

N O R T H S T A R JOURNAL

NEWS ON OUR EFFORTS TO KEEP THE ENVIRONMENT HEALTHY FOR MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES

Winter/Spring 2024
Volume 44 Issue 1

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Watercolor credit: Gail Speckmann



SIERRA CLUB
NORTH STAR CHAPTER



Dear reader,

This year climate change felt personal for me. Having so many bad air quality days here in Minnesota was eye-opening. Blue skies and open windows are precious to me now. And I know this is nothing compared to what other communities are facing, or what's ahead. This year is projected to be the hottest our planet has ever seen. But while this may be our hottest year yet, it may be the coolest year we will ever have again. Some might read that and feel like giving up. But I can't. And neither will the North Star Chapter.

We all have personal stories that compel us to act for our environment, home, and future. What's yours?

Margaret Levin, State Director



Sierra Club staff, Patty O'Keefe and Mary Blitzer, celebrate outside the state capitol.

This year with your support:

- **We passed legislation for 100% clean electricity in our homes by 2040.** We also won millions of dollars for buses, trains, bicycling, and walking, improving the lives of our neighbors who already use transit, and giving thousands more safe, efficient options for getting around.
- **We took local action for climate change** by passing the People's and Climate Equity Plan in Minneapolis, and are working for more sustainable cities from Saint Paul to Duluth, Rochester, and across Minnesota.
- **We led over 50 events with and for people of color, veterans, and the broader Sierra Club community** so more Minnesotans can get outside and experience the transformative power of nature.



Sierra Club volunteers and coalition partners pose in Minneapolis City Hall following the passage of the Climate and Equity Plan.

Together, with your support, we will step into 2024 ready to:

- **Build on our legislative wins from last year.** We'll fight to ensure the billions of dollars available for the energy transformation are spent on real, equitable climate solutions.
- **Continue on the path to environmental justice** by ensuring that new rules to protect low income and communities of color from added pollution are strong, and meet communities' needs.
- **Bring our full legal and organizing power to fighting corporate polluters and their disturbing influence in government.** We will push Governor Walz and the state agencies he leads to be accountable to Minnesotans, not to industry.



JR Hunte, Sierra Club staff, and a youth participant from the Sanneh Foundation set up a tent. Photo credit: Devon Cuperly

Volunteers Wanted: Join A Volunteer Team

Capacity Teams

Share your talents & skills with us.

- Communications, quarterly meetings
- Community Outreach, ongoing events
- Outings, ongoing events

Stewards Teams

Research, monitor, and advocate for environmental issues.

- Forests & Wildlife, 2nd Mon. 7:00 pm
- Water & Wetlands, 2nd Mon. 7:00 pm

Campaign Teams

Lead grassroots advocacy campaigns on our most pressing issues.

- Beyond Oil, 4th Monday at 5:00 pm
- Land Use & Transportation, 2nd Mon. 6:00 pm
- Clean Energy, 4th Tues. 6:30 pm
- Zero Waste, 1st Tues. 7:00 pm

Geographic Teams

Organize in your city for 100% Clean Energy and other local needs.

- Rochester, 2nd Mon. 6:30 pm
- Duluth, 1st Tues. 5:30 pm

Office Volunteers

Support mailings, data entry, etc.

- Tuesday & Wednesday, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

sierraclub.org/minnesota/volunteer-opportunities

NET ZERO, REALLY

Peter Wagenius

The climate movement is gaining momentum and transition is finally underway. But fossil fuel interests and corporate agriculture are increasingly pivoting to fake solutions that are made to sound sustainable even though, in reality, they extend a lifeline to the fossil fuel industry. The environmental movement needs to stay ahead of them if we want to achieve the real version of Net Zero.

What is Net Zero?

Net Zero is the point where the amount of emissions we are adding to the atmosphere equals the amount of emissions we are removing from it. For scientists and advocates, Net Zero reminds us that we need to stop climate emissions and also preserve natural spaces that naturally sequester carbon in plants and soils.

Polluting industries, on the other hand, want Net Zero to mean that they can keep burning fossil fuels because their emissions will somehow be offset by industrial carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) schemes that are expensive, unscalable, and ineffective.

Here's the bottom line: To stabilize the climate, we need to stop polluting in multiple sectors. Not just pollute less. Not delay by investing in more "bridge fuels" like fossil gas.

2024 MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE GOALS: GET TO NET ZERO EQUITABLY.

Clean Energy

In 2023, the legislature passed the 100% Bill which requires all electric utilities in the state of Minnesota to provide 100% carbon-free electricity to their customers by 2040. This is amazing AND now we must hold gas utilities accountable to climate goals too. In 2024 we'll focus on real solutions like: switching from gas to electric appliances, reducing energy use through efficiency gains, and reducing demand on the grid through maximizing community solar. All the while, we'll need to stay on the look-out for false, green-washed solutions such as "renewable natural gas" and carbon pipelines, which are designed to throw a lifeline to gas utilities and the ethanol industry.

Land Use & Transportation

Unchecked metropolitan sprawl is damaging in many ways. When natural lands at the perimeter of a metro region are destroyed, we lose both habitat and natural carbon sequestration in plants and soils. And where people live greatly affects how much they drive and how much they pollute. Studies show dramatic reduction in climate emissions from land use policies. (See New York Times' "Climate Impact of Your Neighborhood Mapped," Dec 13, 2022)

To combat sprawl, we must legalize and build more housing in the already developed areas of the region, particularly along transit lines.

Zero Waste

Since all garbage burners in Minnesota produce carbon pollution, they will all need to close by 2040, thanks to the 100% bill. But that's not fast enough to address the environmental injustice of emissions from facilities like the Hennepin County garbage burner a.k.a. HERC.

To shut down the HERC sooner and ultimately all burners by 2040, we need to move towards a new system of handling solid waste. The Zero Waste coalition, including Sierra Club, will promote a package of bills including extended producer responsibility (EPR), electronic waste recycling and composting, as well as expansion of Right to Repair, which passed last year. Big Oil will oppose this through its plastics lobby. (Listen to "A Matter of Degrees" Podcast from Dec 15, 2022). We can stop them in Minnesota.

Peter Wagenius is the Legislative and Political Director of the North Star Chapter. When he's not working you can find him chauffeuring his daughters around town on a longtail cargo bike.

