



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

JANUARY 2024

*"In the U.S., per capita emissions are more than double the world average, while in India they are less than half the world average. Globally, the 10 percent of the population with the highest income account for nearly half of all emissions." - United Nations*

## Transportation, Environment, Equity

Transit Equity—the right of all people to affordably and sustainably get to school, work, events, appointments, services, and a full life regardless of their age, income, race, health, or ability—is key to reducing transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. For the past six years, the Labor Network for Sustainability has promoted Transit Equity Day, February 4, Rosa Parks’ birthday, to highlight how important public transportation is for fair access, good jobs, and a livable planet.

In the La Crosse area, Transit Equity Days will be recognized from January 29 through February 4, with displays, events, programs, and an invitation for all of us to consider the local and global effects of our personal transportation choices. Our region is lucky to be served by the La Crosse MTU, the Scenic Mississippi Region Transit (SMRT) buses, Amtrak, several para-transit services, and several shared-ride taxi services including those in Onalaska-Holmen-West Salem, Viroqua/Westby, Black River Falls, Tomah, Richland Center, and Prairie du Chien. To learn more about Transit Equity Days and how you can get involved, please visit <https://actionnetwork.org/events/la-crosse-wi-transit-equity-days/>



**On February 1, the Wisconsin Sierra Club and CRSC will host an online program about the Sierra Club’s new Transit to Trails for All initiative from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.** including national and state guests talking about how we can work together for better access to local, state, and national natural and outdoor recreation areas. If you want to celebrate Transit Equity Days in your community, spread the word about this event and encourage your friends and neighbors to attend! Register at <https://tinyurl.com/WISC224-T2T4A> or call 608-315-2693 for information about how to join the program by telephone.

## Education Grant Deadline Jan. 5

CRSC offers grants of up to \$200 each for environmental education projects to schools or community organizations involving young people at the elementary and middle school level within the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties.

Applications may be completed online, emailed or mailed.



The deadline is January 5, 2024. Learn more at [www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education](http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education) or [www.tinyurl.com/CRSC-Education](http://www.tinyurl.com/CRSC-Education)

To learn more about how you can donate to our grants program, please email or call us (608-315-2693).

## Small Business Sustainability

On Thursday, January 18 from noon to 3 p.m. at the La Crosse Center, the City of La Crosse and the Climate Alliance for the Common Good will host a hands-on workshop to help La Crosse area small businesses and organizations create a draft sustainability plan. Experts will guide attendees from concept to a nuts-and-bolts plan through reducing energy, emissions and waste while sharing ways to pay for it with rebates, incentives, and savings from reduced energy demands.

The workshop is based on the free-to-download La Crosse Small Business Toolkit on Sustainability developed by the nonprofit group Climate Alliance for the Common Good: [www.climatealliancecg.org](http://www.climatealliancecg.org) Register for the free workshop at [tinyurl.com/LaXSmallBizCAPWkshp](http://tinyurl.com/LaXSmallBizCAPWkshp)

## 2023 In Review by Kathy Allen, CRSC Board President

Our club continued to be leaders and voices for environmental sustainability and access in 2023. Several CRSC members have amplified our efforts through their local, regional, state, and national connections with allied groups and movements. Here are some highlights of 2023 in the Coulee Region Sierra Club.

**January** - We hosted an online program on **Transit Equity and Climate Action** with Susan Gaeddert from 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, as part of La Crosse's Transit Equity Days (you can view the program at our Facebook page: [tinyurl.com/2023CRSCTransitAndClimate](https://www.facebook.com/1000FriendsOfWisconsin)). We also awarded two environmental education grants to local elementary schools.

**March** - We hosted an online program with Al Buss from the Vernon County Energy District (VCED) on their Community Approach to the Energy Transition, Watch it at <http://tinyurl.com/CRSC-VCED23>

**April** - We conducted our spring roadside clean-up along River Valley Drive, tabled at the La Crosse Earth Fair, and co-sponsored the Drive Electric Earth Day event at the Earth Fair.

**May** - We co-hosted a "Know your Utility" event in Sparta, where we talked with customers of Xcel and rural electric cooperatives about how we can convince our utilities to transition to clean energy.

**June** - We got together for a Summer Potluck at Goose Island County Park.

**July** - We conducted our summer roadside clean-up of River Valley Drive in the La Crosse River marsh.

**September** - We hosted a walk at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge on Brice Prairie with Refuge Visitor Services Specialist Katie Julian.

**October** - We co-sponsored an "Ask Me About my EV" event and a first-ever Solar Tour in La Crosse, as part of the American Solar Energy Society's National Solar Tour; we also conducted our fall roadside clean-up.

