For an ICO trip to be successful, the well-being of all involved is a priority. For Kris and other ICO leaders, this means paying careful attention to both the human and non-human elements of the trip. Drawing from a wealth of personal experience in the out of doors, Kris brings the logistical know-how to plan and execute trips that provide fun and adventure for all involved.

In the same spirit of John Muir, the Club's first outing leader, Kris is driven by a desire to share his experiences. "Many of my most enjoyable experiences were outdoors, and I know that I was lucky to have access to the wilderness," he said. "I want to give others the opportunity to explore the outdoors as well."

In the land of 10,000 lakes, Kris sees infinite potential. When asked what he enjoys most about Minnesota's wilderness, Kris responded, "It's everywhere."

Kris' experience with youth and the outdoors have made him a perfect fit for our Inspiring Connections Outdoors program. His work to ensure that those with the least access to natural spaces get to experience the wonders and excitement of the outdoors not only continues a century-old legacy of engagement, it furthers it. Kris' leadership is not only in action, but in thought. The North Star chapter celebrates and deeply appreciates these contributions to our community of wilderness enthusiasts. While we all benefit from this type of leadership, the real winners are the youth Kris works with and the future they represent.

Get Involved

Learn more about how you can get involved in Inspiring Connections Outdoors. Contact mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org. We hope you can join us!

Justin Randall is an Organizational Development Intern with the North Star Chapter.

Clean Energy for Northeastern Minnesota

In July, Minnesota Power, the Duluth-based energy company for Northeastern Minnesota, announced plans to cease burning coal at its Taconite Harbor 1 and 2 old coal-burning power plant on Lake Superior's North Shore near Schroeder. Minnesota Power will idle the plant in fall 2016 and cease burning coal in 2020.

This long overdue action will address the pollution concerns dozens of local faith, health, youth, conservation and environmental groups and leaders have raised with the utility and its state regulators over the years. As part of a settlement with Fresh Energy, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy and Sierra Club, Minnesota Power filed air pollution modelling that demonstrated potential ongoing air pollution for sulfur dioxide concerns from the aging Taconite Harbor plant. Sulfur dioxide causes respiratory illnesses and increased risk of hospital admissions or emergency room visits, especially among children, older adults and people with asthma.

On September 1, 2015, Minnesota Power proposed its full 15 year energy plan. Although it takes a step forward by setting a timeline to replace its Taconite Harbor coal units, the plan still relies heavily on burning coal and fails to maximize energy efficiency, wind and solar. The company still plans fossil fuels (coal and natural gas) for at least 66% of its power in 2030. Over the next several years, Minnesota Power will be making investments in its electric system and needs to build a 21st century clean energy system to serve its customers' needs; instead of locking our fate into fossil fuels.

Thanks to Minnesota's clean energy laws, including the state's commitment to generate 25% renewable energy by 2025, Minnesota Power is saving its customers money with its wind energy investments. Yet, Minnesota Power's 2015 energy plan does not include more investments in wind energy.

Minnesota Power has been a state utility leader in saving energy, but there are more opportunities to reduce energy waste, especially with the largest energy users, which helps everyone save money.

Xcel Energy plans to generate at least 10 percent of their electricity in Minnesota from solar by 2030, which amounts to about 750 megawatts (MW). By contrast, Minnesota Power proposes to install a mere 33 MW by 2020 to meet the state's 1.5 percent by 2020 solar standard and develop its first community solar garden. Minnesota Power can and should do better by adding more solar beyond 2020 and making sure community solar benefits everyone who wants to take part.

As Minnesota and the nation transition to a clean energy economy, let's position Northeastern Minnesota to be a part of the solution. Clean energy jobs are on the rise in the region, but more can be done with a clear regional clean energy and energy savings plan to grow good-paying, family-sustaining wind, solar and efficiency jobs in our communities and plan a transition beyond coal that benefits communities and workers.

Through early 2016, Sierra Club and our partners will be working to engage Minnesota Power customers to call on Minnesota Power and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to outline a plan to maximize energy efficiency, wind and solar in the transition beyond coal in Northeastern Minnesota. To get involved, contact Jessica Tritsch at jessica.tritsch@sierraclub.org or 612-659-9124.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Preserve the Future

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For the schedule of committee meetings and other volunteer opportunities, please check the North Star Chapter calendar at sierraclub.org/minnesota or call the office at 612-659-9124.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES



Louis Alemayehu
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My candidate statement is simple:

As we move further into a century that cannot afford continue to “thrive” on fossil fuels, I am looking for ways to create a new way of life with others locally and globally.