REAL VS. FAKE

A primer on some of the more widely promoted greenwashed solutions from the fossil fuel industry.

Fake: Renewable Natural Gas (RNG)

“Renewable” gas, derived from methane captured from organic waste sources like landfills and farms, seems promising at first glance. But it is not a practical solution. Experts estimate that RNG could only replace a small fraction, about 2 to 5 percent, of the total gas consumption in the United States in 2019. The infrastructure required to convert waste into usable gas is expensive, and regardless of its source—be it fracking, landfills, or factory farm manure—gas presents risks to our health and the environment.

Real: Electrification, Zero Waste, and Sustainable Farms

Instead of investing more ratepayer money in gas infrastructure, we must get ready for renewable energy by electrifying buildings using readily available technology. And we need to move to zero waste and sustainable farming practices to reduce emissions from landfills and factory farms.

Fake: Carbon Pipelines

Big polluters have a plan to build a network of pipelines to take carbon dioxide “captured” from ethanol and fertilizer and transport it to North Dakota where it will be used as a fracking material to get more oil from the ground. This form of carbon capture utilization and sequestration (emphasis on the “utilization”) is called “Enhanced Oil Recovery” (EOR) and is a perfect example of a dead-end pathway where polluter interests are seeking greater investments in systems we need to stop using. The Iowa chapter of Sierra Club has been doing a great job opposing these pipelines and we will be seeking ways to help.

Real: Carbon Sequestration in Forests

In the northern 1/3 of Minnesota, there are lowland forests and peatlands that provide excellent habitat and naturally sequester a huge amount of carbon in plants and soils. Since these lowlands are wet and inaccessible to vehicles, both logging and harvesting of peat is currently limited. But that could change as the climate heats up. The time to protect these lands is now, which is why the Sierra Club will work to broaden and deepen our coalition to establish a Lowland Carbon and Habitat Reserve (LowCaHR).

Key Questions for Vetting Climate Solutions



1. Emissions

What percentage of greenhouse gas emissions is reduced or added?



2. Pathways

Can this technology exist in our zero-emission future? Or is it a dead-end pathway?



3. Alternatives

Are there better alternatives?



4. Impacts

Beyond emissions, what are the other impacts, both good and bad?



5. Dollars

Who benefits? Who loses? Who pays?

ART & ACTIVISM



Community members rally, holding signs made at art builds. Photo credit: Devon Cupery

Whitney Terrill

Visual art, public art, and narrative storytelling have a long tradition in social change movements. In the last few years, Sierra Club North Star Chapter has learned from our leaders and partners about the power of protest art to advance our environmental and climate justice goals. We have also seen that the experience of making art together through community art builds, printmaking stations at rallies, and other events can be a powerful organizing and community-building tool.

Together with our partners at the MN Environmental Justice (MN EJ) Table, Hope Community, and Community Stories Collective, we developed a mural project for the campaign to shut down the HERC Trash Burner. Our goal was to design and build a portable mural with the purpose of engaging North Minneapolis residents – especially youth – and invite their participation in the campaign. Hope Community Center contributed in-kind support. The mural is now being installed at North High School. This has facilitated a

broader partnership with the North High Art Club, building relationships with faculty and students as they express their hopes for the community and the future through art.

Another example is the series of art builds that we have supported in partnership with the MN EJ Table and Spill Paint Not Oil, an art collective and studio space. At these events, more than 100 people have designed and built art projects. Spill Paint's events build community in a fun and creative environment; the artmaking process leaves participants with a really memorable experience and deepens their commitment to stay involved.

We plan to continue hosting art builds and invite all to join at upcoming events.

Whitney Terrill joined the North Star Chapter as an Environmental Justice Organizer in 2022. In her role with the Sierra Club, she works to strengthen and empower communities most impacted by environmental injustices.



"Hyphenated Justice" is a mural focused on the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) that will be installed at North Community High School. Artists Connor Rice and Witt Siasoco of Community Stories Collective, artist Whitney Terrill of the Sierra Club and organizer Akira Yano, formerly with the MN EJ Justice Table, collaborated to produce the mural.



Connor Rice “CRICE”, a South Minneapolis based artist and muralist, working on the mural.

When discussing organizing in her work, Terrill said,

“ORGANIZING THROUGH AND WITH ART, ESPECIALLY MURALS, INVITES PEOPLE TO CREATIVELY ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND TO DOCUMENT THESE CONCERNS AS PUBLIC ART. IT SPARKS PUBLIC DIALOGUE THROUGH ENGAGEMENT AND THE FINAL ARTWORK. WHEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY, ART AND ORGANIZING CREATE AN IMPORTANT ENTRYWAY TO ACTIVISM FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE IN MINNESOTA AND CAN FOCUS ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP.”



Terrill working on another mural called “We Deserve to Breathe” located in North Minneapolis. The mural is based on community visions of a future without the HERC.

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CHAPTER STAFF & LEADERSHIP

Find a list of chapter staff and volunteer leaders at sierraclub.org/minnesota/staff and sierraclub.org/minnesota/chapter-leadership. With any questions contact us at 612-659-9124, north.star.chapter@sierraclub.org.

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Illustration credit: Brian Bradshaw

WINTER POEMS - 853

You've probably heard of the haiku, a Japanese poetic form consisting of three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables each. In honor of the 853 cities in Minnesota and the long winter that we all share, we've come up with a twist on the classic haiku. We requested submissions for three-line poems of 8, 5, and 3 syllables having something to do with winter, snow, ice, or cold. Perhaps reading these beautiful pieces will inspire you to try your own!

Winter, you say, eh? FREEZE ME, now!

Give me more Summer,

Warm my core.

- Rubin Latz

**Four silhouettes twirled through the mist
of night, a shadow**

watched alone -...

-Minh Thu Duong

The trees wear their snow like a bride

Adorned in pure white

Frost elopes

-Gabriel Maravelas

The chamomile is steeping

Outside wind whirls snow

Blizzard night!

-D.E. Green

I breathe a canvas on iced glass—

fleeting masterpiece

fogs the pane.

-Becky Boling

A snowflake on my lover's nose

Announces winter

Wonderland

-Savannah S. Miller

A warm coffee and a good book

Silent snow falling

Feeling good

-Madeline Mahn

Early morning, frozen hands, blades

Sharpened. Swish, swoop, pause.

