

# *Crossroads Group* *Sierra Club*



WINTER 2020

## **Let's Help All Michiganders Envision a Prosperous, Green Economy**

Imagine that people from left to right, both urban and rural got together and decided what government needs to do to address the climate crisis, improve our lives now and ensure a better future for our children and grandchildren. Imagine if those things included:

- 100% clean, affordable energy;
- Investment in rebuilding infrastructure to reduce climate impact and strengthen national security;
- Clean water for everyone;
- Incentives for investment in green manufacturing with good-paying jobs;
- Agricultural policy that truly protects and sustains our food supply.

Those are just a few of the big ideas in the "Green New Deal" legislation introduced in Congress this past February. Since then, the climate nay-sayers have been busy deriding the more far-reaching and ambitious components of the bill, and legislators in right-leaning districts have had to shy away from supporting it.

But here in Michigan, there is still a lot of buzz about some type of "Green New Deal" legislation, and a group of Crossroads leaders is helping to keep the conversation going. Inspired by past Sierra Club President and current board member Aaron Mair's vision of Michigan as a driving force in a green economy, we've been meeting regularly since August to explore how many of the components of the bill (H.R. 109) would benefit our region. At the top of the list: jobs, especially for unionized labor, clean air and water in *all* our communities, lower energy costs, and better transportation.

Ultimately, it will likely not be just one mega-bill that enables us to mitigate the climate crisis and the environmental and economic injustices of our current economy. It will take initiatives at the local, state and federal level. Each of us can help build the grassroots support needed to persuade our elected officials to take action. Talking and listening to friends and neighbors from across the political spectrum and focusing on the benefits of investing in climate solutions, especially right here in our state, is a good place to start.

*Crossroads leader Penny Goldstein has served as Group Representative to the Michigan Chapter Executive Committee for the past three years.*

## **Our Changing Climate Art Show**

To raise the awareness of the threat climate change poses to our planet and future generations, the Sierra Club Crossroads Group together with the Environmental Council of Huron Valley (EcoHV), Whatever It Takes Sanctuary (WITS), Community Unitarian Universalists in Brighton (CUUB) and Huron Valley Council for the Arts (HVCA) are holding Our Changing Climate Art Show.

Art considered for this exhibition will have one of the following effects on the viewer. It will inspire action, broaden awareness, deepen understanding, convey urgency, point to solutions or illuminate the consequences of our planetary climate crisis.

The show will take place in two locations simultaneously; CUUB and HVCA during the month of April 2020. The winners from both shows will be displayed at the Earth Day Challenge at Mt. Brighton on April 25, 2020.

We are looking for artists of all ages to submit their art. Please put the show in your calendar and participate by visiting the show(s), voting for your favorite pieces and returning home with a tree to plant as one small action step we can all take. For more information and art submission details please go to our website <http://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads>.

## Solar Energy Legislative Update

### Executive Committee Chairs

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VISIT US AT:

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[meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group](https://meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group)



### Solar Tax Exemption Bills Signed into Law

On November 15<sup>th</sup> Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed into law a package of bills that makes it illegal for local tax assessors to increase your property taxes because you added solar panels. This was a strong bipartisan effort that flew through the house and senate with almost unanimous support.

### Powering Michigan Forward Bill Package

This bill package is the most exciting solar bill package we have seen that has a good chance of passing. A big hurdle is the dark money that DTE and Consumers Energy give to legislators who oppose the bills. During the last election they gave six figures to each of several candidates to unseat legislators that support bills that are against the utility companies' interests.

The first bill is HB5145/SB597. This bill removes the ½ % cap on residential solar users and on commercial users. These limits mean that once the aggregate total wattage for residential solar users connected to the grid (interconnection contracts) hits ½ of 1 percent of the utility company's peak load, the utility company will refuse to allow any new solar customers to connect to 'their' grid. The same is true for commercial customers. Currently Consumers Energy and DTE are over 60% of the way there. Approximately half of all solar interconnection customers have come on board over the last twelve months. So this bill is **CRITICAL** to get passed. If not passed the solar industry will shut down overnight sometime towards the end of 2020.

