



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
AUGUST 2019

"If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon." - Sir David Attenborough

SUMMER VISIT to the home of Nick Nichols Tuesday, August 27 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Nick Nichols, La Crosse County's Sustainability Coordinator, has invited Coulee Region Sierra Club members and friends to visit his home and see how he lives the sustainable life 24/7. Nick will show us his solar system, his garden, and other renewable systems and hacks. The visit will be from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 27. If you'd like to participate, please complete this form (tinyurl.com/CRSCVisitsNick) OR call Cathy at 608-315-2693 no later than August 26 at noon. We will also try to facilitate ride sharing. This is your chance to see what one family can do and ask questions about how to do it!

READY FOR 100 LA CROSSE!

The Coulee Region Sierra Club is happy to announce that the La Crosse City Council passed a resolution committing the community of La Crosse to transitioning to 100% renewable energy and zero percent carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner. More details will be in our September newsletter. The Sustainable La Crosse Commission hopes to pass a similar resolution at the county level soon. Email crsierraclub@gmail.com if your community would like to start a similar initiative and check out the resources available at sierraclub.org/ready-for-100. You will learn about the Mayors for 100 initiative and how to start your own Ready for 100 campaign using tools and resources available from Sierra Club, partner organizations, and the others who have made the pledge.



Gundersen's Sparta Clinic achieves "energy independence"

The US Green Building Council Wisconsin has honored the Gundersen Clinic in Sparta with a Transformation Leadership Award for the clinic's successful sustainability practices. The Sparta clinic met its "energy independence" goal before it was even a year old by producing more renewable energy than it consumes. The clinic's HVAC system uses geothermal wells, they have a variety of monitoring systems in place to conserve energy, the building is well insulated, and there is a 100kW solar array on the roof. In addition those who work at the clinic maintain an "energy-conscious attitude while working in the building," according to Alan Eber, Manager of Facility Operations at Gundersen. Gundersen Health System has been a leader in energy efficiency and energy independence. Read more at gundersenenvision.org.

Fennimore Solar Garden Completed



As reported by SWNews5U.com/local/fennimore-solar-project-completed, a new 18-acre solar garden in Fennimore is the largest solar array in Wisconsin. The project started as a collaboration between Organic Valley, OneEnergy Renewables, and participating communities but was purchased by BluEarth Renewables, a Canadian based company. It is one project in the Butter Solar portfolio which also includes arrays in Argyle, Cashton, Cumberland, Elroy, and New Lisbon. With completion of this project, Fennimore will be getting about 40 percent of its energy from wind and solar, surpassing their 20% renewable energy by 2020 goal. The Butter Portfolio energy will directly serve the local communities where projects are sited.

Black River family canoe trip

Fine weather and a wonderful group of children and parents made this year's family-friendly canoe trip on the Black River a delight. We'll have more about the trip in our September newsletter. Upcoming Sierra Club water outings include a five day trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (September 5-10) and a day trip on the Kickapoo (September 15). For more trips and information, see tinyurl.com/jmcwatertrips.

Thank you cleanup vols!

Thanks to the seven volunteers who showed up for our July 16 highway cleanup effort along River Valley Drive in La Crosse. Some volunteers cooled off at Rudy's after the activity. Our next cleanup will be in October.

Public transit open house

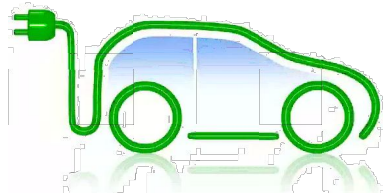
The Coulee Region Sierra Club partnered with La Crosse Area Transit Advocates and the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation to host a **Love Our Transit Open House** in La Crosse on July 10. Similar events were held around the state to collect public transit riders' and drivers' stories and highlight the importance of public transportation in providing independence to the thousands of Wisconsinites who don't or can't drive private vehicles. In La Crosse, we were also able to talk about the role public transportation can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. New "clean diesel" buses this year and electric buses next year will improve efficiency and reduce fuel and maintenance costs.

Inspiring Sustainability awards

The Sustainability Institute at Western Technical College in La Crosse will present two Inspiring Sustainability awards at a September 24 program. Superior Fresh, a leading aquaponics facility in Northfield, and Kahya Fox, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity La Crosse will be recognized by La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat. The event begins at 4:30 p.m. with a cash bar. Mayor Kabat will speak at 5:00 and will present the awards at 5:20. To register (free) visit www.sustaininstitute.com/education.

September electric vehicle charging workshop

Get on the fuel efficiency fast track: trends, planning considerations, and funding resources is a workshop for those considering a charging station or electric vehicle fleet. It will be presented on Wednesday, September 11 at the Radisson



Wetland videos

The Wisconsin Wetlands Association has produced a series of short videos on state wetlands. They are free, downloadable, and useful for programs, classroom use, or just sharing with friends and family. Access the videos at www.wisconsinwetlands.org.



Mississippi Valley Conservancy

MVC is offering several hikes and volunteer opportunities in the Coulee Region during August.

