



The *Muir* VIEW

NEWS OF THE SIERRA CLUB IN WISCONSIN | JOHN MUIR CHAPTER



PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

In the midst of a global pandemic and a presidential election, the Sierra Club -- John Muir Chapter has not forgotten about the environmental crisis that is not going away anytime soon. One of the contributors to this crisis is conventional agriculture and its massive impact on our land and water quality. People all over the country, including here in Wisconsin, have realized the importance of supporting their local communities through a local food economy.

In the name of protecting our environment and promoting sustainable farming practices, the *Muir Musings* blog will feature six stories of organic farms and organizations in Wisconsin, many of which run a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. CSAs connect local farmers with customers by providing a weekly box with fresh, locally grown products throughout the harvest season. It is more than just a subscription -- it builds a community that cares about the idea of minimizing the environmental impact caused by agriculture and supports small-scale, sustainable farming.

When it comes to agriculture, this approach is exactly what we need right now. Organic and small-scale farms in Wisconsin are proud to showcase their efforts to take care of their soil and are open about how they get to their end product. They are not afraid to build relationships with locals and invite them over to their farms. An important aspect of this blog series is acknowledging that we need to change the way we understand agriculture and learn that seeing it exclusively as a business is causing great damage. Climate change is something farmers are already dealing with and have been for many years. The average age of farmers is rising, and it is becoming increasingly more difficult for young farmers to get started in the industry due to high land prices, lack of generational wealth, and large agricultural companies striving to overtake small-scale operations.

“Organic” is not just a fancy label that allows farmers to charge more for what they sell. The real value comes from the practices farmers use to make sure they contribute to the health and ecosystem of the soil.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

THE AUDACITY OF HOPE

I've found this country's last four years very troubling – especially the last one. The incendiary words, inhumane actions, rampant racism, economic disparities, environmental harms and tragedies, and a mismanaged pandemic – all while climate change forges on. But perhaps most troubling is the divisiveness and partisanship that are pulling us apart when we need to come together in the face of challenges.

What's giving me hope are the many leaders and organizations fighting for positive change, peaceful protesters rejecting hate even in the face of suffering, the widespread calls for justice and human decency, and positive actions being taken by many local communities. Being part of the Sierra Club with such great volunteers, staff and supporters dedicated to a better future has helped lift me up – and I hope you as well.

The election will bring a vastly better administration, but we remain deeply divided at the individual level. New leadership at the top will help, but much of the solution lies with us as individuals to be and create the change we want – from being adversarial to being cooperative, from seeing divisions

to finding unity and moving from fear to caring and being in community.

Once again, the Sierra Club offers many pathways and opportunities to bring us together and find common ground. Think about our issues. Everyone wants cleaner air and cheaper energy, not to mention more jobs, especially local ones.



We fight for that by advocating for a transition off of coal and investing in energy efficiency and wind, solar and battery storage.

Who doesn't want safe, clean water to drink and recreate in? With lead water pipes, runoff from CAFOs, and now PFAS, we have opportunities to engage with people in nearly every community and burg in Wisconsin on issues they care about.

Likewise, people love Wisconsin's natural features, parks, waterways and outdoor recreational choices – especially vital during the pandemic. Saving our heritage and those places is something

nearly everyone has in common.

That's certainly not all. But as a start, we can listen to people from other communities, find what we have in common and build on that. What we all want, we can create together – and start healing our divides.

This is my last column as Chapter Chair, and it is my privilege to have served these past four years. But even as I leave this position, I will remain on the ExCom for at least another year (I believe in good transitions!), and have taken the opportunity to engage nationally. I am on the Sierra Club History and Future Task Force to examine our history in light of statements and attitudes of some of our founders and where we are

headed now. I am also a Chapter Chairs Representative, five chairs who serve as an ExCom for chapters, until September.

I move on knowing we have great leadership in the chapter, our groups and teams, our wonderful staff who do such fantastic work, and you, our members and supporters who have been here for us steadfastly, and I know we can continue to count on.

Don Ferber
Chapter Chair

THE MUIR VIEW

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The deadline for submission of articles to the April issue is midnight on February 15, 2021.

Change of Address:

You can update your contact information online at myaccount.sierraclub.org.

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This blog series will give an insight into how much work and thought goes into making that a priority. Here are some of the core sustainable practices that farms featured on our blog promote:

MINIMIZING WATER POLLUTION In Wisconsin and other upper Midwestern states, the leaching of nitrate from soil fertilizers is a major problem. Nitrate contaminates water around farming areas and makes the water undrinkable. Organic farming aims to improve the quality of surrounding water through limited application of composted animal manure, cover cropping and other methods listed below.

COVER CROPPING Specific plants are grown among the main crops to improve soil health and quality, control weeds and diseases and increase biodiversity.