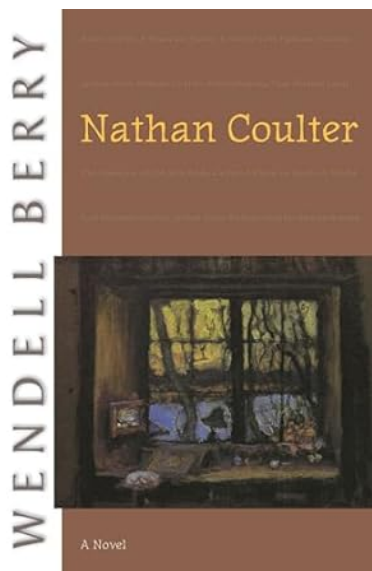
**November** - Two organizations that we've partnered with, Citizen Action of Wisconsin and VCED, received Good Citizen awards from the Sierra Club's Wisconsin Chapter (view the program at [tinyurl.com/23WISCAwards](https://www.facebook.com/1000FriendsOfWisconsin)).

**December** - We hosted our group holiday get-together for the first time in four years - thanks to all who attended for the great food and great company!

---

## January 2 - Book Club

Join Sierra Club members and friends from around the state for a discussion of "Nathan Coulter: A Novel" by



Wendell Berry. This first novel introduces us to the fictional Port William—a community united by duty and bonds of affection for one another and for the land upon which they make their livelihood.

Register for an email that includes a link to join the call at [tinyurl.com/WISC-NCoulter](https://www.facebook.com/1000FriendsOfWisconsin) or call 608-315-2693.

## Our 2024 Board!

Congratulations Kathy Allen, Ned Gatzke, Larry Sleznikow, and Cathy Van Maren who were elected to serve on the Coulee Region Sierra Club Board of Directors for 2024-2026! Also, thanks to the state chapter for helping facilitate online voting.

We are sorry to say goodbye to **Pat Wilson**, our excellent, long-serving board member, past president, historian, mentor, state chapter liaison, outings leader, networker, organizer, and much more who has been the spine of CRSC for many years. While he is stepping away from the Board, Pat will still be active in the club, the work, and the community. *Thank you, Pat!*

The new board will meet in January to elect officers and set priorities for the coming year. If you would like to attend the meeting or have suggestions for issue, events, or programs, please email [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com) or call 608-315-2693.

## Calling Xcel Energy Customers and Clean Energy Advocates!

Last spring we told you about Xcel Energy's proposal to "repower" an existing gas plant near Eau Claire with new fossil gas turbines. The new Wheaton facility would consist of a 210-MW combustion turbine and five 9-MW RICE (reciprocating internal combustion engine) units. Xcel claims the new facility is required to meet projected load requirements and maintain system reliability under extreme weather conditions.

Xcel anticipates a 40-year life span for the project, but this is not consistent with Governor Evers' plan to decarbonize Wisconsin's electrical grid by 2050. And, it conflicts with Xcel's own pledge to achieve 100% carbon-free electricity by 2050!

To move forward with this plan, Xcel Energy needs a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC is currently accepting public comments on Xcel's proposal and will hold two virtual public hearings on January 25, at 1:00 and 6:00.

Please share your comments and concerns! Learn more and find a link to the public comment page at [tinyurl.com/WIPSC-Wheaton](https://tinyurl.com/WIPSC-Wheaton).

For help with in-person or written comments, please contact our Chapter Campaign Coordinator, at [jadine.sonoda@sierraclub.org](mailto:jadine.sonoda@sierraclub.org).

---

## Enviro-Ed Grant Report

Jenn Speckeen, a teacher at Hamilton Elementary in La Crosse, shared: "The fourth and fifth-grade students celebrated end of the school year with an exhilarating hike through the scenic trails. Thanks to a grant from the Sierra Club For funding this opportunity! Students immerse themselves in nature, bonding with their



classmates and creating lasting memories before embarking on their summer break. Most students had never been to the Hixon trails before. Some highlights were completing a scavenger hunt for things found in nature, seeing a deer on the trail and walking almost 10,000 steps!"

## 2024 Sierra Club Teams Kickoff

An Issue Team is a group of volunteers from around the state who work together on specific issues under shared volunteer and staff leadership. These teams meet monthly online, strategizing and planning to win environmental victories,

On Saturday, January 20 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., teams will meet in Madison and online for a day of planning and relationship-building. This year, with elections, big projects in the pipeline, and climate deadlines looming, our Teams work is even more important than ever.

**YOU ARE INVITED** to join a team and use your skills, experience, and passion to help make real change. No prior volunteer or environmental experience is required. Join here: [tinyurl.com/WISC-EnviroTeams](https://tinyurl.com/WISC-EnviroTeams) or email or call us (608-315-2693) to learn more.