The second Bill is HB5144/SB598. This bill restores Net Metering, which allows solar users to receive fair compensation for power contributed to the grid. Currently DTE compensates at a much lower rate known as Distributed Generation, which would be eliminated. This formula results in a much longer timeline for solar users to recoup their investment. Consumers Energy will end Net Metering around October 2020. If this bill passes it will restore Net Metering to all publicly regulated utilities and make installing solar panels much more attractive financially.

The third bill is HB5143/SB596. Interestingly, this bill and HB5144/SB598 conflict. This bill establishes a 'Fair Value Tariff' for all energy sold to the grid by Distributed Generation Customers. Unlike the current law, which only assesses the cost of solar to the grid, this bill will assess the actual value of solar to the grid. Other states that have done this have established rates twice what ours are.

We expect the utility companies to fight these bills vigorously. So we are calling on the Green Army of solar supporters to meet with or contact their state senators and representatives to demand that they side with Michigan's residents and against the interests of dark money.

*Mark Hagerty is president of Michigan Solar Solutions, a business partner of the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club and a sponsor of Crossroads. Their services are recommended. For more information or to subscribe to their newsletter go to <http://www.michigansolarsolutions.com>.*

## Crossroads Group Outings Winter 2020

**Outings are subject to weather conditions.** To check for cancellations or changes, or to find out more information about any outing, see our website ([www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads](http://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads)) or Meetup page ([www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group)) or contact us at [crossroadsoutings@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:crossroadsoutings@michigan.sierraclub.org).

All outings are open to Sierra Club members and non-members. Bring water and snacks.

**\*\* Please arrive 15 minutes early for sign in, outings will start promptly at the stated time**

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### **Pinckney Recreation Area Hike - Saturday January 18, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Pinckney Recreation Area, 8555 Silver Hill Rd., Pinckney; meet at the trailhead parking lot for the Silver Lake, Potawatomi, and Crooked Lake trails. GPS: 42.4169, -83.9642

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport  
Join us for a hike on the Crooked Lake Trail (5 miles) or the Silver Lake Trail (2 miles). These trails are part of Michigan's premier trail systems, winding by glacial moraines, kettle lakes, and swampy lowlands.

### **Huron Meadows Metropark Ski Outing/hike if no snow & Optional Lunch - Sunday February 2, 10 AM\*\***

**Location:** Huron Meadows Metropark, 8765 Hammel Rd, Brighton; meet at the Ski/Golf Center

**Skill Level:** novices to advanced; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires Metropark entry fee. Optional ski rental \$15.

Join us for a cross country ski outing. Ski / boot rental available at the park (please arrive by 9:30 if renting gear). Enjoy miles of groomed trails both on the golf course and through the woods. We will ski on shorter and longer distance trails depending on experience levels. We will hike if there is no snow. Optional lunch at a nearby restaurant after the outing.

### **Island Lake Recreation Area Night and Lantern Hike - Saturday February 15, 6 PM\*\***

**Location:** Island Lake Recreation Area, 6301 Kensington Rd, Brighton;

Meet in Kent Lake parking lot (go straight past toll booth, 1st lot on left) near the campfire (west side)

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport  
Join us for a 5 mile night hike on the Hickory Ridge trail. The last mile of the trail will be lit with lanterns, but headlamps are required for the first part of the hike. Be sure to dress warm. Ice cleats (such as Yaktrax) could be helpful as it may be hard to see slippery patches. There will be a campfire and hot chocolate near the end courtesy of the Friends of Island Lake.

NOTE: people who want a shorter hike can do the regular lantern hike on their own – this is around 2 miles and you can start any time between 6pm and 8:15pm.

### **Brighton Recreation Area Equestrian Trail Hike - Sunday March 1, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Brighton Equestrian Day Staging Area lot, Howell; From Bishop Lake Rd & Chilson Rd in Howell, go west on Bishop Lake Rd 0.3 miles, turn left into the parking area. GPS: 42.5056, -83.8644

**Skill Level:** medium; **Difficulty:** moderate to strenuous; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport  
Join us for a 5.7 or 2.7 mile hike on the equestrian trails at Brighton Recreation area. These trails are hilly and the ground is uneven and possibly muddy in some places due to horse travel. Sturdy hiking shoes or boots recommended.

