



# Four Lakes Sierran

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club newsletter, Fall 2022

## Land Access and Equity Team Report

*Liz Wessel*

Hello from Massachusetts! My family life finds me on an extended visit to Concord, Massachusetts. Bill and I have been exploring his old haunts. Many of the paths that allowed access to the larger green spaces in the area have disappeared or been closed off to public/neighbor access. And there was a story this morning on the local public radio station about the history of exclusion to beaches along the MA coastline. There is work to be done across the country to ensure all people can access our public lands and parks.

The Land Access and Equity Team continues to offer activities and support projects that address different types of access issues in our region, especially in Dane County. In July, the Environmental Fun Fair held at the Lussier Family Heritage Center was an afternoon for families to share a variety of free activities and fun learning opportunities.

At our camping demo, we watched and assisted children and their adult friends set up a tent and/or explore and play (lots of selfies) in our tent city which got some families interested to try camping. Our volunteers were excited to help provide information and encouragement – with lots of smiles at the end of the event. We had examples of different types of tents, what should be in a basic first aid kit and information on where to find second hand/less expensive camping gear. (See our website to download this useful document!).

The Four Lakes Group along with the YWCA also hosted a free shuttle from south Madison to the event, but shuttle use was very light. Team representatives will meet with our partners from Dane County Parks and the Dane County Parks Foundation this fall to brainstorm new and better ways to remove transportation barriers to our local parks system.

Later in July, the Team participated in a fun free fishing day event at Stewart Lake County Park. After participating in several activities/educational booths, participants earned a free fishing rod. Visitors to our Sierra Club booth played freshwater BINGO, learning a little but about the smaller animal life in our lakes and

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## Chair's Column

*Ronda Conner, Co-Chair*

Greetings from the Four Lakes Group of the Sierra Club!

I hope your summer has been exceptional and you are able to embrace the fall as it fast approaches. I noticed some sumac are starting to change fiery colors which is a sign of the beautiful fall colors around the corner. If you have been contemplating summer activities that you haven't gotten around to or have not done enough of, there is no time like the present. I am never really ready for summer to end, but it helps if I have done plenty of what I enjoy outdoors.

As I start to look towards fall, voting is one activity that comes to mind. The Sierra Club Chapter and the Four Lakes Group Executive Committees will both have opportunities for voting. The people on our Executive Committees are essential to shaping how we do what we do financially, politically and socially. Please help make sure that we have the right people in these critical committees.

Our Four Lakes Group continues to meet virtually, but we have been working on some exciting in-person opportunities. We have also been volunteering at some Madison

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streams. All players received a “mercury free” fishing bobber, and our first winners in each group got to choose an additional prize. Many thanks to Culver’s Custards and the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society for their prize donations. We had so much fun with the BINGO that we are looking for other events where BINGO could be played. Let us know if you have ideas!

As we head into fall, the Land Access and Equity Team is beginning to make plans for the rest of the year and 2023. At **Shine On!**, Downtown Madison’s holiday decorating event along State Street, the Four Lakes Group has decorated trees over the last two events with outdoor themes. This year, the theme for ornaments will be freshwater and winter outdoor activities.

***We invite you, your friends and family to create an ornament for this year’s tree.*** The ornaments could represent fish, water birds, invertebrates, your favorite lake or river, your favorite winter recreation activity on snow or ice. More details will be provided in the Enews, but we we’ll need all ornaments by the week of November 14th. Ornaments should be made of sturdy material (e.g. wood) that is durable enough for 8 to 10 weeks outdoors. Contact Liz Wessel, [lizard59sc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizard59sc@yahoo.com) or 608-238-9934.

Other plans include working on transportation access, another Environmental Fun Fair in 2023, hosting some local outings, and other ideas the team comes up with – or you send to us! ***To get updates and learn more about the team*** and our work to improve equitable access to parks and nature in and around Dane County, visit our website <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes/parks-public-lands-and-access> or sign up on our interest form <https://tinyurl.com/LEaccess>.



