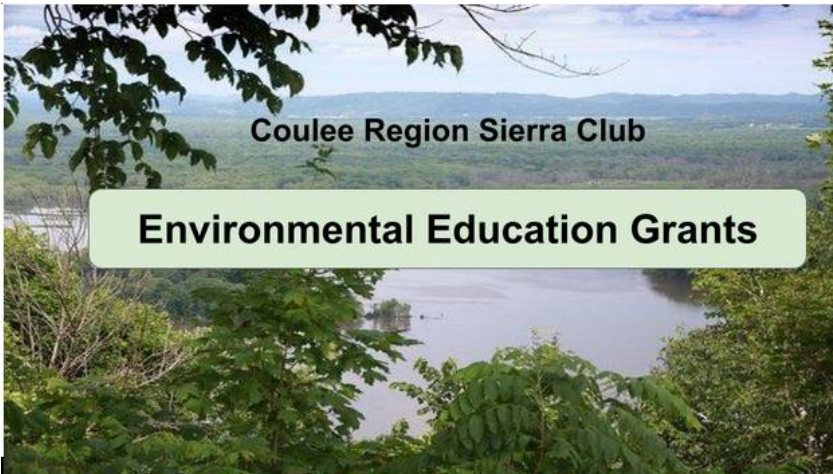




Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
AUGUST 2021

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." - James Baldwin



The next generation

The Coulee Region Sierra Club (CRSC) aims to involve tomorrow's decision-makers in better understanding the natural environment and our connection to it. The goal of the grants are to promote exploration, enjoyment, understanding, and protection of the natural environment (land, water, air, wildlife, etc.)

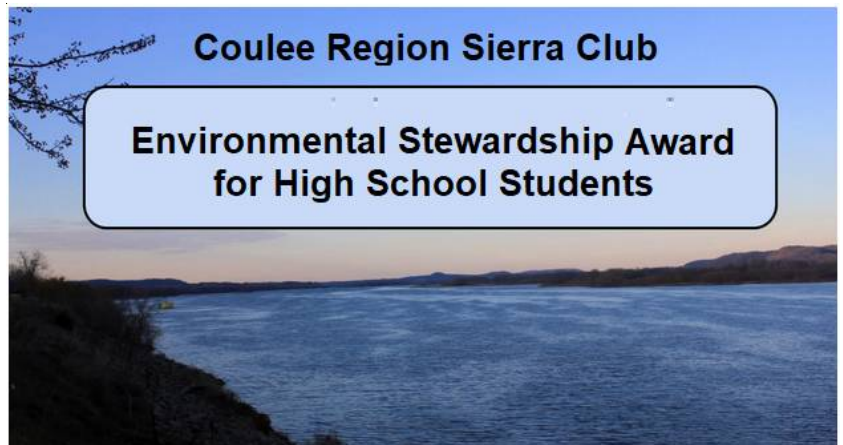
For spring 2022, CRSC will offer grants of up to \$200 each for **environmental education projects to schools or community organizations involving young people at the elementary and middle school level**

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 for applications is December 10, 2021. For more information, visit sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education or tinyurl.com/CRSC-Students

The Coulee Region Sierra Club also seeks to promote environmental stewardship through enduring, fair, and equitable action. Protection of air, water, land, wildlife habitats, and the climate is a primary goal. CRSC believes that all people of all ages can help protect the natural environment for present and future generations through active engagement.

New for 2021-2022, CRSC will recognize the achievements of and **award \$150 to a high school senior** who demonstrates leadership, action, and environmental stewardship, and who understands the importance of civic engagement in protecting our environment.



Eligible students are those graduating from high school in 2022 who reside in the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. The application includes essays and submission of a portfolio. The deadline for applications is March 15, 2022 with the award to be given by the end of April, 2022. For more information, visit sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education or tinyurl.com/CRSC-Students

Funding for these environmental grants and awards is possible thanks to an annual grant from the Paul E. Stry Foundation, shared dues from Sierra Club memberships, and donations made by community members. To learn more about donating, please email CRSierraClub@gmail.com.



Summer on the river

Great fun was had by all on the Black River family canoe camping trip July 24-25. The hot sunny weather was great for a trip like this. If we weren't swimming we were dousing each other with water guns while paddling. It's amazing how much energy kids demonstrate on trips like this. We camped on a sand bar. This was the first experience with canoeing or primitive camping for some of the people on the trip. While paddling 24 miles on the Black River, we experienced the river's recreational and ecological value.