CROP DIVERSITY AND ROTATION The process of crop rotation is important to ensure the diversity of nutrients in the soil. Big agriculture companies often deplete the soil of essential nutrients and grow the same crop time and time again, whereas organic agriculture promotes the idea of giving back to the soil.

SOIL TESTING AND CONSERVATION In order to maintain the organic certification, farmers test their soil every few years and report what chemicals are being used on their farm to eliminate the use of harmful substances. In order to receive the certification, farmers must report what chemicals have been used on the soil for the past three years.

BIG NEWS: SOUTH OAK CREEK COAL PLANT ANNOUNCED FOR RETIREMENT

Last November, after years of hard work and dedication by Sierra Club activists and partner organizations, We Energies announced that they are retiring the Oak Creek coal plant. We did it! Thank you to all who have taken action and supported this campaign over the years. The plant will retire its remaining units in 2023 and 2024. Moreover, We Energies' announcement included plans to invest in a clean energy portfolio that includes 800 MW of solar, 600 MW of battery storage and 100 MW of wind. This decision is promising and points in the right direction -- it's crucial that as we transition away from coal, we simultaneously invest in clean, renewable energy, instead of investing in additional fossil fuels, such as fracked gas. With another coal plant down, our fight continues. There's still work to do with Oak Creek, where we'll push We Energies to ensure a just transition for their employees, and our calls will only grow louder to the remaining coal power plant-owning utilities across the state: it is past time to transition to clean energy.

Jadine Sonoda, Campaign Coordinator

CONTOUR CULTIVATION AND NO-TILL FARMING Through these methods, organic farmers reduce soil erosion by planting crops along the slopes of a field and eliminating tillage, which can also spread crop diseases.

These and other key practices will be further discussed on our blog, alongside the stories of our local farmers. They all agree that sustainable farming on its own is not enough to fight climate change and that it is not the ultimate solution. It is, however, a solution within an already existing industry that improves the condition of our land and environment, and reduces water pollution, soil erosion and energy waste.

Do you want to help improve the farming standards Wisconsinites follow? Many sustainable farming practices decrease nitrate pollution, but it's also important to set rules that strictly limit it. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is in the process of updating Wisconsin's Nitrate Rule, which will do just that. The DNR will accept public input on the changes they propose and these opportunities will arise over the next few months, so stay tuned to find out how you can contribute! Want to learn more? Email jadine.sonoda@sierraclub.org to get involved.

Zane Klavina
Volunteer

KEEPING GREY WOLVES ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST



In October, the Trump Administration announced they were removing grey wolves from the Endangered Species list through an administrative rule.

The final rule disregards concerns raised by scientific peer reviews and the almost two million people who voiced public opposition to removing protections for wolves. Gray wolves are still recovering, and removing them prematurely risks that progress as well as the health of the ecosystems that rely on them. The rule is set to go into effect on January 4, but the Sierra Club and a large coalition of organizations announced plans to file a lawsuit when the rule goes into effect. In addition to fighting to stop this short-sighted and unscientific change, we're working to encourage the Department of Natural Resources to ensure all rules around a potential wolf harvest are science-based, in the event that they lose their protected status.

Elizabeth Ward, Chapter Director

GET INVOLVED IN THE NEW YEAR!

2020 posed a series of challenges when it came to volunteering. From shifting all of our work and volunteer opportunities online to onboarding dozens of new volunteers, we've had to get creative and think about our work differently! No matter your interest or schedule, we have a volunteer role for you.

ONE-OFF OPPORTUNITIES -- ATTEND A VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER NIGHT

Join us on the second Monday of every month for a night of community, fun and action. We work together over Zoom, learn skills, listen to music and advance our work in Wisconsin. These are open to folks of all skill levels and interests. Come check it out and learn all about us!

SPECIFIC VOLUNTEER ROLES -- JOIN A REMOTE SUPPORT TEAM

Whether you're looking for a flexible volunteer commitment or are only interested in one type of volunteer task, we have a support team that's right for you! We send projects and assignments as help is needed, and it's a great way to learn a specific skill and contribute on your own schedule.

Our Support Teams: Phone Banking, Graphic Design, Photography & Videography, Digital Communications, Writing & Research, Texting

JOIN A CONSERVATION ISSUE TEAM THAT WORKS TOGETHER LONG-TERM TO ACHIEVE SUBSTANTIAL CAMPAIGN GOALS

We have several action-oriented teams that are recruiting new members, each with its own campaign focus. Joining a team can mean anything from helping plan an event and strategizing, to designing social media content or writing a petition or press release. These are long-term teams, and the opportunities to learn and contribute within your own schedule are endless. No experience is needed – just a passion for the issue area and a willingness to contribute as you are able!

