



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
JANUARY 2020

"Trees have long been trying to reach us. But they speak on frequencies too low for people to hear." - Richard Powers

TUESDAY, January 28 at 7 p.m.
Water Quality in the Coulee Region
with Karl Green, UW-Extension
Ho-Chunk Three Rivers House
(8th & Main, La Crosse)



La Crosse County, who will discuss our region's leading water quality issues, what's being done, and what we can do to protect this precious resource.

Karl is a university professor, parent, outdoorsperson, and community collaborator involved with several diverse groups, from La Crosse Promise to La Crosse Partners in Learning to the La Crosse Urban Stormwater Group. ([www.lacrosseareawater](http://www.lacrosseareawater.com))

Everyone is welcome to this event. You need not be a Sierra Club member to participate. We will also introduce our new board, hear your ideas and hopes for the new year, and discuss plans for 2020. Refreshments will be provided!

Water is life, and the threat to clean water one of the top concerns of Coulee Region residents. Whether it's CAFO siting rules, blue green algae, flooding, phosphorous, PFAs, high capacity wells, or new water treatment standards, water issues require our understanding and constant attention.

On January 28, we'll welcome **Karl Green**, Community Natural Resource and Economic Development Agent for

Start the new year with a pledge to CLIMATE ACTION!

in 1959, Dr. Edward Teller warned the American Petroleum Institute and U.S. government officials attending his speech that burning fossil fuels emitted carbon dioxide into the atmosphere causing the Earth's climate to warm, polar ice caps to melt, and coastal cities to be inundated. That was 60 years ago. (www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/jan/01/on-its-hundredth-birthday-in-1959-edward-teller-warned-the-oil-industry-about-global-warming)

Countless papers, speeches, books, articles, testimonies, and movies later, we are rocketing past sustainable limits - CO2 levels of 350 ppm (we just passed 415 ppm) and a global temperature rise of no more than 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels (we are at about 1° already).

Last month, the 25th UN conference on climate change ended in failure because powerful interests, rich from a fossil fuel system, will not yield, not even for their own children. Our planet is in grave peril. Some climate experts say CO2 emissions must peak in 2020, but we continue to burn fossil fuels for fun and profit at every opportunity.

Writing in The Correspondent, environment reporter Eric Holthaus calls on us to get political. "It's not constructive to continue to pretend that polite compromise and incremental changes will save us." (thecorrespondent.com/195/the-un-climate-conference-has-failed-what-now/25815394605-31a939c0)

Every month, we will highlight ways we can, as individuals and members of communities, redouble our efforts to lower carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. This month, consider assessing your family's personal carbon footprint and make a plan to lower your emissions by at least 5 percent. This page, tinyurl.com/EIReduceCO2, will give you ideas and resources. Share your own ideas for our next newsletter. Email CRSierraClub@gmail.com.

Reminder: Enviro-Edu Grants!

The Coulee Region Sierra Club is offering **grants of up to \$200 for environmental education projects** involving young people at the elementary and middle school level.

The application and more details are available at tinyurl.com/CRSCGrantInfo. **The application deadline is JANUARY 5, 2020.** Please spread the word about this opportunity available to those in Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau and Vernon counties. If you have questions, please email CRSierraClub@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Thank you to Barb and Don Frank for hosting our annual holiday social on December 17. The food was great, the conversation enlightening, and the energy for making 2020 a great year for our environment, inspiring.

Join Our New CRSC (Online) Book Club!

In 2020, we will try to connect our large Coulee Region online through an environmental book club.

The *CRSC Enviro Book Club* is now open for your participation at [Goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com). To join, make a Goodreads account (or use one you already have), and visit tinyurl.com/CRSCBookClub.

We'll do one book a month, but if that's too much for you, skip one or two or go at your own pace. In addition to connecting our club members, this will be a chance for us to share and find new favorites.

You are welcome to set up a time to meet in person with friends and other community members. In-person groups may meet at a library or restaurant where internet access would allow you to use online comments as talking points and contribute your sub-group's ideas to the online club.

Let's try it! We can adjust logistics as we go along if needed. Our January and February books are set, but we want your suggestions for March and beyond. Please use this form (tinyurl.com/CRSCBookNom) to suggest a club book. Next month, we'll vote on March's book.

If your book is chosen, we'll include your brief description in the newsletter. At the very least, we'll end the year with twelve good books to read and share. We might even make some new online book club friends.

For January, Susan Colliton suggested **The Overstory** by Richard Powers. Good reading. See you online!