*Chair’s Column, continued from page 1*

festivals to assist with Recycling Away from Home. We continue to work on our Land Access and Equity project which is to support equal access to parks. We are pleased to report that we completed a tree planting in a park that needed tree cover as well as a pilot bus program to Lake Farm County Park which is otherwise difficult to access. We successfully completed training for outings leaders and are excited to get some outings scheduled. Please keep an eye on our online calendar if you would like to join us for some outings. Let us know if you have any ideas, questions or concerns. This work brings me hope and connection which is critical now more than ever.

Take care of each other!

## **Tree Planting Projects – Volunteers Needed**

*Jake Johnson*

The Four Lakes group is teaming up with Dane County and other organizations to plant hundreds of trees starting this fall and continuing in the spring. While many of us may have homes or live in neighborhoods with lots of trees, we don’t realize that there are other areas that have a lack of trees and other vegetation. Our focus is on areas in need of tree canopy, where we can help to achieve some measure of equity by strategically planting in underserved neighborhoods in need of greenery.

Planting trees is a traditional and effective way to achieve the added benefits that trees bring to our communities. Trees and shrubs can offer many benefits including providing shade and cooling and respite from the hot sun. They help remove pollutants and clean the air. They can also be effective at screening – both visually as well as noise. They also provide some measure of serenity and beauty. In addition, they help battle climate change by taking in CO2 and providing oxygen.

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## **Energy Justice**

Much of our Sierra Club's Beyond Coal (and tar sands pipeline) work focuses on climate change and stopping pollution. But at the heart of much of our work is something deeper – justice. So many of the harms occur to marginalized or poor communities – people and places that often have little say in what occurs as systems are historically slanted against them. But the Sierra Club is working to make a difference on a number of fronts.

### **Shutting down coal**

Shutting down coal plants has been at the core of our Beyond Coal work, with success here in Wisconsin and elsewhere. Starting with the 2002 fight to get the UW Madison Charter St plant off coal, we now have 4 major coal plants in Wisconsin, and by 2025, will be down to 2! Many of these plants have been located in historically low-income areas, harming especially nearby residents. These coal plants also polluted waters where many lower income people fished as a source of food. Getting rid of coal will improve their lives in so many ways.

### **Shutoff moratoriums**

Utilities in Wisconsin are prohibited from shutting off people's power between November 1 and April 15 so people won't freeze during our cold winters. The pandemic worsened many people's economic situations, and in 2021, we convinced the Public Service Commission to extend the moratorium during the full year to ensure people would have power at that critical time.

While the moratorium was not extended beyond April 15, 2022, we brought attention to the plight many were in, and the PSC now requires utilities to report customer arrearages and number of people at risk for shutoff, putting a spotlight on this issue, and pressure on the utilities to develop solutions and not shut off people's power.

### **Energy burden**

It's no surprise people at risk of having their power shut off also have a high energy burden – the percent of income spent on utility bills. As our report on energy burden in Milwaukee showed, the people and neighborhoods with high energy burden (in some cases 10% or more), were also predominantly communities of color that were historically redlined. We've been working with organizations in Milwaukee that represent those communities to highlight this issue and get the utilities and local

governments, as well as the PSC, to pay more attention to this issue and develop programs and policies that will help alleviate this problem. Unfortunately, underlying this issue is the more fundamental problem of income disparities and lack of wealth that are ongoing.

### **Focus on Energy**

This statewide rebate program provides customers with funding to lower their carbon footprint through installing energy efficiency or solar, and has been very effective, returning nearly \$4 in savings for each \$1 spent. However, it requires people to have the upfront financing to receive the rebate. For renters too, it's very difficult since they don't own the buildings. However, Focus on Energy is undergoing a Quadrennial (every four year) review, and we successfully raised this issue such that the PSC will be developing policies and programs to provide more equity in accessing the funding.

### **Third party solar**

Inequities also occur in the ability to install solar. A homeowner must pay for the costs of installing solar upfront, with the payback occurring over many years, leaving those with lesser means, or renters, unable to achieve the savings from solar. We are actively working to have the PSC authorize third party solar, whereby a company can pay for and install solar on someone's house (or business), and that company would own the solar and get paid back by the customer out of the savings from having solar on their building. At least 26 other states have this program, and it makes solar much more affordable and access to it much more equitable.