Public input opportunities

The City of La Crosse anticipates receiving nearly \$22 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan Act and they have created a public input tool for city residents to provide ideas and examples. The funds will be distributed over the next few years and are to be used for revenue replacement for certain specific payments and projects (see <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/FRF-Interim-Final-Rule.pdf>) including water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure; public health; payments to essential workers; and payments to individuals and businesses hard-hit by COVID.

If you are a City of La Crosse resident, please take this opportunity to share your priorities and ideas. Visit <https://bit.ly/2UyQTMZ>

Seeking volunteers

On Sunday, September 26, from 1 to 5 p.m. several groups, including the Coulee Region Sierra Club, will host a National Drive Electric Week event at the Copeland Park Oktoberfest Shelter in La Crosse. At this event, local electric vehicle (cars to bikes) owners and dealers will show and talk about their experiences. We are seeking volunteers to help with the event, including setting up, welcoming and placing participants, helping tablers, guiding visitors, and cleaning up. If you are interested in helping with this free and open to the public event, please sign up at tinyurl.com/DriveEVLax-092621 or call 608-315-2693. Masks may be required depending upon conditions at the time.

The County of La Crosse is also seeking input: "As part of our Envision 2050 Comprehensive Plan process, we have launched a new survey on the future of rural La Crosse County. To participate, please go to publicinput.com/envision2050. The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. What happens to our agricultural land over the next decade and beyond matters to everyone, so we encourage all La Crosse County residents to participate."

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee is still seeking public input as it updates its Regional Transit Development Plan. The online survey is closed, but you may still provide comments through the online mapping site. Learn more at tinyurl.com/LAPC-RTDP

CAFO news and actions

On July 8, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the state Department of Natural Resources has the authority to place permit restrictions on large livestock farms and high-capacity wells to protect the state's water. Please take advantage of this ruling! The Crawford County Roth Feeder Pig II permit is still being evaluated, and concerned citizens are encouraged to continue to request an Environmental Impact Statement. Learn how and where to send requests at crawfordstewardship.org

The Real News Network and In These Times have produced an excellent documentary about the fight against CAFOs in Crawford, Polk and Burnett counties. Watch the film at youtu.be/Cs7WfJKMfaY and share with others. (Caution: some profanity.)

Build back better for clean energy, justice and jobs!

Wisconsin Sierra Club, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Wisconsin Environment and other groups are encouraging all of us to keep pressing our elected representatives to take bold steps in addressing the climate crisis. Per WCV: "Congress must invest in climate, clean energy, justice, and jobs at the scale that science demands. We must take action to get millions of people back to work in new, good-paying jobs in the clean energy economy while tackling climate change and environmental racism. Clean energy is the fastest-growing industry in America and provides a huge opportunity for high-quality union jobs that help rebuild the middle class. We have to meet the scale of the crises we face with the big investments needed to build back better with justice and equity.

Congress will be on recess during August, so we are urging people to call, email, and attend events when members are in their home districts. We want:

CLEAN ENERGY: Put the U.S. on the path to 100 percent clean energy powering our electricity grid, the transportation sector and our buildings – including homes, businesses, and schools.

JUSTICE: Prioritize the just and equitable solutions that the communities most harmed by toxic pollution--low-income and communities of color--are leading, and ensure that at least 40% of benefits go to the communities who need it most.

JOB: Support the preservation and creation of high-quality, good-paying union jobs across the economy, like builders, roofers, pipefitters, engineers, electricians, accountants, researchers, teachers and more.

Use this link (bit.ly/3hrLJd3) to tell your member of Congress to support investments in clean energy, justice and jobs. If you live in the La Crosse area, visit the Sierra Club/WI Environment Photo Petition table on August 13 at the Cameron Park Farmers' Market, 400 King St., beginning at 4 p.m. Sign up here: tinyurl.com/0813PhotoPetition

Inaction on climate is not an option. We are out of time. We need Congressional action on clean energy, justice and jobs.

August events

Thursday, August 5: Wisconsin League of Women Voters hosts an online program on Drinking Water and Wastewater from 3 to 5 p.m. online. Learn more and register at tinyurl.com/WILWV-Water

Tuesday, August 10: Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration host Karl Green, Community Development Education, UW-Extension, for an online talk about Water Resources in the Driftless Area (La Crosse County). Noon to 1 p.m. on Zoom. fspa.org/EcoAction.