I have served on the North Star Chapter Executive Committee since 2013.

Here is more background about me:

Louis Alemayehu is a writer, educator, activist, poet, father, grandfather of African and Native American heritage. He facilitates workshops on racism, culture, environmental justice and community building. His writing has appeared in national and international publications. In 2003 the Headwaters Foundation gave Louis an award for life-long commitment to social justice. Alemayehu’s work focuses on teaching, writing, mentorship, community organizing, and Transitions related initiatives. He works deeply across multiple cultural communities with the North American Water Office, with Ce Tempocalli for Chicano cultural arts and environmental justice; with AfroEco for food security and reclamation of African/African American environmental wisdom and connection to the land; with Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota for urban agriculture, youth development, green economics and health disparities; with Multicultural Indigenous Academy for intercultural education; and with the Women’s Environmental Institute on health disparities and food justice.



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I am currently on the Ex-Comm for the past 4 years. My prior experience has been working with the Indigenous Environmental Network in Bemidji for 8 years as the Office Manager and Pipeline Organizer. In November of 2014, I was elected to the Clearwater Soil and Water District as a Supervisor.

I am a caretaker of a Environmental and Healing Retreat Center in Bagley named Farm By The Lake.

I believe that we need to make the Sierra Club into a state organization, by having more out-state events and opportunities for people of color and financially disadvantage people.



Katie Eukel
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I have served on the ExCom for six years, and I’m honored to serve as the Chapter Vice Chair for the first time this year. I’m excited about the Chapter’s efforts to build our collective strength – growing and diversifying our membership, building new alliances and working together to address our most pressing environmental challenges.

In my professional life, I head up Fourth Sector Consulting, a strategy and communications consultancy focused on social impact. I work with clients across multiple sectors, on an array of issues including climate change, health, sustainable agriculture, racial equity, media innovation, the arts, and more. All share a passion for making our world a better place to live. These experiences inform how I approach my work as an ExCom member – I know that one of the most effective ways to win hearts and minds is to tell powerful, personal stories and then work together for change.

I appreciate your support in continuing to serve on the executive committee!



Kirsten M. Johnson
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I cut my teeth as an activist fighting for clean energy. I took those skills and began a career working alongside community members to create social justice and racial equity. For the past decade, I have had the privilege of working collaboratively to address the challenges facing our communities – from ending youth homelessness to closing the achievement gap to creating health equity. I have worked at all levels – from board chair to grassroots organizer – to engage communities in creating change.

I am running for the Sierra Club Executive Committee because I think too often we create boundaries, separating justice and equity work from environmental and climate change work, when in reality these movements are and must be deeply intertwined.

If chosen to serve on the Executive Committee, I will bring to the table experience in effectively engaging diverse communities, in building people’s capacity to navigate cultural differences, and in applying a racial equity lens to policy and decision-making. I will bring my passion and commitment – as a climate justice advocate, as a white woman committed to racial equity and as a mother who wants a better future for her children.



Regina Mustafa
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reginamustafa@gmail.com

Amidst the rise of Islamophobia in the West and extremists in the East, I launched a non-profit organization to increase interfaith dialogue and education. My organization strives to not only be a source of reliable information on Islam and Muslims but also to actively stand for interfaith acceptance, serving Rochester, MN and beyond.

I became a volunteer with the Sierra Club early in 2015. The Sierra Club has helped me become more aware of my own religious teachings on taking care of the earth. Currently I am helping to organize an interfaith event on climate change to take place later this Fall. Barriers exist between people of different faiths due to lack of knowledge and fear of the unknown. How can we solve the problems plaguing our shared environment when we cannot overcome our outward differences? When Muslims and non-Muslims educate themselves on each other’s cultural and religious traditions, we can discover how alike we really are. When that wall is torn down we can make changes and help save our sick planet. If ever there were a topic that can unite people of all faiths,

it is the care of our earth.

If elected as an Executive Board Member for the Sierra Club, I will take part in bringing down that wall of fear and also help our local Muslim community realize their moral responsibility towards climate change.



Sarah Wovcha
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My first experience in environmental activism was in 1971 as a 4 year old in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where my siblings and I tabled to raise awareness about Gray Wolves. My family, originally from the Iron Range of Minnesota, has spent part of every summer of my life at an old log cabin along the Canadian border. When Voyageur’s National Park was established in the region we recognized it as a critical factor in saving the wild character of the land. As I visit there with my own children now we face new threats begging renewed activism, including proposed copper/nickel mining that would impact the region’s watershed. As a lawyer with a masters degree in public health, I will bring to the Executive Committee a life long passion for Minnesota’s wild places as well as expertise in evidence-based advocacy. As the director of a non-profit serving low-income children for the past 15 years and a past long-time director of the Wedge Community Coop, I will bring twenty years of experience in successfully serving mission-driven organizations. I am most excited to support the North Star Chapter in improving sustained access to outdoor opportunities for disadvantaged children and families.