### **On-bill financing**

As you can read on page 4, some utilities have on-bill financing whereby, similar to third party solar, the utility becomes the solar supplier and owner, and the homeowner pays the utility back over time. Unfortunately, only a limited number of utilities offer this, and we are encouraging all utilities to adopt this program.

### **Creating energy equity**

Energy efficiency and clean energy can provide great benefits, but significant disparities exist in accessing those benefits. That further burdens those who are most marginalized by continuing to saddle them with high energy bills and unhealthy homes. If you're troubled by this current state of affairs too, consider joining our Beyond Coal team and help us fight for energy justice.

## More Ramblings on becoming a Sustainable Good Guy

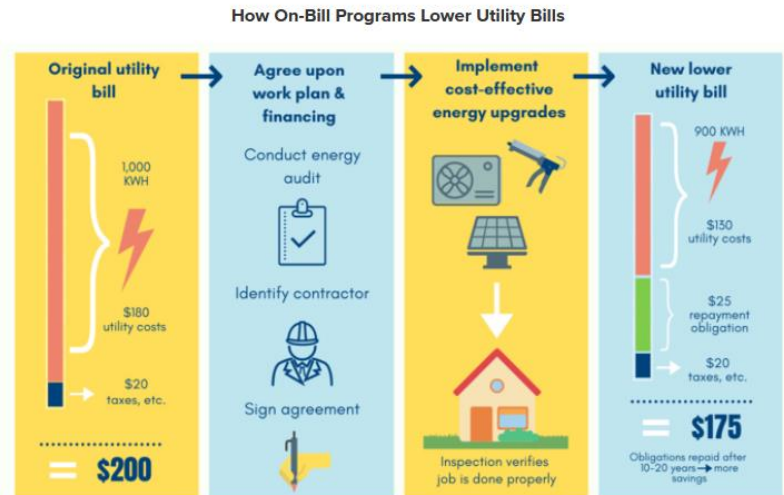
There are a number of ways to afford solar panels on your roof. Some may end up costing you nothing. Nothing! So how can you get solar panels installed on your house for free? If your utility offers it, an option is “On-bill financing”.

**On-bill financing** is a mechanism where financing repayments are made monthly through your existing utility bill. Your new solar panels are automatically paid for out of your LOWER utility bill each month.

Notice in this graphic how your electrical bill is LOWERED while at the same time, YOUR solar panels are operating on YOUR house.

Here are some issues that are often barriers for people considering installing solar panels. If:

- You don't have the upfront money to pay for solar panels and energy upgrades. Panels are often paid for upfront, but have long-term payback.
- Your credit score is low or your income isn't sufficient, and banks won't give you a solar loan or will charge you prohibitive rates.
- You live in a rural area and your utility bills are high, but so can the cost be of having panels installed.
- Your house or roof is not in good shape, making panel installation problematic, or your roof is too shaded.
- You are a renter and can't make the choice to install solar. (Landlords often don't have an incentive to install solar since they generally don't pay the utility bills.)



These On-bill financing features make it possible for you to lower your electric costs and have cool looking solar panels on your roof:

- **NO UPFRONT COSTS** to participants, with the cost of the panels and any administrative fees rolled into the repayment plan and INCLUDED on the utility bill.
- Programs designed to ensure that your **utility bills are LOWER after the panels are installed** than they were previously. It's a win-win-win-win situation.
- **Tying the solar panel payments to the utility meter (not the individual)** lets the cost to be transferred to the next owner (or renter) if you decide to move. You are not stuck with it. **This is key to allowing renters to participate**, as they pay for the upgrades only as long as they benefit from them.
- **Long repayment periods** allow lower monthly payments, as long as they remain tied to the upgrade's warranty period (e.g. 20 years for solar panels).
- **Your history of paying your utility bill** is used to determine your reliability as opposed to banks which use your credit score or proof of income.
- **Low interest rates** to help offset the cost to participants from longer repayment terms. This can be achieved through rate subsidies or alternative capital sources (e.g. green banks).
- **Combining financing with utility rebates, incentives, and tax credits** to lower overall energy upgrade costs.