Our Teams: Public Forests & Lands, Water Protection, Beyond Coal, Transportation Access & Equity, Stopping the Tar Sands and more!

Interested in any of the opportunities above or the Volunteer Fair? Email our Volunteer Coordinator Katie at kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org. She's waiting to hear from you!

Katie Hogan
Volunteer Coordinator

Undecided?

**Come to our
Virtual Volunteer Fair
and find the perfect fit!**

This January, kick off the new year with us at our Virtual Volunteer Fair. We'll talk about what volunteering can look like, dive into our current opportunities and give you the opportunity to explore as many as you like and ask as many questions as we have time for.

STOPPING NEW FRACKED GAS PLANTS

Our fight to cancel plans for the proposed Nemadji Trail Energy Center (NTEC), a fracked gas plant in northern Wisconsin, has evolved as the project has changed. Earlier this year, Dairyland Power in Wisconsin and Minnesota Power in Minnesota, who are jointly pursuing the project, announced that they were changing the water-based cooling system they had originally proposed, instead opting for an air cooling system. With such a big change to their proposed plant, we're asking for their permitting and approval process to be restarted. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) held a second Air Permit hearing for NTEC in August, where we highlighted the air pollution fracked gas produces in public testimony, and emphasized our point by submitting hundreds of comments from Wisconsinites concerned about

the project. While we wait to hear from the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the DNR, we're expanding our reach and engaging with people across the state to talk about why fracked gas is not part of the transition to clean energy. The fossil fuel industry may claim that fracked gas is natural, but they can't hide the fact that methane emissions from fracking and transmission are 86 times more potent than CO₂ over a 20-year period, or that the air pollution gas plants produce negatively impacts our health and environment. Want to help build the movement? Email Jadine Sonoda at jadine.sonoda@sierraclub.org to get involved.

Jadine Sonoda, Campaign Coordinator

THE CATHOLIC MULTICULTURAL CENTER'S COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM HAS A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

It all started with a rain garden. In 2013, the Catholic Multicultural Center (CMC), a social service agency that serves people in need in Madison, connected with Earth Partnership to build a rain garden at the agency's site on Madison's south side. Seven years later, the CMC's Community Environment Program has grown by leaps and bounds.

Building the rain garden was a true community effort. CMC hosted workshops on the benefits of rain gardens and native plants. Community members planned and installed the garden. The sign that marks the garden has drawings and writings from the members who helped to build it.

According to Laura Green, CMC's grants and volunteer coordinator, the impetus behind building the rain garden came from "recognizing that the people we serve here -- low-income people, immigrant people and minority people -- are all unfairly impacted by environmental problems like climate change, water pollution and having access to fresh, healthy and affordable food."

Building a rain garden was also a way to put the Catholic social teaching of care for creation into action. Green said that CMC's Community Environment Program provides a space for its clients to become active in the environmental movement.

"People we serve are not well represented or included in the environmental movement," Green said. "We wanted to create a more inclusive and diverse environmental movement. Nationwide, the environmental movement tends to be whiter and middle class."

Today, the Community Environment Program consists of four to six activities a year, including interactive workshops and field experiences. Past workshop topics have included recycling, upcycled art, climate change and energy conservation. Eighty percent of the workshops are offered in English and Spanish, and 20 percent of the workshops are in Spanish only.



In 2019, the group partnered with the Ice Age Trail Alliance to host a nature walk at Warner Park in Madison. They also hold annual clean ups of Wingra Creek, which is located about a half mile from CMC.

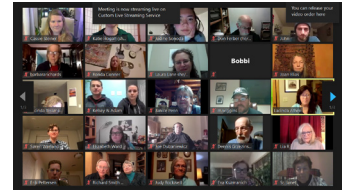
"Some people think that people of color don't care much about the environment because they don't see them participating, but just about everyone cares about the environment -- having clean air, clean water, access to green spaces -- but people of color face many barriers to participating in the environmental movement, and they aren't always actively included at the table where we are having these discussions," Green said.

In addition to the rain garden, CMC's site now has a native plant garden. And at the agency's food pantry garden in Verona, community members recently planted 3,000 square feet of prairie seed. The environmental efforts have extended to the CMC's building itself. Volunteers helped to replace over 500 light bulbs with LED bulbs during the past two years. Green said this effort will result in a 55% savings in energy for the agency.

Laura Lane
At-Large Executive Committee Member

2020 CHAPTER AWARDS

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS



In November, the Sierra Club John Muir Chapter recognized outstanding volunteers and community leaders for their work on behalf of the environment. From new activists to lifetime achievements, we acknowledged their amazing efforts and accomplishments with a virtual celebration!