Saturday, August 14: Mississippi Valley Conservancy hosts Canoeing and Kayaking Basics from 10 to 11:30 a.m. mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/canoeing-kayaking-basics

Tuesday, August 17: Botany & Beer community hike at Duck Egg County Forest, Irish Ridge Road, Viroqua, Masking and distancing required. BYOB. Meet at 5:30 p.m. Email for info: hike@botanyandbeer.com

Tuesday, August 24: JacksonInAction Hunter/Hiker Fitness experiences. Hike area trails and learn about health and fitness. www.blackrivercountry.net/event/hunter-hiker-fitness/2021-08-24/

Waking Up White Group Read

The La Crosse Public Library and the Waking Up White Collaborative invites everyone to join the La Crosse regional community read of Debby Irving's best selling book, *Waking Up White*. The event includes public presentations and small group book chats, in addition to conversations about ways to create a more welcoming and inclusive multicultural community.



Beginning August 16, the book will be available, free, at La Crosse area libraries and businesses. Sign up to participate in Book Chats--small, in-person, theme-based, facilitated discussions. Starting September 12, free, public programs will look at antiracism topics. Visit www.laxwakingupwhite.com/waking-up-white-regional-read.html for more information.

Coulee Region People

This month we talk with Beth Piggush, Integral Ecology Director and Laudato Si Promoter with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse.

What got you interested in the environment and outdoors activities?

My personal interest in the environment and outdoors stems from time at my house as a child in southern Minnesota. I spent as many hours as I could outside climbing trees, catching frogs in the ditch and building snow forts in the winter. I was also lucky to live near the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center in Austin. It had a terrific Director and Naturalist, named Larry Dolphin leading summer camps, maple syruping tours, snowshoe hikes and canoe trips down the Cedar River. The experiences I had as a child exposed me to love the places around me, no matter the season there was always something to do.

Now, as an adult, my interests have grown to more advocacy for what I love in nature as well as taking time to play and find peace with my surrounding environments. Plus it doesn't hurt that professionally I get to tie in my interests of caring for the environment and outdoor activities too.

What kinds of activities are your favorites? Do you have favorite outdoor spots?

Depending on the season (and there are more than 4 seasons), I like to be outside on a trail with my family. It could be a hiking trail, water trail, cross-country ski trail, or random deer trail (when I get lost). I like to be on the ground, to enjoy nature up close and personal. My favorite spots at the moment are the City of La Crosse trails, specifically the Hass Tract right now. I have enjoyed the Bittersweet Lakes State Natural Area in northern Wisconsin. I also enjoy a quick canoe or bike ride around Lytle's Landing or a winter or spring hike along Seven Bridges (avoiding the muddy or mosquito seasons of course).

What got you involved in the Sierra Club?

I have known about the Sierra Club for a long time, since I worked with them in Connecticut on advocacy campaigns back at 2007. My family officially joined the Sierra Club when we were able to enjoy the Black River canoe trip a couple of years ago. That was a great experience, which we just repeated this month. We joined shortly after our initial canoe trip and made it official.

What are your main environmental interests and how did you come by them?

I am genuinely interested in many topics from renewable energy and energy efficiency to clean water to climate justice. I am interested in working to mitigate the impacts of climate change, so my children and future generations can enjoy what I love and enjoy within nature. I also have a strong interest in learning from the landscape and understanding indigenous uses of plants as medicine and food. Being up close and personal on a trail allows me to notice the details of a plant through its whole growth cycle or learning the "season" when different mushrooms pop.

How have you worked on those interests?

My work on climate is constant; it involves conversations at the dinner table with my family and making everyday choices of a want vs. a need. I have participated in strikes, petitions and presentations about climate change. I am learning more about the public health and social impacts of climate change, too--how racism and migration are part of the climate crisis, as we are all interconnected. I work every day to make better choices and I share what I learn and know with others.

With regards to the landscape, this is a hobby that keeps me motivated to learn more about each place I visit. Whose land was it? How is it being managed now? What can I learn from the prairie, forest or stream? Can I offer anything to the prairie, forest or stream?

Do you have an environmental wish for 2021?

My wish would be for people to understand the true cost of purchasing an item from a store or online. Knowing this "cost" could help people understand many more environmental issues and possibly stop some awful behaviors.