The on-bill financing option is a good one if your utility company offers it. (Many do not.) Utilities may not be keen on helping customers reduce their energy use and cut into their profits. Ask your utility company if they offer this.

Don't be discouraged. There are other ways to go if this method isn't available. However, it's a good one if it is.

In an upcoming edition, I will present my utility bills and how they have changed since I installed panels. Stay tuned...



*Tree planting, continued from page 2*

We already have a fun and motivated group of people interested in this issue, but we could use a number of volunteers or smaller groups to be a part of tree planting projects. It's also an opportunity to learn about different trees and how to properly plant and care for them while we are improving our community and the planet.

It's great for families and volunteers of all ages, so if you'd like to help, email Jake at [jake@paradymeproductions.com](mailto:jake@paradymeproductions.com) with your contact info and we'll get back to you and let you know about tree planting events when we have them ready to schedule.

## Volunteer Work Night (and Party!)

### Third Wednesday of each month

Phone calling, texting, graphic design, social media – whatever your favorite thing to do or method to contact people is, we need you! If you've been thinking about getting more involved, this is a great chance to learn about our different opportunities and see what you'd like to do. Just have an hour or two to give to make a difference and can't do more than that? Then this is a great place for you too!

Sign up at: <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/calendar>

RSVP or questions: Katie Hogan, [kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org](mailto:kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org)

## Cruisin' for Cuisine kicks off another season

With a booster in your arm and a growl in your stomach, come out and join us for some excellent food and friendship! Local restaurants are still fighting back from the pandemic, so let's give them some support while making new connections with fellow Sierrans. Hosts may vary, but RSVP to Lacinda Athen 608-274-7870 or [lacinda.athen@gmail.com](mailto:lacinda.athen@gmail.com). See you soon!

**Tuesday, October 11 at 5:30 - [Bandit Taco & Coffee](https://www.bandit-tacos.com), 640 W Washington Ave <https://www.bandit-tacos.com>**

Tasty tacos and Mexican treats, coffee and other beverages, and it's all right on the bike path! Dig out your bike light and meet us for some light fall fare. Parking available too.

**Tuesday, November 15 at 5:30 - [Kettle Black Kitchen](https://www.kettleblackkitchen.com), 1835 Monroe Street <https://www.kettleblackkitchen.com>**

Check out one of Monroe Street's newest additions, offering French inspired comfort food, in a comfortable intimate space.

**Tuesday, December 13 at 5:30 - [Taza Mediterranean Grill](https://tinyurl.com/TazMed), 1900 Cayuga St, Middleton <https://tinyurl.com/TazMed>**

For anyone who fondly remembers Lulu's and The Casbah, the owner is at it again! Join us to enjoy food from Mediterranean regions like Greece, Turkey, and North Africa into Morocco.

## Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>

<https://www.facebook.com/4lakesSierraClub/>

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**Patrick Stoffel**, [stpa0001@hotmail.com](mailto:stpa0001@hotmail.com)

**Liz Wessel**, Co-treasurer, Land Equity Access team, (608) 238-9934, [lizard59sc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizard59sc@yahoo.com)

(All are on the Four Lakes Executive Comm.)

## Volunteer at the Willy St Fair

Summer isn't over! Not until after the Willy St Fair, September 17 and 18 in Madison! We'll participate by engaging Fair goers at our Sierra Club booth, and assist with the recycling through our Recycling Away from Home (RAH) program, which this year we've joined forces with 350 Wisconsin to help manage.

Information about the great music and yummy food offerings is at <https://willystreetfair.org>.

This street festival is not to be missed. The fabulous Sunday parade is one highlight.

We'd be thrilled if you join our merry crew to table or help with the recycling. No experience needed – we'll orient you – and you'll be in good company. Here are your sign up options:

- **Tabling:**

<https://signup.com/go/XvPRKYL>

- **Recycling:**

<https://signup.com/go/GUcwFLp>

For more info or questions, contact Don Ferber at [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net).