Zamboni.

-Marie Stevens

Turkeys peck through snow searching for

A humble man, I

Resist thought.

-Larry Gavin

Communication Team volunteers and community members submitted poems, which were collected by Lindsay Starck. Starck is a fiction writer, freelance editor, and English professor at Augsburg University. When she isn't collecting winter poems, she's out for a snowy jog around Lake Nokomis with her dog, Cedar. Her new novel, *Monsters We Have Made*, will be available in March.

EXPLORE: A POCKET GUIDE TO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Alec Olson

As a hunter, there are few experiences I welcome more than setting foot onto the uneven, diverse prairie lands in western Minnesota come fall.

Gearing up, meeting friends, watching dogs pop their heads out of the tall grass, scouring prairie lands for pheasant — these spaces are full of joy.

As someone who loves and respects the outdoors, I venture into these areas to pursue game but I also relish what feels like a well-kept secret: the 1.37 million acres of public lands across the state that offer refuge to popular game animals like pheasant, turkey, and deer. Today, there are more than 1,500 Wildlife Management Areas in Minnesota, which is one of the largest programs of its kind in the country, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

What are Wildlife Management Areas?

Wildlife Management Areas, or WMAs, are parcels of land specifically set aside for the conservation and management

of wildlife. Managed by the DNR, these areas encompass diverse ecosystems, from wetlands and prairies to forests and grasslands.

Conservationists work diligently within WMAs to protect endangered species, restore natural habitats, and promote biodiversity. For outdoor enthusiasts, WMAs offer recreational opportunities such as birdwatching, hunting, fishing, and wildlife photography.

Why WMAs Matter

WMAs are crucial to protect wildlife, foster biodiversity, and mitigate climate change. The forests and wetlands in WMAs pull and store carbon dioxide. Moreover, WMAs contribute to the state's economy by supporting outdoor tourism and the hunting and fishing industries.

If you're eager to explore Minnesota's WMAs, start by visiting the DNR's website to learn more about them, and help protect them by joining the Sierra Club's Forests & Wildlife Stewards Team.

PROTECT: STOP POLLUTER CAPTURE OF STATE AGENCIES

Across Minnesota we value our public lands and depend on our government agencies to protect them. Yet in recent years, public agency leaders seem to have forgotten that they work for the public, not industry.

WMAs are just one example of this. The DNR recently put millions of federal dollars designated for WMAs at risk because they were out of compliance with federal regulations regarding clearcutting. This money is needed to support and manage WMAs.

This issue of 'polluter capture' refers to state agencies responding to polluting industries' needs, rather than the needs of Minnesotans, as called for in their missions. It is seen in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) attempts to hide federal EPA concerns about the proposed PolyMet sulfide mine from the public. It shows up when

the EPA steps in to tell the MPCA it is failing to protect human health and must better regulate nitrate pollution. Or when the EPA finds air quality violations that MPCA missed at Smith Foundry in Minneapolis. And it is evidenced in state agencies granting illegal and inadequate permits for Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline and failing to hold Enbridge accountable for catastrophic damage during construction.

Enough is enough. Governor Walz's administration must stand up to timber companies, multinational mining conglomerates, Big Ag and chemical companies, and fossil fuel projects like pipelines.

We are calling on Governor Walz to tell his state agencies to stop selling out the public interest by rubber-stamping every polluting project that crosses their desks. We demand that state agencies return to their missions.

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VETERANS CONNECT OUTDOORS



Participants on a Military Outdoors fishing event. Photo credit: JR Hunte

“I SERVE VETERANS LIVING WITH TRAUMA. ONE OF THE HARDEST CHALLENGES I FACE IS REACHING THOSE VETERANS THAT REALLY COULD USE SOME SERVICE.

THIS IS WHAT MADE JR'S WORK AT THE SIERRA CLUB PUTTING ON THE FREE FISHING EVENT SO AMAZING! WE HAD A GREAT CROWD, A DIVERSE GROUP OF VETERANS AND FAMILIES. I SAW VETERANS SMILE THAT NORMALLY DON'T GET OUT OF THEIR HOUSING! I WAS APPROACHED BY A VETERAN THAT JUST RETIRED, JUST MOVED TO MINNESOTA AND DIDN'T KNOW ANYBODY IN THE STATE EXCEPT HIS WIFE'S FAMILY. HE MADE CONNECTIONS THAT WILL SERVE HIM AND ALL OF US.”

- Daniel Crawford, former Army veteran and representative of 23rd Veteran

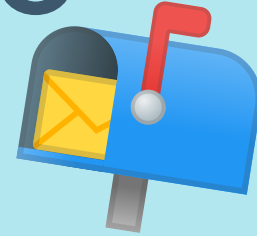
The North Star Chapter has been expanding activities to provide special events for the BIPOC community, along with military members and veterans. It's powerful to see the impact these programs are having. Learn more about our outdoor programs which include events open to everyone, youth, BIPOC, and veteran and military families. Join as a participant or a volunteer.

sc.org/mn-outings

Wildlife Management Area in Kandiyohi county on private land. Photo credit: Alec Olson



THE SECRETS TO WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Alison Brown Cerier

Sierra Club members have written letters to the editor that were published and made a difference. Here's how you can, too.

The power of letters to the editor

The editorials page is the most-read part of any newspaper. That makes a letter to the editor (also known as an LTE) an effective way to reach a large audience, including elected officials.

Most published letters respond to a news article, editorial, or other letter. Letters support or oppose what's been written in a paper about a current issue of interest to its readers. A letter to the editor can add new information, propose an alternative, or call for action. Most importantly, a letter gives the impression that many people feel the same way.

Letters that aren't published matter, too. They educate the paper's editors on an issue and increase the chances of future articles and letters about it. Bob Graves, the chair of the Forest and Wildlife Stewards, says, "It means a lot to a paper if many people write in about an issue and support an alternative. And it's more likely that one or two of the letters will get published."

Boosting the power of members' letters

Sierra Club members write letters to the editor on their own and as part of campaigns. Peter Wagenius, the chapter's Legislative and Political Director, says that "individual letters about current issues are always helpful," but Sierra Club letter-writing campaigns can have "exponentially more benefit" through coordination and repetition.