This year's award winners are:

Laura Lane - New Activist Award

Laura is a leader on our Beyond Coal Team and the chapter's Executive, Fundraising and Equity Committees. She and her daughter, with their contagious enthusiasm, are frequent participants in our monthly volunteer nights, fighting to create a better world.

Forests and Public Lands Team -

Wildflower Award With impressive enthusiasm and creativity, the team not only launched new campaigns around the Every Kid Outdoors pass, but also successfully advocated for forest protections that will make a difference for decades to come, as well as launching the chapter's book club.

Søren Warland - Wildflower Award

Søren made significant contributions to the Beyond Coal Team, where he facilitated several meetings, led a training for members on how to interact with the press, authored several proposals to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, and helped organize a webinar on the impacts of burning coal on health.

Barbara Richards - 2020 Merit Award

Barb is a founding member of the Milwaukee Equity and Climate Alliance and represented Sierra Club on the Milwaukee City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity. She was editor of the Great Waters Group newsletter, spearheaded multiple local initiatives, and continues to make a difference on our Transportation Team.

Ronda Conner - LD Rockwell Award

Ronda spent countless hours during the 2020 election season working with the national Sierra Club Texting Team to get out the vote, recruited and trained members herself and helped people learn more about our endorsed candidates. She is also active with the Four Lakes Group, the Beyond Coal Campaign, and leads texting at volunteer nights.

The League of Women Voters of Ashland and Bayfield Counties - Good Citizen Award

As part of their ongoing efforts to protect northern Wisconsin, they are involved in efforts to protect the area from destructive mining, and most recently they have been vital in advocating for the protection of the area's waterways and wetlands from the proposed reroute of the Line 5 pipeline.

Chairman Michael Wiggins Jr. of The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa - Torchbearer Award

Chairman Wiggins has used his leadership position to lead tribal opposition of the proposed Penokee taconite mine and the Line 5 pipeline. Under his leadership, solar has been installed on tribal buildings and sustainable forestry practices have also been implemented, demonstrating his dedication to the protection and conservation of water, land and wildlife.

Caryn Treiber - JJ & Pat Werner Award Caryn serves as chair of the Chippewa Valley Group

and has helped steer the strategic direction of the chapter as a delegate to the chapter Executive Committee for many years. She has lent her time and talents to many issue campaigns and fundraising efforts, both locally and statewide, and is always willing to step into any position and support any campaign that moves us towards a clean, just future.

Katie Hogan, Volunteer Coordinator

Jacinda Tessmann, Chapter Coordinator

MEMBER POEM

Thank you to long-time member Allan Mortenson for sharing your story and your poetry with us.

"At age 93, I still am concerned about caring for our environment. My 115 acre forest has gone from cut over brush to a first class forest. It has taken 65 years, but carbon is being stored, water is cleaner, and the earth is a bit cooler."

VOID

When up was not what down is now,
And thought confused my memories.
I looked at pitch-black darkened night,
And saw the light of centuries.

My tale reversed to lead me on;
My mind o'erwhelmed by what might be.
I knew the future of the past,
For clearly fog did let me see.

Outside my soul revealed time's wealth,
The Sun unlit, the Earth in freeze.
I saw a riddle solve itself,
What ever was, could never be.

Allan J. Mortenson, 2001

CHAPTER ELECTIONS

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

Voting for the Sierra Club - Wisconsin Chapter Executive Committee ended on November 15. Congratulations to the following Sierra Club Wisconsin Executive Committee members:

ERIN EREGBU

Erin is a long-time Sierra Club member and environmentalist who says she began reading the Sierra Club's magazines when she was six years old. Protecting natural resources and raising awareness of nature's benefits have been lifelong passions for Erin, whose vision for Sierra Club Wisconsin is to engage more with diverse communities and explore their non-traditional skills to build a strong, connected community of contributors.

ABBY ROSS

Abby has worn many hats at Sierra Club, from event planning to media team lead. Most recently, she helped to lead the Tar Sands Storytelling Project. She is an active youth organizer and environmental educator. Her vision for Sierra Club Wisconsin is to create a culture of inclusion, where diverse voices work together to shape real solutions.

DOUG WHITE

Doug is a lifelong environmentalist with over four decades of experience in nonprofit leadership and a passion for protecting nature. He sees the chapter's Beyond Coal and Clean Energy work as key to slowing the climate crisis. His vision for Sierra Club Wisconsin is to expand and diversify its membership base and financial resources and to increase its flexibility to adapt to political and social change.

BYLAW CHANGE

With 83 percent support, the proposed bylaw amendment to change the Chapter's name to the Wisconsin Chapter of the Sierra Club passed.