## Four Lakes Group Executive Committee Elections 2022

Thank you for helping democratically elect your local Sierra Club representatives! The candidate statements are below. You may vote online instead of by mail by filling out the form at <https://bit.ly/3CTkYe5>. If we receive both paper and electronic ballots from the same member number, only the electronic ballot will be counted.

Your member number can be found on your Sierra Magazine label, or go to [www.myaccount.sierraclub.org](http://www.myaccount.sierraclub.org) and log in if you have an account, or sign up if you don't, to find your member number. You can also call Member Care at 415-977-5500 or email [member.care@sierraclub.org](mailto:member.care@sierraclub.org).

### Candidate questions

- 1) Please describe your interest in the Sierra Club, and any leadership or volunteer activities with our organization or other non-profit groups that will help you fulfill your role as described above.
- 2) What skills, experience, or perspective from your personal or professional background (fundraising, volunteering, advocacy, legal, accounting, communications, Board, political, events) will you bring to the Sierra Club , Four Lakes Group Executive Committee?
- 3) Looking forward over the next 3 years, what do you think the Four Lakes Group needs to do, or how do we need to grow and change to be effective on local and regional conservation issues?
- 4) The Four Lakes Group covers 9 counties (Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Rock and Sauk) in south central Wisconsin including urban and rural areas, state and local parks, major rivers and trails. What issue(s) are you interested in working on and why? How do you see the Four Lakes Group supporting this work and how will this help build the Four Lakes Group?

### Don Ferber

- 1) I have been active with the Sierra Club for about 2 decades in many roles including the Four Lakes board, Chapter Executive Committee, Beyond Coal team, fundraising team, newsletter editor, extensive outreach activities and coordination activities, and leading Recycling Away from Home. This has given me an awareness and understanding of the Sierra Club's efforts, and an ability to take leadership roles in advancing our causes and spreading our messages. I have also been active with 350 Wisconsin.
- 2) I have done extensive outreach and advocacy, especially as part of our Beyond Coal campaign efforts, served on both our Four Lakes Group and Chapter boards, coordinated our presence at a number of events and activities, and done extensive outreach to obtain new volunteers. I also work on Chapter fundraising activities, write for our Four Lakes newsletter, assist with fundraising newsletters, and post on social media.
- 3) I would like to see us recruit more racial and geographic diversity in our leadership, attract more youth, and expand our active volunteer base. It would be helpful to have more leadership on local issues that includes more activism and outreach outside of Dane County to the other 8 counties in the Four Lakes Group region, and to expand the focus in our area where we're lifting up more local issues and concerns.
- 4) As part of my strong energy interests, I would like to increase energy justice and lower energy bills by providing low-income people with better access to solar and energy efficiency to aid in affordable housing, and provide well-paying jobs for them. By centering the needs of marginalized communities and working to lift their voices and needs, the Four Lakes Group can also become more inclusive. Our work to provide more equitable access to recreational opportunities and outdoor spaces can also increase equity.

### Erik Pettersen

- 1) I'm active with the Four Lakes Group and currently serve as the co-treasurer. I also volunteer with Housing Initiatives where I serve on the Board of Directors as a consumer of mental health services. I love the Sierra Club and what it stands for and have been a volunteer for over ten years. I have a wealth of experience with Sierra Club and enjoy spending time working on environmental causes and campaigns. My particular passion is mass transit such as trains and buses.

## Four Lakes Group 2022 Executive Committee Election Ballot

Please read the candidate statements for election to the Executive Committee and select your choices by putting an "X" before the name. Select up to three candidates. If your ballot is not from a Four Lakes Sierran mailed copy, please write your name and membership number on the back. Only ballots from active members will be valid, so please cut the portion of the back page with your name and number on it. Please mail ballots to: Wisconsin Chapter Sierra Club, 754 Williamson St, Madison, WI 53703 by December 1, 2022.