With the flood of digital content, Peter says printed LTEs are even "more powerful and necessary if you want to rise above the din and

say something at a point in time so people can react to it."

When a letter is published, then the North Star Chapter spreads word of its work and campaigns through digital platforms. You can help by reacting to and sharing the posts. Ask a question, add a point, tag a local official. Even if you never write a letter to the editor, you can play an important role in getting a message out.

You can do this!

How often do you find yourself supporting or disagreeing with an article or editorial about an issue? Go ahead and write a letter to the editor. Share what you know, how you feel, and what you want to happen.

Our recommendations in the sidebar will increase the chances your letter is published. And getting published in a paper of any size, from the Star Tribune to your local weekly, helps get the word out.

This fall, the *Star Tribune* published a letter by Nic Baker, a volunteer with the Clean Energy team. Nic wrote in about the issue of polluting industries capturing state agencies. He was supported by staff in writing the piece and proud of the way it turned out. You can read more about the issue of polluter capture on page 10. Nic followed best practices in LTE-writing like referring to a recent article by name and writing for nonexperts. He also ended with a strong call to action.

To write as part of a campaign or to get help with your letter, contact Mary at mary.blitzer@sierraclub.org.

Nic's advice to others who consider writing their own letter:
"Do your best. Just give it a try!"



Excuses galore in foundry dispute

Our state agencies have forgotten their mission to work in the public interest, not in service to polluters' interests.

Another case in point is "Feds find foundry is a chronic polluter; neighbors upset with lack of enforcement": Federal investigators found through a surprise inspection that Smith Foundry has been releasing higher-than-allowed levels of emissions, including lead, for years. The foundry is located in Minneapolis' East Phillips neighborhood, which is already dealing with more than its share of industrial pollution.

Reports show that the MPCA received complaints and found elevated levels of pollutants from its own air monitoring, but took zero action.

This is another example of "polluter capture" from the MPCA that we have seen repeatedly: flawed approvals of the Line 3 pipeline, failure to protect drinking water and our state forests being "managed" for profit, not habitat. It's past time for Gov. Tim Walz and the Legislature to demand answers.

- Nic Baker, Roseville

How to write a letter to the editor

Keep it short: Be sure to stay under the paper's maximum word length, but aim for much shorter.

Be timely: Respond to a published article, editorial, or letter within a day or two. Include the title, writer, and date in your letter.

Be focused: Limit yourself to one specific policy or issue. Briefly and clearly make one or two points.

Be relevant: Write about a current issue. As you can, show its effect on the local community.

Stick to the facts: Make your argument with verified facts.

Keep your composure: Express your feelings, but avoid outright partisanship and personal attacks.

Make it personal: Tell your own story or something about you that has shaped your reaction to the issue.

Write for the average reader: Assume most will not know about the topic. Provide a short background and avoid insider jargon and acronyms.

Name drop: Catch the attention of an elected official or business by putting their name in the letter.

Call to action: State the change or action you want to see.

Follow submission rules: Send the letter in the body of an email (no attachments) and include your name, address, phone number, and email. Submit to one paper at a time.

Alison Brown Cerier is a volunteer on the Communications Team. She enjoys writing about climate action and the environment, and going on wildlife adventures.

LIVING WITHIN LIMITS



Canadian-based company Aura Minerals' open-pit gold mine near the Azacualpa community in Honduras.
Photo credit: Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Marya Hart

As an American living under late-stage capitalism, the only curb on my desires for food, energy, and consumer goods is my ability to pay. But if it is true that the end of limitless resources is upon us – and all signs point that way – I won't be able to do that anymore. I could take this as a loss. But perhaps it's a wonderful opportunity.

What could a civilization that lived within its limits look like?

It could be more fair. We could share resources equitably between the global North and the global South and meet the UN's sustainable development goals, our "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet." No longer would 28 percent of the world's women face food insecurity. Trade and labor practices could improve: no one in Congo or Indonesia would be immiserated by mining for cobalt, copper and nickel which are primarily used for electrification in places like Europe and the United States.

Our lives could be happier, more convenient, and cleaner. We wouldn't have to watch for air quality alerts; we could catch the bus late at night after Beyonce's concert; and the grocery, liquor and hardware stores could be within walking distance.

We wouldn't be forced to buy plastic with every purchase, so we'd have less plastics in our water and bodies. Our friends

and neighbors wouldn't be hurt by pollution from garbage burners and landfills; we'd see less junk cluttering streets and open spaces.

Our food would be grown closer to us; we could visit the farm and know our farmers and their work.

We could work fewer hours, to greater purpose, both because we need less and because profits from our labor could be shared equitably.

Our clothing and appliances could be better made, and worth enough to mend. We could build more small cooperative industries that would be interested in serving communities rather than shareholders. Workers would get a better shake.

What will we lose?

Maybe we Minnesotans won't eat strawberries in February. Maybe Colorado River water won't irrigate alfalfa for Saudi Arabian cattle fodder. Maybe our diets will be less meat-based, as row crops will give way to food crops. Maybe we can't drive 20 miles each way to a job. Maybe we won't have whatever we want, whenever we want it.

But maybe that really didn't make us happy. Maybe it's time to find happiness elsewhere.

Marya Hart is the Communications Chair of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter. She regularly volunteers with the Sierra Club to advance just, sustainable systems change.

2023 Minnesota Delegation to Honduras

Frontlines of Resistance: Mining, Migration & Environmental Justice



Delegation members visit with local legal representation in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras.
Photo credit: Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Jenna Yeakle

In February of this year, staff from Sierra Club, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and Honor the Earth traveled to Honduras to join Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective, a Midwest-based organization committed to peace, justice, and sustainable economies in the Americas. Because of my role in water protection and clean energy advocacy, I was invited to join the trip to learn from urban and rural communities. During the first part of the trip, we visited:

- A cooperative farming community in the Aguan Valley whose water source, the Guapinol River, is polluted by Los Pinares, an upstream mining facility located in a national park.
- The Garifuna coastal community of Triunfo de la Cruz, an Afro-Indigenous people whose livelihoods and culture are deeply tied to the coast, where they hold treaty rights. Their ancestral lands are increasingly privatized for the sake of tourism.
- The rural mountain town of Azacualpa, whose homes and families were displaced by MINOSA, a subsidiary of the U.S.-based mining company Aura Minerals, to extract gold deposits. The company's gold mine also destroyed ancestral burial grounds and contaminated the mountain's water sources.