Preeti Yonjon
1708 16th St SE Apt 2
St. Cloud MN 56304
917-775-4154
preetiyonjon@gmail.com

My name is Preeti Yonjon, a Gerontology and Social Responsibility graduate student with passion for working around environmental issues against climate change. I have been involved with Sierra Club North Star Chapter as a volunteer from the city of St. Cloud since 2013 and hope to be part of the Executive committee. My work so far with Sierra Club has not only educated me with legislative and political aspects of environmental justice but has also brought more interest in me to organize and work on policies around supporting the community. I hope to bring support and more knowledge to the executive committee through my organizing experience of Global Social responsibility Conference 2013 & 2014, various educational rallies, teach-ins, panel discussions and community engagement organizing as a Co-organizer of a student group, as recipient of Civic Newman Leadership Award 2014, Excellence in Leadership Award 2015 and also as a change agent in the community. With experience as an Intern in a nonprofit organization, Adhikaar in NY from 2013-2014 for social justice and as a graduate assistant in Teacher Preparation Initiative, St. Cloud State University since 2013, I hope to bring more expertise and more upkeep within the committee.

PLEASE VOTE FOR YOUR CHAPTER LEADERS DEADLINE FOR VOTING IS JANUARY 4, 2016

The Executive Committee (ExCom) is the governing body of the North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, with responsibility for overall activities, budgeting, and strategic planning of the Chapter.

There are fifteen members of the ExCom, elected by members of the Sierra Club in Minnesota for rotating three-year terms.

Members reflect a diversity of backgrounds and talents, brought together by their common interest in environmental protection, and a commitment to help the Sierra Club's North Star Chapter thrive and grow in its work as the leading grassroots voice for Minnesota's environment.

Current members of the North Star Chapter ExCom:

TERM EXPIRES 2015	TERM EXPIRES 2016	TERM EXPIRES 2017
LOUIS ALEMAYEHU	LUTHER DALE	C. SCOTT COOPER
JASON BENDER	MAT HOLLINSHEAD	JOHN DOBERSTEIN
MARTY COBENAIS	JAVIER MORILLO-ALICEA	SAM GRANT
KATIE EUKEL	LOIS NORRGARD	CHRISTY NEWELL
	TOM THOMPSON	BRUCE SNYDER

Please take the time to read the statements and mark and return a ballot. Your vote is important regardless of your level of involvement in Chapter activities.

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS:

To vote by mail:

1. Your member number is included with your mailing address on the back of the ballot. This will be used to verify membership; however, your vote will be kept confidential.
2. Please read the candidate statements provided.
3. Vote for up to five candidates of your choice by clearly marking "X" in the box next to their names on the ballot, or by writing in a non-listed candidate's name on the line provided. Multiple votes for one candidate will disqualify the ballot (except, of course, for a joint membership in which each member votes for the same candidate). The five candidates receiving the greatest number of votes will be elected to serve three-year terms on the North Star Chapter Executive Committee.

4. Place your ballot in an envelope and mail it by January 4, 2016 to:

Elections Committee
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
2327 E Franklin Avenue #1
Minneapolis, MN 55406

To vote by email:

1. Locate your 8-digit membership number included with your mailing address on the back of the ballot. Your vote will be kept confidential, but this number is required to verify membership.
2. Please read the candidate statements provided.
3. Vote for up to five candidates of your choice by listing them on an email message to ballot@northstar.sierraclub.org. You may write in one non-listed candidate's name. Multiple votes for one candidate will disqualify the ballot (except, of course, for a joint membership in which each member votes for the same candidate). The five candidates receiving the greatest number of votes will be elected to serve three-year terms on the North Star Chapter Executive Committee.
4. Send your email message to ballot@northstar.sierraclub.org before January 4, 2016 at 5 p.m.

ELECTION BALLOT FOR NORTH STAR CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2016

Please vote for up to five candidates:

MEMBERS VOTE HERE **JOINT MEMBERS VOTE HERE**

Louis Alemayehu

Marty Cobenais

Katie Eukel

Kirsten M. Johnson

Regina Mustafa

Sarah Wovcha

Preeti Yonjon

Write-ins:



SIERRA CLUB
NORTH STAR CHAPTER

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Or current resident