



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

AUGUST 2020

"All the climate modeling in the world will not help us if we don't squarely face the oppressive systems of our past."- from Finding My Climate-Conscious Tribe: Black Nature Lovers and Writers by Kim-Marie Walker



August 11 Primary Election Day

PLEASE VOTE! Request an absentee ballot by contacting your clerk's office. If you vote absentee, you must have a witness sign your ballot in most cases. Absentee-in-person voting begins, in many jurisdictions, on Tuesday, July 28 and continues through Friday, August 7. Election day is Tuesday, August 11. Check your voting status, ballot, polling location, and more at myvote.wi.gov The Sierra Club has not endorsed state candidates yet, but the Wisconsin Conservation Voters has its list out. They also have a voting record archive. Read their endorsements here:

conservationvoters.org/elections/fall-general-and-presidential-election

Beyond voting, please support candidates who will immediately address the climate crisis; protect public lands and waters from destructive drilling, mining, cutting, and fracking; support fair maps; encourage social justice and equity; end fossil fuel pipelines and energy plants; fund public transportation and bike/ped infrastructure; block Trump administration attacks on clean air and water; and best work to help us fulfill the mission of the Sierra Club:

To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth;

To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources;

To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment;

and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

Tearing Down Our Monuments

By Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director

The Sierra Club is a 128-year-old organization with a complex history, some of which has caused significant and immeasurable harm. As defenders of Black life pull down Confederate monuments across the country, we must also take this moment to reexamine our past and our substantial role in perpetuating white supremacy.

It's time to take down some of our own monuments, starting with some truth-telling about the Sierra Club's early history. That will be followed by posts on how we've had to evolve on issues of immigration and population control, environmental justice, and Indigenous sovereignty. We will also devote a post to a discussion of how the Sierra Club is working to center the voices of people we have historically ignored, so we can begin repairing some of the harms done.

The most monumental figure in the Sierra Club's past is John Muir. Beloved by many of our members, his writings taught generations of people to see the sacredness of nature. But Muir maintained friendships with people like Henry Fairfield Osborn, who worked for both the conservation of nature and the conservation of the white race. Head of the New York Zoological Society and the board of trustees of the American Museum of Natural History, Osborn also helped found the American Eugenics Society in the years after Muir's death. [Read the rest of the article at tiny.cc/scracism]

Return of the Zombie Highway

Gov. Evers and WISDOT Secretary-designee Craig Thompson announced that the state is reviving plans to rebuild and expand 3.5 miles of Interstate 94 in Milwaukee. Then-Gov. Scott Walker had canceled the billion-dollar expansion of I-94's East-West Corridor in 2017, citing high costs and community opposition to the project, including litigation by several groups concerned about racial and environmental justice.

This announcement comes at a time when communities are still experiencing increased economic hardship due to the COVID pandemic, we have ten years left to stop climate change, and we have heightened awareness around structural racism in our society. Communities of color are disproportionately



impacted by our polluting, car-centered transportation system, and by highway expansions like this one. The I-94 project will double down on these negative impacts on all fronts. In addition, this project will work directly against Gov. Evers' pledge to reduce state carbon emissions by encouraging more car driving, more congestion, and more pollution

Tell the Evers Administration not to proceed on a project that is proven to be harmful and offers no solutions to our real transportation issues. As the governor cuts millions from state spending due to COVID-19, it makes no sense to resurrect this expensive project.

Sign the petition at tiny.cc/NoZombieHiway and then email your state representative and senator and tell them to oppose this anti-environment, anti-people project.

The Future is Clean Energy



Dairyland Power Cooperative and Minnesota Power are proposing to build a 625 megawatt gas powered facility in Superior, WI. This project, called the Nemadji

Trail Energy Center, would contribute to a number of environmental issues that would impact the health and well-being of local residents and hinder statewide efforts to curb climate change.

The plant would add 3 million tons of carbon emissions per year at a time when climate scientists tell us we must drastically reduce carbon emissions. It would destroy nearly 20 acres of wetlands along the Nemadji River. And it would require millions of gallons of water from the groundwater aquifer. The Wisconsin DNR has voiced concern about the plant's planned water use. In addition to environmental concerns, as energy demand flattens and renewable energy becomes cheaper, opponents worry that new fossil fuel plants like Nemadji Trail will become a "stranded asset," requiring ratepayers to pay for an obsolete facility that loses money.

It was disappointing to read that Western Wisconsin legislators, including Senators Marklein (17), Smith (31), Testin (24), and Shilling (32) who has since quit her position to become a Dairyland lobbyist, and Representatives Billings (95), Doyle (94), Oldenburg (96), and VanderMeer (70) sent an industry-written letter in support of the energy plant to the PSC in November. Some of these legislators have sought endorsements from the Sierra Club. Read more: www.energyandpolicy.org/dairyland-power-cooperative-behind-lawmakers-letters-to-psc/

The project has encountered much opposition in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In February, the Sierra Club and Clean Wisconsin filed a lawsuit asking for a judicial review of the Public Service Commission's (PSC) approval of the project. They also point out that this plant will work in direct opposition to Governor Evers' goal to reduce the state's carbon emissions. Read more at www.cleanwisconsin.org/why-were-suing-to-stop-the-nemadji-trail-energy-center/

Not only is there ongoing litigation, but the PSC has changed. Republican Mike Huebsch left the three-member commission and Governor Evers appointed Tyler Huebner, former director of RENEW Wisconsin, in March. Read more about the reasons environmental groups are suing at tiny.cc/GasLawsuit