Each community has endured acts of state violence – unregulated pollution, surveillance, criminalization, forced evictions, abductions and disappearances, and murder – with no consequences for the perpetrators.

The second half of the trip was filled with

meetings with government officials, some of whom are sympathetic to human rights defense and environmental justice, and some of whom benefit from the violence perpetrated upon Honduran communities.

Here in northern Minnesota our communities experience our own challenges to protect the social, economic, and environmental integrity of our home against multinational corporate greed and the government agencies and officials who are beholden to them. From the criminalization of hundreds of Stop Line 3 protesters to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's faulty decision to grant PolyMet a permit when the EPA had expressed concerns about the project, Minnesotans have reason to call for stronger accountability of our state agencies, whose purpose is to protect the public.

This is what the Sierra Club is striving for in our Polluter Capture campaign discussed on page 10.

From Honduras to Minnesota, it is imperative that we uphold Indigenous treaty rights, account for the full impacts of industry projects, put people above profits, and work towards a future where all have what they need.

Jenna Yeakle is a Sierra Club community organizer based in Duluth. She applies her community organizing experience, public health expertise and passion for social justice to building the movement for a just transition to clean, equitable energy in the Northland.



A community leader from Azacualpa looks at the relocated ancestral cemetery that the mining company Aura Minerals destroyed.
Photo credit: Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

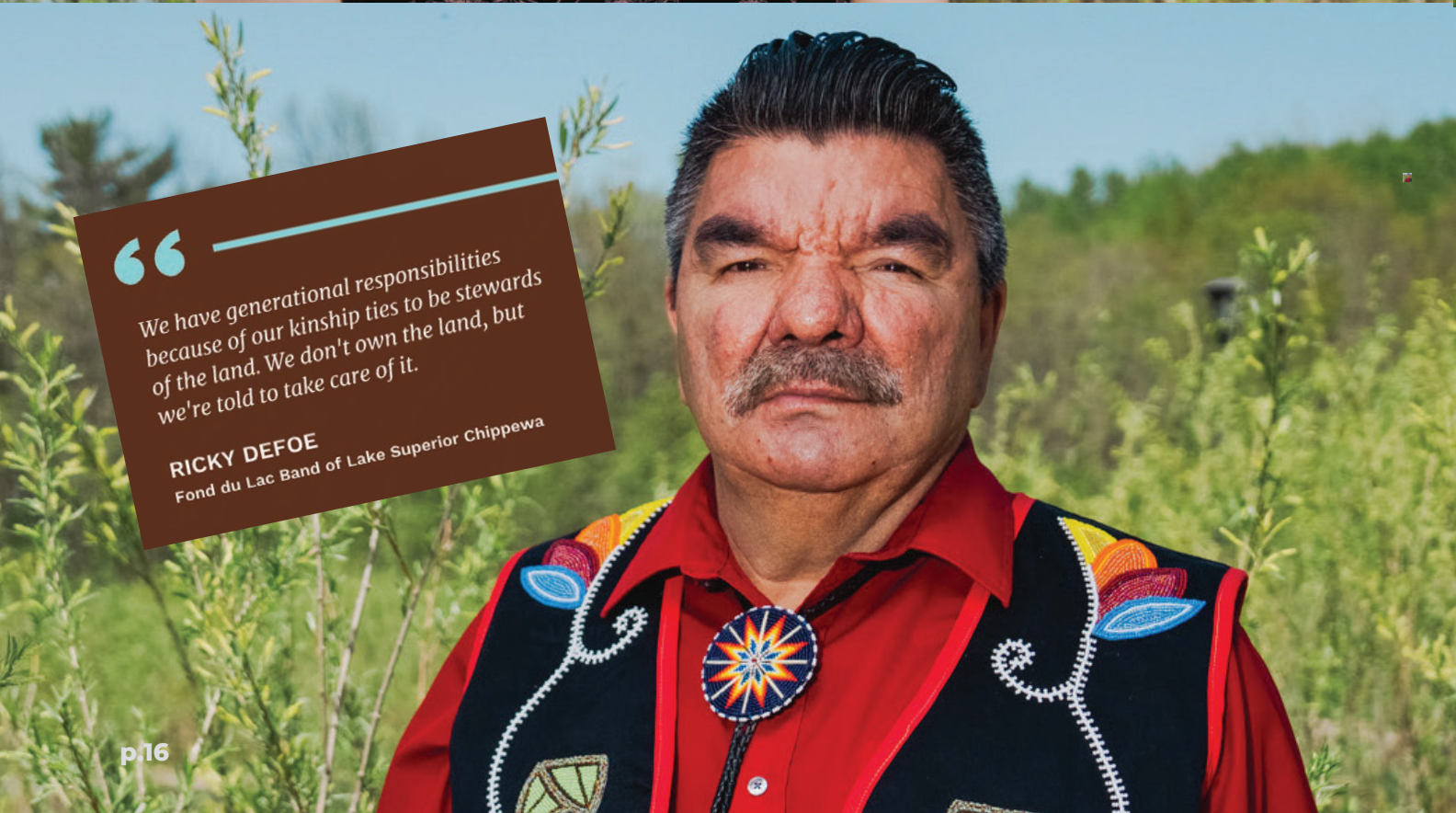
PROTECT WATER,



“

I heard about sulfide mining one day just on the internet... I felt a strong calling to come back to Duluth and to give whatever energy I can to protecting this water.

EMILY LEVANG, Duluth



“

We have generational responsibilities because of our kinship ties to be stewards of the land. We don't own the land, but we're told to take care of it.

RICKY DEFOE
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

STOP SULFIDE MINING



*Water is life. We can't do without it...
Everyone has a responsibility and
that's ours, not just for us today, but
for future generations.*

LINDA HERRON, Duluth



Minnesotans and Tribal members across the state are proud to be fighting for our water, lands, and neighbors. The Sierra Club Campaign to Protect Water and Stop Sulfide Mining highlights how dangerous it is to trust that sulfide mining companies – many of them with devastating records of environmental destruction – will protect water quality in Lake Superior, the Boundary Waters Wilderness Area, or the Mississippi River watershed.