Here are the current Teams:

**Clean Water** - Advocate for protection against factory farm pollutants, PFAS, and other pollutants that threaten our drinking water

**Transportation Access & Equity** - Work towards a strong transportation system in Wisconsin that includes accessible and well funded mass public transit, walking and biking; work to stop out-of-control highway spending; help re-prioritize the state transportation budget.

**Moving Beyond Coal to Clean Energy** - Advocate for clean energy and help Wisconsin move beyond coal, gas, and nuclear to cleaner energy solutions. Help close individual coal plants, promote energy efficiency and conservation and clean, renewable solar and wind energy.

**Public Lands & Forests** - Help protect old growth forests and increase access to public lands. Advocate for access to Wisconsin State Parks for all fourth graders in Wisconsin.

**Wildlife** - Fight for science-based wildlife management informed by the Tribes and public input.

**Tar Sands Pipelines** - Work to stop new oil pipelines in the state, protect our waterways, and connect with other pipeline fights in the region. The team is focused on stopping the new Line 5 reroute and supporting activists fighting the Line 3 pipeline in Minnesota.

**Mining** - Work to ensure mining proposals do not negatively impact our air, water, or climate.

If a link does not work, copy the text of the link and paste it into your browser, removing spaces if needed. If it still doesn't work, please search on the item or event title in your browser.



What climate actions will you take in 2024? How can you make a difference? Do you know what your options are? Do you know how to take the first steps?

The City of La Crosse has partnered with Bright Action to host a Carbon Zero challenge with ideas, suggestions, and assistance for making sustainable changes. If you live in La Crosse and would like to join our community team, please use this link: <https://brightaction.app/westernwi/community-group/join/9659>

If you live outside La Crosse, you can still join, learn, network, share ideas, and take action. Go to [brightaction.app](https://brightaction.app) to sign up and get started.



## The Global Ten Percent

We often hear about the “global wealthy” and their responsibility for high greenhouse gas emissions. But just who are the wealthiest people on Earth? According to the 2023 Credit Suisse *Global Wealth Report*, an individual with at least \$137,333 in net assets (income, savings, investments, property, vehicles, etc. less debts) is in the global top ten percent, and someone with about \$1.1 million in assets is in the global top one percent.

Changes made in transportation, food, energy, consumption, leisure, and investment habits among members of this group can have big climate impacts. The U.N.’s list of *Actions for a Healthy Planet* is a good place to start. Time is short. Stakes are huge. Read more at [www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions](http://www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions)

1. Reduce energy use. Be efficient at home.
2. Switch to renewable energy.
3. Walk, bike, take public transit.
4. Use an electric vehicle.
5. Stop or reduce flying.
6. Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle.
7. Eat more vegetables, fewer animals.
8. Reduce food waste.
9. Plant native species.
10. Produce less waste, clean the environment.
11. Make your \$ count in buying and banking.
12. Speak up!

---

## More January Events

1/ 6: Transportation Camp hosted by Transportation for America. [t4america.org/transportation-camp](http://t4america.org/transportation-camp)

1/ 8: Film: Journey Down the Gila. Online at 6:30 p.m. [tinyurl.com/WISC-0108Film](http://tinyurl.com/WISC-0108Film)

1/12-14: Snowshoe Challenge in Black River Falls. <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/2024-winter-wonderland-snowshoe-challenge/>

1/12: Science Cafe - CARPool Karaoke with Dr. Marybeth K. Brey. 6 p.m. JavaVino [www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=371331382240887&set=a.191427546897939](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=371331382240887&set=a.191427546897939)

1/13: Winter Festival at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. <http://kickapoovalley.wi.gov/Events/Annual-Events/Winter-Festival/>

1/15: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

1/17: Habitat Management and Research Projects in the Black River Falls area. 1 p.m. at the Lunda Community Center. [www.blackrivercountry.net/event/lcc-hub-guest-speaker/](http://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/lcc-hub-guest-speaker/)

1/19-21: Snowshoe Challenge in Black River Falls. <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/2024-winter-wonderland-snowshoe-challenge/>

1/24: La Crosse Citizens Climate Lobby meeting at 6:30 p.m. Email [info@lacrossecccl.org](mailto:info@lacrossecccl.org) for access info.

1/30: Sierra Club Virtual Volunteer Fair 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Online. [tinyurl.com/WISC-124Vol](http://tinyurl.com/WISC-124Vol)

1/31: Transportation Liberation interactive workshop on going car-free or car-light. 6:30 p.m. at the Southside Neighborhood Center in La Crosse [tinyurl.com/TEDLaCrosse2024](http://tinyurl.com/TEDLaCrosse2024)

2/ 1: Transit to Trails for All, a Sierra Club initiative. Online program featuring national and state guests. 6:30 p.m. [tinyurl.com/WISC-T2T4A](http://tinyurl.com/WISC-T2T4A)

**STILL seeking one or two people to help with the newsletter. Call 608-315-2693 or email [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com) for details.**