Board Elections

Thank you to everyone who voted and to those who volunteered to serve on the board in 2020! Thank you and congratulations to new board members **Veronica Bauer** and **Ned Gaztke**. Meet your board at our January meeting. Veronica and Ned will join current board members **Kathy Allen**, **Nancy Hartje**, **Maureen Kinney**, **Avery Van Gaard**, **Cathy Van Maren**, and **Pat Wilson**. Please email CRSierraClub@gmail.com if you have input, ideas, or suggestions.

Sierra Club 2020 Calendars!

We still have a few calendars! The calendars cost \$14.95 for the wall calendar and \$15.95 for the engagement book. Please order from Maureen Kinney: 608 784-9324/784-5678 or email maureen@johnsflaherty.com.

SIERRA CLUB NOTE AND HOLIDAY CARDS are available at store.sierraclub.org/calendars--cards-c28.aspx

A Tale of Trees

I doubt anyone could write a more inspired review of Richard Powers' powerful, timely novel, **The Overstory**, than the one by Barbara Kingsolver for the New York Times Book Review. I certainly won't attempt it. Instead, I will recommend Kingsolver's review, and *The Overstory*, to those who haven't yet taken the journey down the switch-back pathways of this remarkable, tree-lined novel. It is carved by Powers of the deepest heartwood -- ringed with resonance from human-designed mythological symbols of prosperity to today's human-driven environmental destruction. But trees are resilient beings, and fortunately smarter than we are in many respects. What better reading for the short, bare, cold days of winter than a novel about tall, green, growing things -- and the diverse, devoted human lives they direct and alter.

You'll find Kingsolver's review, "The Heroes of This Novel Are Centuries Old and 300 Feet Tall," at www.nytimes.com/2018/04/09/books/review/overstory-richard-powers.html. *The Overstory*, winner of the 2018 National Book Award and 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, is available at your favorite book source.

- Susan Colliton



The Sustainability Institute at Western Technical College invites businesses and organizations of the 7 Rivers Region to apply for their Spring 2020 cohort-based program that will provide participants with, “the inspiration, tools, and network they need to better implement and amplify their unique social and environmental impacts.” The program begins in March. See sustaininstitute.com/sustain for more information.

Monroe County CCTF

In September, the Monroe County board voted unanimously to recognize the dangers of climate change and begin to seek ways to protect county resources and residents through a new Climate Change Task Force. To support the county’s efforts, a new citizen group has formed, POWER (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources) is providing awareness and education through public meetings. A November 29 POWER meeting drew more than 75 citizens who heard from a variety of speakers and groups. Participants at a December CCTF meeting learned about the Flood Center at the University of Iowa. We hope to include more updates about this important group and find ways to connect climate change groups in the Coulee Region so we can share energy and ideas.

Kickapoo Reserve Events

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve near La Farge will host a Winter Festival on Saturday, January 11 and guided ice formations hikes on January 18 and 25. The reserve is a unique example of the driftless area ecoregion managed under a joint agreement between the State of Wisconsin and the Ho-Chunk Nation. Learn more at kvr.state.wi.us/events.

Position Available

The John Muir Chapter is looking for a campaign coordinator to work on campaigns, recruit and train volunteers, administer communications, and participate in equity, inclusion and justice initiatives. Read more about it at tinyurl.com/rugnytg.

Report on Water Conference

Dave and Donna Swanson sent information about the Discovery Farms Water Conference held in Wisconsin Dells on December 11. Discovery Farms is a Division of the University of Wisconsin Extension. The conference covered best farm practices for water protection, the Southwest Wisconsin water study, help for private well owners, and news about the Water Quality Task Force.

The Task Force update included news that the Assembly will recommend funding increases for county conservation positions, a nitrate pilot program, and more. A vote on the bill is expected in spring. Read more at tinyurl.com/DellsWaterConf. Keep up on area issues through reporting by Gillian Pomplun in the Crawford County Independent, www.independentscout.com.

January Water Lobby Day

Wisconsin Conservation Voters will join with others to host a special Clean Water Lobby Day in Madison on Thursday, January 30 from noon to 5 p.m. in the Madison Concourse Hotel and the State Capitol. “*The three major threats to our water quality are nitrate from ag pollution, the ‘forever chemicals’ called PFAs, and lead. ... We’re headed back to the State Capitol to speak directly with lawmakers who hold the future of our water quality in their hands.*” Learn more about the day and RSVP at conservationvoters.org/events/clean-water-lobby-day.

January Science Cafe - Water

The La Crosse Science Cafe will turn to water quality with a presentation by Stuart Giblin, the Mississippi River Water Quality Specialist for the Wisconsin DNR. His talk, “Water Quality and the Mississippi River - Past, Present, and Future,” will be held at JavaVino, 2311 State Road, La Crosse on Saturday, January 11 at 6:00 p.m. Read more: www.facebook.com/LaCrosseScienceCafe.