These multinational companies are proposing a new kind of mining – sulfide mining – that extracts metals, like copper or zinc, from sulfide ores. This type of mining has never been done in Minnesota and produces huge amounts of waste rock and acid water.

A mine tailings dam used to store the mine's byproducts risks collapse and threatens to release toxic runoff into critical drinking sources like Lake Superior.

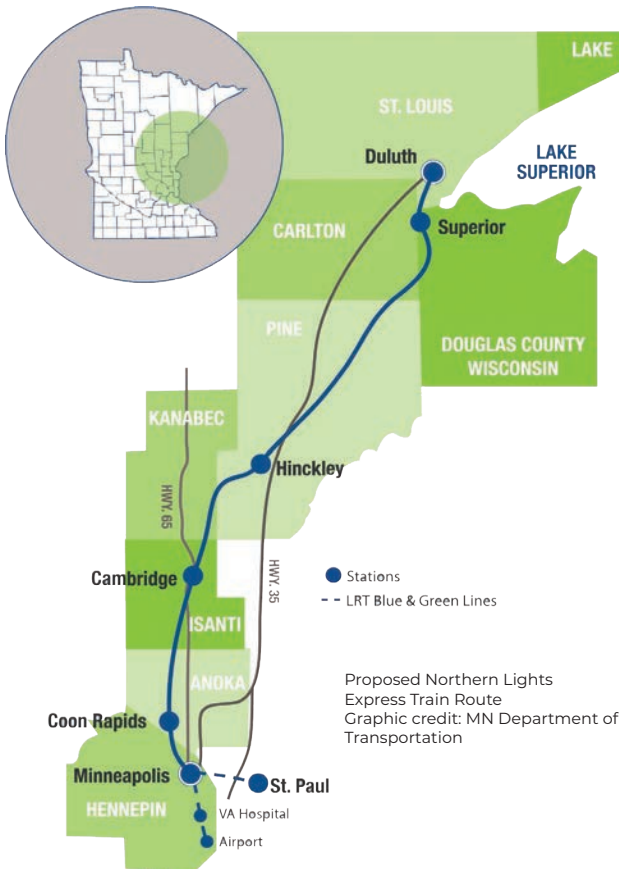
We know better than to listen to extractive, profit-driven

companies telling us they care about the climate or our communities. Climate change is driving a water crisis, as fresh, clean water is becoming ever more scarce in a hotter, drier world. The climate crisis cannot be solved by polluting 10% of the earth's fresh water.

Minnesotans are the ones who can and should decide what works for our communities – not multinational companies and the politicians and agencies in their pocket. Together we are fighting for what our families need, not for what corporate polluters tell us we should settle for. We can keep our lakes blue and our communities thriving.

Join Ricky, Emily, Linda and thousands more in saying “no” to projects that can't demonstrate they can operate safely. And “yes” to protecting water. sc.org/protect-water

THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN MINNESOTA



- The Minnesota Legislature approved \$194.7 million for the Northern Lights Express, a planned high-speed passenger rail project that would run between Duluth and Minneapolis. This local matching funding was needed to pursue federal grants for the project.
- The MN Legislature funded a study on expanding the busiest bikeway in the state, the Midtown Greenway, over the Mississippi River to connect Minneapolis to Saint Paul.
- In Rochester, the Chester Woods Regional Trail will soon connect all the city through Chester Woods Park to Eyota. And a Safe Routes to School demonstration project was implemented in Lincoln K-8 District School. The project goal was to test out street changes – like greenery and curb bump outs – to make it safer and easier for kids to walk to school.

Transforming our transportation system from one where nearly all of us have to drive, to one where most have viable options to walk or take transit will take time, money, and dedicated advocacy. We've made these major shifts in transportation systems before, and we can do it again. What's your transportation story, wish, or concern? Contact joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org or 612-259-2447 to share. See you on the bike trail, bus, or train!

Joshua Houdek, Jenna Yeakle, and Kristoffer Acuña are Sierra Club staff and contributed to this article.



Transportation is the #1 source of climate change pollution in Minnesota and the nation. Improving options for how we get where we need to go and how we develop our communities has a profound impact on the air we breathe, our physical health (think walking and biking more versus driving everywhere), and our pocketbooks (the average new vehicle now costs a staggering \$12,000 a year to own and maintain according to the AAA).

We are proud to have played a leading role in the coalition that won major new funding for transit, bicycling, and walking in Minnesota in 2023. A new report by coalition partner Move Minnesota shows how these changes will lead to more bus routes, shortened wait times, and faster service resulting in increased ridership, reduced pollution and traffic, and healthier people.

Across the state, we are starting to see the impacts of our 2023 wins and previous efforts. A few examples include:

LEGALIZE LAND VALUE TAX

By Rich Nymoen

Is there a vacant or blighted property in your neighborhood? Maybe a half-empty parking lot or abandoned gas station? Most cities are riddled with properties that land speculators are holding until their value increases. But while they wait, we all suffer.

Land Value Tax (LVT) policy can help. Under this tax, the land value of a property is taxed at a higher rate than the building's value. This shift puts pressure on property owners to use or sell their vacant and underutilized sites. Those who build intensively on sites are not penalized with higher taxes as they would be by a conventional property tax.

This can lead to more vibrant, sustainable communities by replacing empty lots with grocery stores, shops, and much needed housing. Building up a little (instead of sprawling out) protects green space around our cities and towns, and allows shorter trips for walking, biking, driving, or hopping on a bus or train.

Unfortunately, Land Value Tax is illegal in Minnesota. This is why Sierra Club is partnering with the Minnesota Chapter of Common Ground USA, Neighbors for More Neighbors, Sustain Saint Paul, and other groups to educate state legislators on the importance of legalizing LVT as an optional tool for municipalities across the state to use if they choose.

In 2023, we successfully passed major transportation funding. Our next step is to pass supportive land use policies like LVT.