Mary Reames

Nominating Committee

GREEN REVIEW

NATURE'S SILENT MESSAGE

BY SCOTT STILLMAN

WILD SOUL PRESS, 2020, 159 PAGES

In a nation harangued by a clatter of partisan screeching and sequestered by necessary stay-at-home imperatives, along comes *Nature's Silent Message*, a series of hiking and camping essays offering an antidote. What happens when we turn down the noise and seek solitude in nature? Nature offers a mélange of experiences that return us to our fundamental selves.

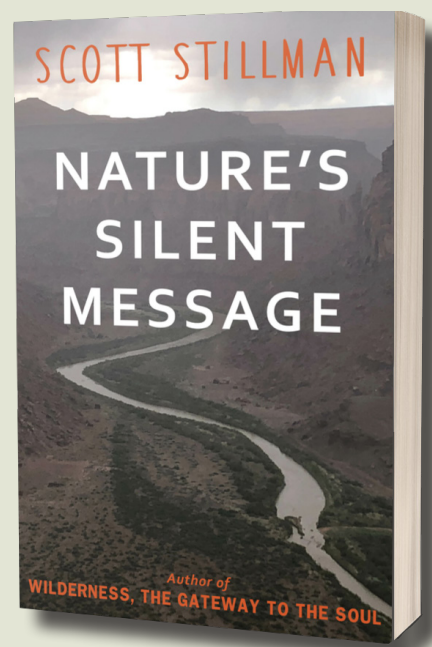
Each of Stillman's short essays includes the experience and analysis of wilderness. The reader's conclusions may differ from Stillman's, yet for anyone who has heard a better-quality voice in their head in a wild place, the descriptions of ardor and pleasure in wilderness prompt clearer thoughts. Stillman seems to make sense of the grand indifference shown to us under a night sky alive with galaxies and waking to a morning evolution of canyon colors. Just as fierce as the indifference is a message of awe from a high rock with a birds-eye view: Earth is an author of love.

Travel vicariously by foot in Utah, Arizona, Washington, Oregon and more. View the velvety peaks of the Cascades while hiking a ridgeline. Camp under exploding views. Consider the change in a sense of gratitude after camping for days without food. Meet tall Saguaro cacti that each offer a long prickly arm of salutation. Think thoughts that have nothing to do with buying something or demeaning someone.

While Stillman is grateful for the wilderness that remains and presents his defense for the preservation of the lands for all, there is no clear plan here -- or in most nature writing -- about how to share this resource with those who were taken from their homeland and with those isolated on islands of poverty. There is at least a hint of hubris in the assertion that this land is available to all. Many do not have proximity, transportation and the leisure time to access wilderness.

Books are second best to experience, and Stillman's offering of second best provides a thoughtful escape from our dark winter.

Amy Lou Jenkins is the author of *Friends: Voices on the Gift of Companionship*. Contact her to forward a book for possible review at JackWalkerPress.Com.



2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

Designed by Ashley Gries

JANUARY

Gas Plant Approval

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) greenlighted Dairyland Power Coop (Dairyland) to build the proposed gas plant, Nemadji Trail Energy Center (NTEC) in Superior, Wisconsin. We have appealed that decision.

Support Teams Launch

In January 2020, we launched a new way to volunteer. Seven new Support Teams were created to allow people to volunteer from their homes, on their own time. Support Teams include graphic design, phone banking, texting, social media, writing and research, and more.

FEBRUARY

Genoa Coal Plant Retirement

Dairyland announced they would retire the Genoa coal plant, located outside of La Crosse, by mid-2021.

Shut Down Line 5

Enbridge formally applied for permits to be able to build a new segment of the Line 5 pipeline in northern Wisconsin, around the Bad River Reservation. Sierra Club and our partners joined together to call on Enbridge to shut down Line 5 instead.

Book Club Launch

We launched our first book club! Join in on the second Tuesday of odd months. January 2021's discussion will be about *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

MARCH

Clean Energy Toolkit

We released the Wisconsin Clean Energy Toolkit with RENEW Wisconsin and Wisconsin Conservation Voters. The toolkit is a resource designed to help guide communities of varying sizes and with differing resources as they consider, craft, and implement clean energy policies, and how to ensure the greatest return on clean energy investments.

Sierra Club Work Transitions Online

In order to keep everyone safe during the COVID pandemic, Sierra Club staff began working from home and launched our #ActAtHome series with daily actions that could be taken from home and quick chats with campaign updates and activities to do from home.

JULY

Locally Grown, Nationally Known Virtual House Party

Our annual house party moved online this year! It featured a cooking demonstration by Chef Paul Tseng of Willy Street Co-op using WI ingredients and information about how the ingredients connect to our work across the state. Together, we raised over \$10,000!