### **Kensington Metropark Hike & Optional Lunch - Sunday March 15, 10 AM\*\***

**Location:** Kensington Metropark, entrance is off Kensington Rd just north of I-96, Brighton; meet at the Nature Center parking lot

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires Metropark entry fee  
Join us for a 5 or 2 mile hike around Wildwing Lake and other nature trails. Expect to see abundant wildlife such as turkeys, Sandhill Cranes, and deer. Optional lunch at a nearby restaurant after the hike.

## Crossroads Group Outings Winter 2020, continued

### Maybury State Park Hike - Saturday March 28, 1 PM\*\*

**Location:** Maybury State Park Trailhead #1, Northville; Use 8 Mile Rd park entrance, ~ 1 mile west of Beck Rd. Take park road until it ends at a T, then turn right, then left into parking lot. GPS: 42.4320, -83.5397

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport  
Join us for a 5 or 3 mile hike on trails through rolling hills and around a pond at Maybury State Park.

### Proud Lake State Recreation Area Hike & Optional Lunch - Saturday April 11, 10 AM\*\*

**Location:** Proud Lake Foot Path Trailhead, Commerce Twp; From I-96 & Wixom Rd, go north on Wixom Rd 7.2 miles, turn right on Park Headquarters Rd, go 0.2 miles, see trailhead parking lot on left.

GPS: 42.5707, -83.5548

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport  
Join us for a 5.4 or 2.6 mile hike on the River Trail. This scenic trail runs through a variety of landscapes including forests, marshlands, and parts of the Huron River. Optional lunch at a nearby restaurant after the hike.

### Deerfield Hills Nature Area Hike - Sunday April 26, 1 PM\*\*

**Location:** Deerfield Hills Nature Area, Green Rd & Cohoctah Rd, Fenton; meet in the parking lot.

GPS: 42.764, -83.824

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free  
Join us for a 4 or 2 mile hike on various trails that wander around pine forests, meadows, swamplands, and lakes.

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See our website ([www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads](http://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads)) for additional outings including events sponsored by the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club.

See our Meetup page ([www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group)) for additional outings including service outings (trail work, highway cleanup, etc.) and last minute "pop-up outings"

## 12 Benefits of Hiking

Clears your mind and reduces stress and anxiety  
Being in nature decreases negative thought patterns  
Helps weight loss by burning 440-550 calories per hour  
Improves blood pressure and lowers risk of heart disease  
Increases social connections when hiking with a group  
It is a weight-bearing exercise that strengthens bones

Helps you unplug from technology  
Helps achieve daily Vitamin D intake  
Increases energy  
Improves memory  
Improves balance  
Enhances sleep quality



## Crossroads Group Programs, 2020

Crossroads Group Sierra Club presents these programs free to the public  
Brighton District Library: 100 Library Dr, Brighton

### Let Thy Food be Thy Medicine

Wednesday January 15, 7:00 PM

"Let Thy Food be Thy Medicine" - Hippocrates  
A Presentation by Tatiana Pushman of W.I.T.  
Sanctuary

Ms. Pushman is a graduate of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Her presentation will focus on how the food we choose to eat not only affects our health but impacts our environment. Eating a more plant focused diet can improve our well-being AND reduce our environmental footprint. Tips, recipes and taste testing will be included.



### Spring Gardening for a Natural Backyard

Wednesday March 18, 7:00 PM

By Stephanie Kozak, Certified Interpretive Guide  
for Kensington Metropark Nature Center

Stephanie's presentation will focus on how our spring gardening activities affect the wildlife and habitats that overwinter in our yards – and how we can invite more natural flora and fauna into our spaces.



### How Courts Matter to the Environment

Wednesday May 20, 7:00 PM

Courts Matter Michigan is a non-partisan coalition of diverse organizations who strive to ensure our federal judiciary is committed to upholding our core constitutional values, such as equality, freedom and justice for all.

Presenters from this coalition will discuss how federal judges are appointed by the President and how their decisions impact environmental policies and regulations.

### Politics and the Environment

Wednesday September 16, 7:00 PM

By Christy McGillivray, Sierra Club Legislative and Political Director

Find out what the Michigan legislature has been up to in regards to our environmental issues, what the 2020 election is going to look like, how the political races in our area are shaping up, and how it will impact us and the environment.



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Our Vision: to lead the community in environmental stewardship, education, and awareness

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