Rich Nymoen is the president of Common Ground USA Minnesota Chapter and a member of the Land Use & Transportation Team. He can be reached at minnesotacommonground@gmail.com



Rochester students make their route to school safer.
Photo credit: WeBike Rochester



The short line railroad bridge and site of the possible extension of the Midtown Greenway bike/walk trail over the Mississippi River connecting Minneapolis & Saint Paul.
Photo by Joshua Houdek

ENVIRONMENTAL ETIQUETTE: HOW TO BE GREEN BUT NOT MEAN



Dear Truly Green,

I come from a family of enthusiastic gift-givers. I enjoy giving and receiving as much as anyone, but I'm concerned about the wastefulness of wrapping paper. I wrap all the gifts I give in newspaper or magazine pages, but my family members continue to give me and each other beautiful packages covered in shiny, glittery, definitely non-recyclable paper that will be thrown away after one use. How can I get them to stop wrapping this way without sounding ungrateful?

- Sincerely, Holiday Party Pooper

Dear Holiday Party Pooper,

First of all, thank you for modeling the kind of eco-friendly holiday behavior that you wish to see in others! Americans throw away 25% more waste between Thanksgiving and New Year's—an extra one million tons per week—than they do during the rest of the year. Wrapping paper is part of the problem, especially if it's glittery or shiny and therefore non-recyclable. (This is a concern with holiday cards, too.) According to the National Environmental Education Foundation, we discard enough ribbon (83,000 miles) to wrap around the planet and tie a bow. Since it's hard to let go of cherished traditions, why not suggest new ones? You could all make your own recyclable gift wrap together (try a roll of kraft paper and eco-friendly ink), or use pages from a family member's favorite magazine. Or your present to everyone could be a whimsical set of reusable gift bags that get passed around from year to year. There are many lighthearted ways to help your loved ones make the switch. Since they aren't following your silent lead, it's time to speak up.

- Truly Green

Ideas to easily make your own wrapping paper. This cool tree option from Pinterest user @apieceofrainbow.com

Our resident etiquette expert, Truly Green, offers advice on how to talk to friends and family about making greener choices. Change begins with individuals, and it takes many individuals to create a movement. So why not start talking about waste reduction, sustainable consumption, and cleaner transit with your loved ones today?

Dear Truly Green,

I'm part of a neighborhood social group that I love. We meet once or twice a month, and we take turns hosting. The number of members at each gathering varies from fifteen to thirty people, and because most of us don't have enough glassware to serve everyone, we use disposable cups and bottled water. I feel guilty about this, but I don't see any good alternatives. Do you?

- Sincerely, Penitent Partyer

Dear Penitent Partyer,

This is an excellent question as we move into the hosting season. Since you all seem to know each other fairly well, it seems reasonable to suggest that members bring their own water bottles or drinkware. Try setting up a dishwashing station at the host's house so everyone can clean their glasses before heading home. Or, ask everyone to donate a few dollars so that the group can purchase a shared set of glassware that gets passed from one host to the next. Sustainability requires that we find ways to share resources as a group instead of focusing on our individual possessions. Instead of bottled water, why not try boxed water or compostable cups? Remember, too, that 30-40% of the trash we send to landfills comes from food waste, so it's important that you prepare the appropriate quantity of food and that you send guests home with leftovers. Consider food storage containers as your party favors! I'd also aim for more plant-based meals, since meat requires so much more water to produce. Most importantly, remind your friends that it's easier to reduce waste when we think collectively and creatively, and urge them to make greener choices in similar situations elsewhere.

- Truly Green

Dear Truly Green,

I've started biking more to work, to restaurants, and to grocery stores. I'm really happy about it, but it's also making me more aware of all the people in my life who don't think twice about using their car for short, easy trips. The few times I've suggested that they walk or bus or bike, they get defensive and tell me to mind my own business. What's a good way to talk to people about making better transit choices without, well, driving them away?

- Sincerely, I Don't Want To Be "That Guy"

Dear Not-That-Guy,

This is the million-dollar question! Even though you're right, people are less likely to listen to you if you sound self-righteous. The first step is to model the behavior you hope to see in others. The second is to slip key facts into casual conversation. For example: "Did you know that one-third of all car trips in the U.S. are for distances under a mile?" or "Did you know that internal combustion engines in cars pollute the most on the shortest trips?" The third is to ask people about the barriers that are keeping them from cleaner transit choices. If figuring out public transit routes feels daunting, offer to ride the bus a few times with them. If they don't own a bike, help them find an inexpensive one on a neighborhood marketplace app. If they're concerned about the efficiency and cost of public transit, urge them to express these concerns to their legislators and advocate for more clean transit funding. Most importantly, remember that your goal as a transit ambassador is not to proselytize, but to ask questions, to listen, and to help your friends and family expand their sense of what is possible.

- Truly Green

Executive Committee Candidate Statements

After careful consideration, the Nominations Committee is recommending the following slate of five candidates for five available seats on the Executive Committee. Please review their candidate statements below.



Charles K Frempong-Longdon Jr. - Saint Paul

It would be my honor to have your consideration as a candidate for the Chapter's Executive Committee. I am an organizer, storyteller, & poet with a passion for combining art and political action. I currently serve as the Communications Coordinator for the MN EJ Table, but prior to that spent over 5 years on staff at the North Star Chapter.

Some of my most cherished highlights include co-hosting Environmental Justice movie nights, being a part of the Change & Equity Team, and representing Minnesota nationally as a staff organizer with the Healthy Communities program.

I also was involved in the movement to Stop Line 3 and served on the MPCA Environmental Justice Advisory Group. In my time on staff, I was able to co-develop several trainings with my colleagues around Green Gentrification, Eco-Poetry, Community Care, and the Basics of Community Organizing. These are tools that I still use today in my work.

The North Star Chapter helped to introduce me to the world of Environmental Justice. Since then, I have had the opportunity to spread my work all over the country, working with friends & allies of the movement. I consider SC a political home and would love to support its continued growth.



Gaagigeaashiik-Dawn Goodwin - Bagley

Anishinaabe/White Earth; Indigenous Environmental Network-Representative; RISE Coalition-Co-founder; Protector and advocate for the environment and the Anishinaabeg traditional lifeways.

She is a lifelong resident of northern Minnesota and has lived next to Lower Rice Lake on the White Earth Reservation since 2001. Dawn graduated from Bemidji State University in 2009 with a B.A. in Visual Arts and is near completion of a B.A. in Native American Studies.