Zombie Hwy Returns

Governor Evers announced intentions to bring back the damaging I-94 E/W expansion project (which we have halted more than once due to environmental and social justice concerns). We re-launched a campaign to stop this project one more time.

AUGUST

Commitment to Equity

In August, the Chapter revitalized our Equity Committee, which has since hosted a webinar for all Sierra Club volunteers about hosting welcoming and inclusive meetings. Additionally, Sierra Club - Great Waters Group sponsored a 3-week Anti-Racism and Environmentalism 101 training that more than 100 people attended.

La Crosse County Commits to 100% Clean Energy

The Coulee Region Group and other communities members organized to get La Crosse County to adopt a goal of reaching 100% clean energy by 2050. This comes after the City of La Crosse made a similar commitment in 2019.

SEPTEMBER

Keeping the Power On

Three months of hard work and building public pressure on the Public Service Commission resulted in the extension of the utility shutoff moratorium through November 1, when the winter moratorium kicks in (until April 15), keeping Wisconsinites warm, safe, and healthy.

Oneida County Protected from Mining Proposal

Badger Minerals, the company that applied to do exploratory drilling earlier in 2020 announced that it would no longer move forward with plans to start mining near the Wolf River.

Despite a year of uncertainty, we have continued advocating for climate and environmental justice.

APRIL

Forest Action Plan Victory

The state's 10-year Forest Action Plan was revised early this year. Our newly formed Lands Team solicited comments and feedback on the plan. In response, an entire chapter about forests and climate change was added to the plan, among several other improvements.

Get On Board Day

We coordinated a day of appreciation for transit workers around the state. Dozens of Wisconsinites displayed signs and chalk drawings of appreciation, and we were able to sew and deliver more than 100 masks to transit operators in the Fox Valley, Waukesha, and Milwaukee.

MAY

Edgewater Coal Plant Retirement Announced

Alliant Energy announced plans to retire the Edgewater coal plant and to build 1000 MW of solar power. That same week, Sierra Club released a report that made it clear that both of Alliant's coal plants (Edgewater and Columbia) are uneconomic and that it is in the interest of ratepayers for the coal plants to be retired.

Line 5 Intervention

Sierra Club and partners, represented by Midwest Environmental Advocates, intervened in Enbridge's application to use eminent domain to acquire land for the new Line 5 pipeline segment. Enbridge ended up withdrawing their application in hopes of finding an alternative way to acquire the land.

JUNE

Governor's Task Force on Climate Change

Sierra Club members across the state attended hearings held by the Task Force on Climate Change throughout June and July.

Welcoming our New Campaign Coordinator, Jadine Sonoda!

We welcomed our new Campaign Coordinator, Jadine Sonoda in early June. Jadine moved to Wisconsin from Maryland and is supporting our Water Team, Tar Sands Team and our NTEC and Oak Creek work.

OCTOBER

Grey Wolves to Lose Endangered Species Status

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration moved forward with removing Endangered Species protections for grey wolves. Fortunately, Sierra Club and our partners filed an intention to sue almost immediately.

Getting Out the Vote

Sierra Club members called, texted, and sent letters to inconsistent voters in swing districts around the state to elect conservation champions. Two of Sierra Club's endorsed candidates that were prioritized ended up beating the incumbents in their districts.

NOVEMBER

Michigan Governor Takes Action to Shut Down Line 5

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer made a huge announcement, revoking Enbridge's right to operate in the Straits of Mackinac and calling for them to stop Line 5 operations by May 2021 after reports about Enbridge's failure to maintain the pipeline.

Coal to Clean Energy

WEC Energy Group (owner of We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service) announced it would be retiring the Oak Creek Power Plant and will build 1500 mw of wind, solar, and batteries. That's a lot of coal and that's a lot of clean energy.

DECEMBER

Sustainable Farming Practices

After a virtual screening of the film *Sold Down the River*, which highlights farming practices, nitrates and water quality, we heard from experts and learned about how a strong Nitrate Rule can protect our health and environment.

Budget Work Kicks Off

The state budget process is a big opportunity for advocacy for clean air, clean water, public lands and public transportation. Starting with Gov Evers' Listening Session on December 2, Sierra Club members are making it known that we need a state budget that centers health, equity and climate.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Sierra Club is celebrating the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris! We are thrilled that the Biden administration is committed to reestablishing environmental protections, enacting science-based policy, and rejoining the Paris Climate Accord to fight the biggest threat to the planet. Club members here in Wisconsin and across the country were part of our biggest and most successful voter mobilization ever. Thanks to all the state volunteers who joined in!