Voter 1:  Don Ferber  Erik Pettersen  Liz Wessel

Write In \_\_\_\_\_

Voter 2:  Don Ferber  Erik Pettersen  Liz Wessel

Write In \_\_\_\_\_

### Erik Pettersen (continued)

2) I've gained skills as Four Lakes Group co-treasurer that I use to complete QuickBooks transactions each month. I've written grants and proposals for speakers and events from Ralph Nader to Earth Day activities. I've lobbied elected officials and have worked on various political campaigns as well. I also actively participate in the Chrysalis Clubhouse which is a local non-profit advocacy group for mentally ill folks striving for recovery and getting back to work.

3) I think we need to reach out to communities outside of Madison since we represent the eight counties surrounding Dane County, but have most of our members in the Madison area. We also need to get a serious effort going to build high-speed and commuter rail into the Madison area to connect with Milwaukee and other large cities around the region. Also, shutting down our remaining coal plants would be great too.

4) As part of focusing more on the counties surrounding Dane County, high-speed and commuter rail could be a bridge to begin that work. We are also working hard to get people access to county, state, and municipal parks through the Land Equity and Access Team, and I support that effort as well. The more people we get involved in these efforts, the better our outcome will be.

### Liz Wessel

1) I became an active volunteer with the Sierra Club because it's a grassroots, volunteer-led organization that empowers its members and activists. It provides training and support to develop leaders across the organization and enables activists to pursue issues in their backyard. I have served in elected Executive Committee positions at the state and local level, and as a volunteer team member working on issues. My past work includes lobbying on state and national policies.

2) I have served on several Boards and understand the need for sound, just and equitable operations and great program work. The Executive Committee can provide stability and resources through budgeting, fundraising and training to empower activists to address local issues throughout our region. The Executive Committee should also reflect and lead the Group's members and volunteers to embrace equity, justice and inclusion in our operations and issue work. I would like to continue strengthening the operations side of the Group and serve as co-Treasurer.

3) The Four Lakes group needs to rebuild our Outings program. and together with our access work and new leaders, open the outdoors to people of all ages and abilities. We need to leverage our resources (volunteer experience, creativity, funds) to support new projects like our tree initiative, to link to and enhance our local work on statewide teams and issues like the Every Kid Outdoors policy, and keep building our volunteer base and new leaders. We also can build on partnerships and family-friendly activities like our 2022 Camping Demo, Winter Fun Day, and Invertebrate Bingo.

4) As a member of the Sierra Club Four Lakes Group, I'm interested in working on local climate resiliency especially improving public transportation, and planting and sustaining more trees in our region. As an avid hiker and outdoors person, I will work to remove barriers (transportation, gear or costs) to access public lands and parks and nature and parks recreation areas, and rebuild our Outings program.



Four Lakes Group Sierra Club  
 754 Williamson St  
 Madison, WI 53703  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>

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**Newsletter Mailing**

Our goal is environmentally friendly, cost effective communication with our members. Our primary modes of communication are this newsletter, the Four Lakes Enews, and our web site and Facebook page. If we don't have your email address, we mail you a hard copy – or you can request one. Otherwise, members receive an email letting you know when the newsletter is available to download. You can also visit <https://tinyurl.com/4LGnews> for our newsletters.

Please consider sending your email address to [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net) if we don't have it to save paper and the cost of mailing. Plus we can also send you our Enews to keep you better informed.

Please mail calendar requests to Dave Blouin, 3928 Paunack Ave, Madison, WI 53711. Calendars are \$1 off each for orders of two or more, and the mailing costs is \$5. Email Dave at [burroak15@gmail.com](mailto:burroak15@gmail.com) with any questions.



Enjoy, explore, and protect the planet

**2023 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS**



**ORDER FORM**

ITEM	COST	QTY	TOTAL
Wilderness Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$14.95	_____	_____
Engagement Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15.95	_____	_____
			Subtotal: _____
			Sales Tax: _____
			Shipping: _____
			<b>GRANDTOTAL:</b> _____

Please make checks payable to "Sierra Club" and mail to the return address shown on your newsletter.

**SHIP TO:**

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