In 2009 she began to learn about the tar sands industry and climate change. This knowledge and concern for the health of our waters has led her into advocating for the protection of the lands, plants, animals, people and *nibi*/water for the next seven generations. She is a board member of the 1855

Treaty Authority, a trained Climate Reality Leader and a presenter at the 2019 Climate Reality Leadership Corp Training. Dawn was the expert witness for the White Earth Reservation during the Line 3 MN PUC hearings.

Her work centers around networking with other nonprofit environmental organizations and building community. Dawn works as a representative of the Indigenous Environmental Network, and is a co-founder of RISE Coalition, an indigenous led group of women calling on others to "RISE TO PROTECT ALL THAT IS SACRED."



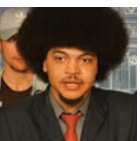
Michelle Hesterberg - Minneapolis

Thank you for considering re-electing me! I have served on the Sierra Club North Star Chapter Executive Committee for three years and the Political Committee for four years. For the past two years, I have also represented the North Star Chapter at the Sierra Club's national Council of Club Leaders. I have 15 years of experience in non-profit leadership, fundraising, political organizing, and environmental advocacy. I am currently the Development Director for Gender Justice, and I've previously worked for Save the Boundary Waters, Environment Minnesota, Friends of the Boundary Waters, MPIRG, Quinn Nystrom for Congress, and OutFront Minnesota.

I've rallied for racial justice, fundraised to protect the Boundary Waters, organized events on climate change, lobbied to protect clean water, canvassed on public health issues, supported legislation to end gun violence, and much more. I have run record-setting fundraising campaigns and raised millions of dollars for LGBTQ+ equity, social justice, and environmental protection.

In addition to working towards a sustainable future and advocating for environmental protection, as an LGBTQ+ woman, I am dedicated to fighting for those in our community who are most marginalized, including transgender people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

I am passionate about Sierra Club's mission and priorities and would be honored to continue serving on the Sierra Club North Star Chapter's Executive Committee.



Sasha Lewis-Norelle - Saint Paul

I've been an environmental activist, organizer, and advocate for over five years, fighting for environmental justice at many levels. I first began organizing in college when I got involved in the fossil fuel divestment campaign at Macalester, and quickly realized that this was my purpose in life. Working with community members, experts, and fellow advocates to create systemic change for our collective betterment has become my main focus, and it's hard to imagine doing anything else. I've worked on divestment, a Green New Deal, fighting the Line 3 pipeline, cumulative impacts policy, lead poisoning prevention, and supporting local environmental justice fights. While this work is hard, I've had the pleasure of working with so many incredible people through this work, including Sierra Club volunteers and staff. This solidarity, and the vision of a better future, are what keep me going, even when the work feels tough. There is still so much change to fight for, but I am forever grateful for the people and communities I get to work with. This is a key

moment in history as we work to address the systemic issues that have caused environmental racism, the climate crisis, racial injustice and inequity, and so much more. I am dedicated to keep up the fight to ensure that my own and future generations have clean air and water, a just and livable future, and the beautiful world they deserve.



Kamau Wilkins - Rochester

It is with great enthusiasm and gratitude that I present my campaign statement for re-election as Chair of the Executive Committee. I have had the privilege of serving on the executive committee since 2018 and as Co-Chair or Chair since 2019. In this time, our Chapter has achieved remarkable victories, and I am committed to continuing this momentum.

During my tenure, we have made significant strides in protecting Minnesota's environment and promoting sustainability. We have successfully advocated for the passage of the 100% bill, landmark legislation which has positioned Minnesota as a leader in the clean energy transition.

Additionally, we have played a pivotal role in the preservation of our natural spaces. Through strategic partnerships and grassroots campaigns, we have fought powerfully against harmful projects that threatened our pristine wilderness areas. As a result, we have secured the permanent protection of

several critical habitats, ensuring the survival of endangered species and preserving the beauty of our state.

Furthermore, our chapter has been at the forefront of the environmental justice movement. We have actively worked to address the disproportionate impacts of pollution and climate change on marginalized communities. By amplifying the voices of those most affected, we have successfully advocated for stronger regulations and policies that prioritize the health and well-being of all Minnesotans.

If re-elected, I will continue to champion these causes and build upon our past successes. I am deeply honored to have served as Chair of the Northstar Chapter Sierra Club, and I am excited about the potential for even greater achievements in the years to come. With your support, we can continue to make Minnesota a shining example of environmental stewardship and create a brighter, more sustainable future for all. Thank you for your trust and consideration.

ELECTION BALLOT FOR NORTH STAR CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2024

Please vote for up to five candidates:

	MEMBERS VOTE HERE	JOINT MEMBERS VOTE HERE
Charles K Frempong-Longdon Jr.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
Dawn Goodwin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
Michelle Hesterberg	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
Sasha Lewis-Norelle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
Kamau Wilkins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
 Write-ins:		
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

**PLEASE VOTE FOR 5 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS,
DEADLINE FOR VOTING IS JANUARY 3, 2024.**

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS:

To vote by mail:

1. Your member number is printed above 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. Joint memberships are allowed two votes. 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).
4. Place your ballot in an envelope and mail it to be received by January 3, 2024 to:

**Elections Committee
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
2300 Myrtle Avenue, Suite 260
St. Paul, MN 55114**

To vote by email:

1. Locate your membership number which is printed above 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. Joint memberships are allowed two votes. 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).
4. Send your email message to ballot@northstar.sierraclub.org before January 3, 2024 at 5 p.m.
5. The chapter plans to send an electronic ballot to current member addresses within our system. If duplicate votes are received, the most recent vote will be considered valid.

Current members of the North Star Chapter ExCom:

TERM EXPIRES 2023	TERM EXPIRES 2024	TERM EXPIRES 2025
DAWN GOODWIN	CONSTANCE CARLSON	SARAH WOVCHA
MICHELLE HESTERBERG	EMMA NEEDHAM	LUTHER DALE
SASHA LEWIS-NORELLE	KATIE EUKEL	LOIS NORRGARD
KAMAU WILKINS	PETER TEIGLAND	RHYAN SCHICKER
	SARAH WOVCHA	TOM THOMPSON



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to learn more

or current resident

INVOLVED

JOIN OUTINGS. VOLUNTEER. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



Illustration Credit: Emma Laskowski

Join us to organize, research, and advocate for our environment. There are lots of ways to be involved!
sc.org/mn | north.star.chapter@sierraclub.org | 612-659-9124