The results at the state level were somewhat disappointing, but our endorsed candidates generally did well, with two Assembly candidates, Deb Andraca and Sara Rodriguez, knocking off incumbents. Congrats to the Great Waters Group for their great organizing work on those races! Those wins were tempered by the loss of two Senate candidate seats, incumbent Sen. Patty Schachtner and Jonathon Hanson. The result is a loss of pro-environment officials in the Senate, but a gain in the Assembly. The Governor's veto authority remains intact because anti-environmental officials do not have super-majority vote margins to override the Governor. This result will be very important for the inevitable fight over redistricting in 2022.

2021-2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PREVIEW

This legislative session, there is so much we have to fight for. After the missed opportunity of the last session, it will be an uphill battle, but we are dedicated to advocating for Wisconsin's residents and environment. In particular, we will be fighting for fair redistricting, which is crucial for fair representation. We will also be pushing for action on climate, public transit and lands and water quality, including PFAS

contamination. Each of these issues are central to creating a healthy, just, equitable Wisconsin, and we're ready to get to work on them.

As always, our biggest focus this year will be the biennial Wisconsin state budget. The process has already begun! This is our opportunity to ask our elected officials to commit to clean water, clean air, public transportation and public lands. The state budget adheres to the following process: 1) In fall 2020, the agencies submitted their budget requests. 2) In early 2021, Governor Evers will announce his draft budget. 3) Around March, the legislative Joint Finance Committee (JFC) will host public hearings, take public comment and edit the budget. 4) In summer, the legislature will vote on the state budget that the JFC has crafted. 5) Once the legislature passes the budget, it will go back to Governor Evers, who has the opportunity to sign it, veto it, or veto specific line items.

Through every step of the process, Sierra Club members have an important role to play. We must speak up for our priorities, contact our elected officials and help our friends and family members engage in the budget process as well. If you are interested in making phone calls to your legislator, attending public hearings, sharing things on social media or other forms of advocacy on the state budget, email Cassie at cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org.

Dave Blouin, Chapter Political Chair
Jadine Sonoda, Campaign Coordinator
Cassie Steiner, Senior Campaign Coordinator

IN CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTEERS

The chapter would not be what it is today without our wonderful volunteers who devote their time and energy to preserve the nature and environment of Wisconsin and fight for an equitable, 100% clean energy future. Our volunteers foster a supportive community for each other and anyone who wants to join the relentless fight against climate change. From stuffing envelopes to leading volunteer teams, our work would not be possible without all of you.

In November, we expressed our appreciation through a week-long social media takeover! Our volunteer appreciation week featured video recordings, virtual

thank yous, quotes and stories from other volunteers and live shout outs, all of which culminated in our virtual awards celebration. It was exciting to celebrate all of our volunteers, teams and groups, and we keep our appreciation coming weekly with the Sunday Spotlight series. Each week we highlight a volunteer and thank them for their leadership and contributions to the chapter. Check us out on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @SierraClubWI to meet a new volunteer weekly!

Katie Hogan
Volunteer Coordinator



FIGHTING FOR TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

Earlier this year, Governor Evers announced that he is bringing back the damaging, proposed I-94 expansion project in Milwaukee. This project is not only a public health, climate and racial justice nightmare (more on that is available on our blog at sierraclub.org/wisconsin), but the rationale behind the project is shaky at best.

The Department of Transportation's 2021-23 Biennial Budget Request Issue Paper about Southeast Mega Project Funding states congestion, bridge age and safety as the three primary reasons to expand this highway. Let's break that down:

- 1. Congestion:** the DOT Issue Paper claims that congestion would increase from 12 to 14 hours of daily congestion between 2020 and 2060 if the highway were replaced in its current footprint rather than adding lanes. The data behind this assumption is faulty because it does not take into account the impact of the pandemic, increased working from home and the stagnation of Milwaukee's working-age population -- a population that is a main contributor to rush-hour congestion. Additionally, Transportation For America's recent report *The Congestion Con* has found that adding lanes to highways almost always makes congestion worse within two years of the project's completion.
- 2. Bridge age:** with most of the bridges in the 3.5 mile stretch of this project dating back to the 1950s and 60s, it is true that repairing infrastructure is important. However, bridges can be repaired and replaced without the construction of additional lanes.
- 3. Safety:** the DOT issue paper states, "As traffic increases, safety and traffic operations on this corridor will continue to deteriorate." A priority for addressing safety concerns should be decreasing traffic on the highway by replacing the highway in its current footprint instead of adding lanes that increase traffic. Funding transportation alternatives like public transportation to decrease traffic on this corridor should also be prioritized.

Given the poor rationale for this project, it is clear that political motives are behind this proposed expansion instead of the health, safety and financial well being of Wisconsinites. Get involved in this project's opposition: email Cassie at cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org.