Nature Online

The **Mississippi Valley Conservancy** will host a second virtual tour of the Kickapoo Caverns at 10 a.m. on Saturday, August 8. Bat biologist and cave specialist Jennifer Redell, from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, will lead the tour which will focus on the 400-million-year-old story of the caves. If you missed Part One, both episodes are available on the Conservancy's YouTube channel: [youtube.com/user/BluffConservancy](https://www.youtube.com/user/BluffConservancy)

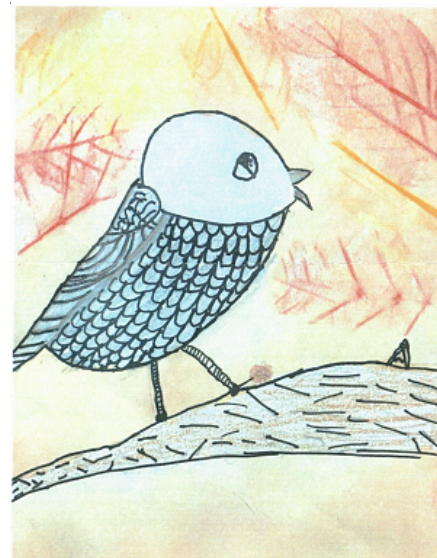
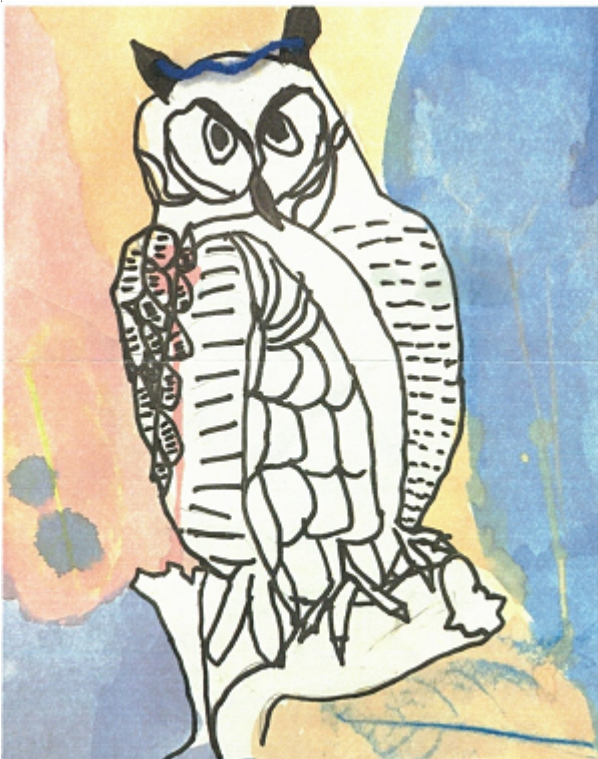
Climate Change: The Science and Global Impact is a FREE online course taught by Dr. Michael Mann, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science, Penn State University. The self-paced course includes readings, videos, quizzes, and tests. tinyurl.com/MannCourse

On August 13, the **Wisconsin Farmers Union** will hold its **summer conference ONLINE**. "Farmers and food system allies are invited to join the conference which will focus on 'Exploring Climate Change & the Role of Family Farms.' Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes will join us and share insights from the Task Force on Climate Change. If you struggle with rural broadband issues, most of the conference content will be just as enjoyable over the phone." The Farmers Union recently launched a Climate Change Resource Center that includes resources for farmers to advocate for policies that support efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, details on the latest actions by policymakers, and information on existing programs that aim to ensure a more economically and environmentally sustainable future for agriculture and rural America. Register: tinyurl.com/WFU2020Conf

CRSC Education Grants

Grant recipient Monica Treu-Olbert, a teacher at Lawrence Lawson Elementary in Sparta, used grant funds to purchase art supplies for a bird observation project with third graders. "Students looked at works by Audubon. We talked about birds, migration, looking carefully at shapes and feathers, etc. We sketched from photos, posters of Audubon's work, and other bird art. Students outlined in Sharpie and some cut out birds. Others worked the area behind the birds, using fake leaves (in future we can gather real leaves), for the rubbings. We talked about using nature in our art through actually gathering things from natures like sticks or leaves, and also representing nature in our art through subject matter. We displayed the students' work to share with the school. I think a project like this opens up students' minds to look carefully at nature and appreciate it. Students who live in town can realize they also have nature right in their backyards and around them." See full color pictures from the project at cr-sierra.blogspot.com

We'll report on more projects in fall newsletters. These environmental education grants are made possible through a grant our club receives from the Paul E. Stry Foundation and CRSC member donations.



Sierra #2008
Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group, John Muir Chapter,
Sierra Club is published four times per year.
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Environmental education grants helped third graders channel their inner Audubon! See page 3.

SAVE MONEY.
MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
GO SOLAR!

GrowSolarLaCrosse.org

Grow Solar La Crosse, an education and group buy initiative sponsored by the City and County of La Crosse, continues to offer online information sessions (Solar

Power Hours) for La Crosse County residents and business owners wishing to explore adding solar to their properties. After the information session, people may sign up to receive a free site assessment and estimate of costs and benefits. Those who choose to go solar will have their systems installed by the end of the year if they sign up by September 30. The more who sign up, the less the cost of panels. Learn more at GrowSolar.org/LaCrosse.

La Crosse County Friends and Members!
Please sign our petition encouraging the La Crosse County Board to pass a resolution pledging to transition, county-wide, to renewable energy in all sectors. tiny.cc/100RenewableLaX