- * August 3 - Encouraging Biodiversity Field Day at Tunnelville Cliffs State Natural Area
 - * August 9, 16, 30 - Love the Bluffs Volunteer Days
 - * August 10 - Forest Bathing in La Crosse
 - * August 21 - Volunteer for the Wild at Tunnelville Cliffs
- Visit the MVC site for more information: mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events.

Rural Energy Savings Program

The USDA's Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP) works through rural energy providers to provide low interest, long term loans to help rural families and businesses reduce energy costs and consumption. Loans may be used for weatherization; Energy Star appliances; HVAC and other systems updates; motors, blowers, boilers, dryers, and process related equipment; on- or off-grid renewable energy installations; irrigation or water and waste disposal systems; replacement of manufactured homes; lighting improvement; building envelope improvements; and other activities and investments directly related to energy efficiency implementation. The loans will reduce upfront costs and it is hoped that cost savings will offset the loan costs. **Wisconsin Citizen Action urges rural residents to push their electric co-ops to apply for the program by the September 30 deadline.** Learn more about RESP at tinyurl.com/AboutRESP and sign the Citizen Action petition at www.citizenactionwifund.org/power.

Crawford County CAFO news

An expansion of a CAFO owned by Pork Producers AV Roth of Crawford County is currently under consideration. The CAFO would be sited along the Kickapoo River. The Crawford Stewardship Project is coordinating studies, education, and outreach. They note that, "The Wisconsin Department of Health Services estimates 47% of Wisconsin wells already do not meet health standards." In this so-called "year of clean water," it has been disappointing to see that the Wisconsin DNR's CAFO permitting policies do not seem to have changed.

A special meeting of the Marietta Town board will be held on Monday, August 5 at 7 p.m. to discuss and vote on a proposed one year moratorium at the Marietta Town Hall, 45550 Maple Ridge Road, Boscobel. Contact Forest Jahnke, fjahnke@crawfordstewardship.org (608-632-2183), for more information and to get involved.

Sustainable business help

The Sustainability Institute at Western Technical College in La Crosse has offered its MPower program for the past several years to help area agencies, programs, and businesses save money and energy, reduce waste, and become more sustainable. A redesigned program will begin this fall. See sustaininstitute.com/mpower.

On **Thursday, August 15**, Dr. Crispin Pierce, UW Eau Claire, and his students and interns will present a program on **Particulate Air Quality Around Wisconsin Frac Sand Mines** at the Skyline Golf Course, 612 North 11th Street, Black River Falls. The program begins at 5:30 p.m. and includes a presentation on particulate air monitoring and one on Public Lab and Project Outreach Sand Sentinel materials. *"The act of mining and processing sand for hydraulic fracturing generates particulate matter that becomes airborne. Our aim is to quantify the risk of ambient exposure to the airborne particulates around the industrial silica sand operations so that communities and decision-makers can be well-informed of their air quality."* Refreshments will be served at this free event.

Invasive plant species

Our area has hordes of invasive plants. Some grow so rapidly, they can be a greater threat to native species than logging, mining, or chemicals. Eradicating them takes a lot of work, and doing it wrong can make things worse by spreading seeds or stimulating root growth.

Common invaders here now include buckthorn, Japanese knotweed (resembling bamboo), Asian mulberry, Asian honeysuckle, wild parsnip, garlic mustard, crown vetch, purple loosestrife, leafy spurge, giant hogweed, Amur Corktree, and more.

Even if you don't have the energy to pull them, it's helpful to recognize and report them, to prevent spreading them and to avoid the dangerous ones like giant hogweed (which may produce large, painful blisters after contact).

CAFO siting hearings

The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will hold public hearings around the state on ATCP-51 CAFO/livestock siting rule updates. According to Wisconsin Farmers Union, "The livestock siting rule determines standards and procedures for local governments to permit new or expanding large livestock facilities." While the law says the rule must be reviewed every four years, it has not been revised since 2006.

A strong showing of farmers, rural residents, and engaged citizens will help defend necessary rule changes. The Farmers Union will host a conference call on August 6 at 6 pm to help organizations and citizens prepare for the ATCP-51 hearings. The call-in number is 800-582-3014 and the passcode is 96772278#.

The only Coulee Region area public hearing will be on Wednesday, September 4 between 1 and 4 p.m. and 5 to 8 p.m. at Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center, 3060 South Kinney Coulee Road, Onalaska. You may also comment online, by email, and by mail.

Get information about proposed updates, details about the process and all public hearings, and learn how to comment at tinyurl.com/ATCP51Update. Read more about CAFOs' impacts on the environment and public health at tinyurl.com/SCCAFO-2017.

Read more about invasive species at the DNR's website: dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives. which also offers [A Field Guide to Terrestrial Invasive Plants in Wisconsin](#) as a mail order book and a .pdf download. Wisconsin First Detector Network, part of the UW - Division of Extension, is a citizen science network that empowers people to take action against invasive species (fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wifdn). County or municipal departments or community organizations may offer invasive species training and work days. Check with your county extension office.

The Mississippi Valley Conservancy schedules workdays throughout the year (mississippivalleyconservancy.org) An October 19 event at Trempealeau Lakes includes work on invasive species. Sign up at tinyurl.com/TrempeInvasiveDay. - Dave Ziemann, La Crosse