Cassie Steiner, Senior Campaign Coordinator

PIPELINES IN WISCONSIN

While the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change spent the year talking about how to move off of fossil fuels and get to 100% clean energy, Enbridge was continuing to build a framework to pump more dirty oil through the state. Enbridge spent the year:

- **Pursuing the Line 3 Pipeline** - Despite years of setbacks and unprecedented opposition, the Walz Administration in Minnesota granted Enbridge their final permits for the Line 3 Replacement Project. If this pipeline moves forward, it will jeopardize streams, rivers, wild rice and treaty rights. The fight carries on as lawsuits are filed and activists continue to organize to stop this dangerous proposal.
- **Increasing oil flowing through the Line 61 Pipeline** - Enbridge got permission to 'upgrade' one of their other pipelines, which runs through Minnesota and into Superior, Wisconsin, along with terminals in Superior and Pontiac, Illinois. These 'upgrades' will result in additional tar sands oil flowing through Wisconsin. The increased capacity means that the Line 61 corridor will become the largest tar sands pipeline in North America, carrying 1.2 million barrels per day (for comparison, the Keystone XL pipeline would be 800,000 barrels per day).
- **Attempting to reroute Line 5** The desperation to continue pumping as much oil through the region as possible is demonstrated best by Enbridge's refusal to shut down the Line 5 pipeline. This even came after Michigan Governor Whitmer revoked Enbridge's easement for the lakebed of the Straits of Mackinac after the company failed to properly maintain the pipeline. We continue the fight to stop the reroute of the Line 5 pipeline around the Bad River Band's reservation and instead call for the pipeline to be shut down. We expect the Department of Natural Resources to announce their findings of the environmental risks early this year.

To get involved in our fight and stop these pipeline proposals, contact Jadine Sonoda at jadine.sonoda@sierraclub.org.

Elizabeth Ward, Chapter Director

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Your generous contributions-above and beyond your membership dues-provided crucial support for our local grassroots campaigns to protect Wisconsin's water, land and wildlife.

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VOLUNTEER
NIGHT



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SIERRA CLUB

JOHN MUIR CHAPTER

754 Williamson Street

Madison, WI 53703

Our newsletter is printed on recycled paper

CALENDAR

VOLUME 59 / NUMBER 1 JANUARY - MARCH 2021

JANUARY 5

Chapter Book Club

Virtual 7 p.m. https://bit.ly/SCWI_books.

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

JANUARY 9

Chapter Executive Committee Meeting

Virtual, 9 a.m., elizabeth.ward@sierraclub.org

JANUARY 12-14

Renew Wisconsin Energy Summit

Virtual <https://renewwisconsin.swoogo.com/2021RESummit>

JANUARY 13

Virtual Volunteer Night

Registration required to receive the zoom call link.

sierraclub.org/wisconsin

JANUARY 20

Virtual Volunteer Fair

Contact Katie Hogan at kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org

JANUARY 25, 27 & 28

Team Kickoff Meetings

Contact Cassie at cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org

FEBRUARY 4

Transit Equity Day

<https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin>

FEBRUARY 10

Virtual Volunteer Night

Registration required to receive the zoom call link.

sierraclub.org/wisconsin

FEBRUARY 11 & 25, MARCH 11 & 25

Wisconsin Environmental Health Network Conference

Virtual <https://www.wehnonline.org/mtc-2020-2>

MARCH 2

The Big Share, an online day of giving

Learn more at thebigshare.org

MARCH 2

Chapter Book Club

Virtual at 7 p.m. https://bit.ly/SCWI_books

MARCH 10

Virtual Volunteer Night

Registration required to receive the zoom call link.

sierraclub.org/wisconsin

MARCH 12-14

Canoeopia

Virtual. More information at canoeopia.com

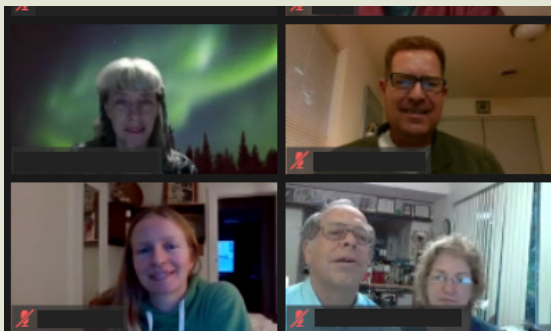
APRIL 6

Wisconsin Spring Elections

<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/>



OUR MEMBERS IN ACTION



For the majority of the year, all of our work and volunteer events have been online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we haven't been able to meet in person, we've found new ways to connect across the state, bringing people from all over Wisconsin into the same virtual room. During one of our monthly Virtual Volunteer Nights, we all worked on developing our video editing skills and, at the same time, created short clips to share on social media that covered topics from transportation to coal plants to voting. Interested in getting more involved? Contact Volunteer Coordinator Katie Hogan to learn more: kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org.