



Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

JUNE 2020

"Uniformity is not nature's way. Diversity is nature's way." - Vandana Shiva

Sierra Club Statement on the Murder of George Floyd

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Contact: Lina Francis, lina.francis@sierraclub.org

Minneapolis, MN -- Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune and Kamau Wilkins, the Executive Committee Chair of the Sierra Club's Minnesota Chapter, issued the following statement on the murder of George Floyd. Over the course of the last 4 weeks, the Sierra Club has also issued statements condemning police brutality and the violent, racist killings of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. In July of 2019, the Sierra Club joined forces with a coalition of environmental justice and national environmental groups to release a just and equitable national climate platform that centers racial, climate and environmental justice to improve the public health and well-being of all communities.

"We all deserve to thrive in safe communities, yet the inhumane, daily assaults on Black and Brown people directly threaten our ability to maintain a healthy planet. The cruel, public lynching of George Floyd is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We cannot expect to come together to protect the planet if racism continues to tear us apart.

"The Sierra Club is committed to confronting the inequality embedded into our society that has allowed these tragedies to persist. If we want to create communities that are truly safe, just and equitable, we must continue fighting for the humanity and the dignity of all people."

On Wednesday, June 17 at 11 a.m., the national Sierra Club will host an **online forum, Solidarity and Racial Justice**, to discuss the intersectionality between the environmental and racial justice movements, and the mutual aid work happening to support Black communities. Chris Novaton, Training Coordinator of Sierra Student Coalition will lead the discussion. Sign up for the event at tinyurl.com/SCSolidarity

You can't have climate change without sacrifice zones, and you can't have sacrifice zones without disposable people, and you can't have disposable people without racism.

- from *Racism is Killing the Planet* by Hop Hopkins [www.sierraclub.org/sierra/racism-killing-planet]

June 30: Virtual Meeting

We will try an **online meeting on Tuesday, June 30 at 7 p.m.** Hear from members around the region and learn what the state Sierra Club is doing to prepare for the very important presidential and state and local elections in the fall. Anyone in the Coulee Region group is welcome to join. Details have not yet been finalized but will be emailed (or given by phone) to those who sign up on this form: tinyurl.com/CRSC-630meeting. If you would like to report on an environmental project or initiative in your community, use this link, too. If you are not online, please call 608-315-2693 and leave a message. We'll contact you with the phone number to call to participate in this online meeting. We will use a platform that will allow people to join with their computer, tablet, smart phone, or "dumb" phone.

Toni Morrison said it best, in a 1975 speech: "The very serious function of racism ... is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being." As a marine biologist and policy nerd, building community around climate solutions is my life's work. But I'm also a black person in the United States of America. I work on one existential crisis, but these days I can't concentrate because of another.

- from *I'm a Black climate expert. Racism derails our efforts to save the planet. Stopping climate change is hard enough, but racism only makes it harder* by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson [www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/03/im-black-climate-scientist-racism-derails-our-efforts-save-planet]

SOLAR SUMMER in La Crosse

Grow Solar La Crosse Residents of La Crosse County may learn about a **new solar panel group buy program** being offered this year through the Midwest Renewable Energy Association. An **online Solar Power Hour will be hosted by the Coulee Region Sierra Club from 3 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, June 30.** A solar group buy program offers:

- information and education about group buy process
- free, no-obligation solar site assessments and estimates for costs and savings
- discounts on solar panels (the more participants, the greater the discounts) for those who move forward
- professional installation and system education.

To sign up for the June 30 presentation, please go to tinyurl.com/CRSC-SolarLaX. If this time doesn't work for you, find other sessions at growsolarlacrosse.org.

Solar on La Crosse Schools (SOLS) is a new group forming to work with the La Crosse School District and parents, students, educators, and residents of the city to press for putting clean renewable energy on school property. The group is just getting started and is currently mapping out its plan and strategy. If you are interested in being connected and helping with this effort, please call 608-315-2693 and leave a message.

The City of La Crosse will begin installing solar panels on some public buildings this summer.

Two La Crosse County School Districts are installing solar this summer thanks to the **Solar on Schools program offered by the Couillard Foundation.** West Salem Middle and Hamilton Elementary in La Crosse are each installing solar panels through this program this year. visit www.couillardsolarfoundation.org/solar-on-schools for more information.

Citizen Action of Wisconsin is working to help Wisconsin homeowners save money on utility bills, reduce carbon emissions, increase the value of their homes, and build green sector jobs across the state. Their green bank partners offer homeowners financing for energy efficient upgrades such as new insulation, air sealing, new windows/doors, new HVAC units, and solar panels. This program is a very important first step in building a better, greener economy in Wisconsin. They hope to upgrade 100 homes before the end of the year with 25 currently in process. Learn more at <https://secure.everyaction.com/2KONh-lotU0mscFkKV5kAw2>

The City of La Crosse offers housing rehabilitation and renovation assistance which can be used to upgrade a home's energy efficiency. Reducing energy needs is a first step in transitioning to renewable energy. Visit www.cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/departments/community-development-and-housing/housing-rehabilitation to learn more about the program and eligibility.

Programs and Initiatives

Viroqua Plastic Free is kicking off a summer letter writing campaign to stores, local organizations, manufacturers of products, and producers of plastic to encourage their use of recyclable and sustainable products instead. Visit viroquaplasticfree.org for simple instructions, sample letters, and facts about plastic pollution.

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GROW La Crosse and **Local Food Group** encouraged people to start garden seedlings this spring. More than 600 bedding plants were handed out at school lunch stops and community gardens in May. GROW also supervises volunteers at several school gardens over the summer. The City of La Crosse has set up four new Community Victory Gardens around the city. Volunteers plant and maintain with weekly produce giveaways planned through fall. These projects will increase availability of healthy and accessible food for city residents and improve community resilience.

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The **Coalition for More Responsible Transportation (CMRT)** is hosting a series of webinars to discuss state transportation challenges and ideas. On Thursday, June 18, a webinar on [The Last Mile Challenge](#) will look at gaps in communities' transit systems. Register (free) at tinyurl.com/CMRT-LastMile. On Thursday, July 9, the topic will be [Transportation and Racial Justice](#). Register at tinyurl.com/CMRT-RacialJustice. Both webinars will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Even today there are places where there are rules, that might be for legitimate reasons (it's not, like, Jim Crow segregation) but they still sort of send a message about who belongs and who doesn't. ... I'm thinking of this pool just up the street in D.C. ... It's a public pool and there's this big sign out in front that basically says what you can and can't wear. And one of the things you can't wear to the pool is jeans shorts. I get that there's a reason for that, right. If you're wearing your jeans all day, you can't go into the pool with them. But, if you ever go to a pool in southern California, lots of Latino kids are in the pool wearing their jeans shorts. So, if you see a sign like that, it's kind of saying, 'Oh, this isn't really for you.'

- from *Code Switch Podcast, Episode 2: Being 'Outdoorsy' When You're Black Or Brown* [www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/06/08/480932447/the-code-switch-podcast-episode-2-made-for-you-and-me]

"Dudley Edmondson has long had to deal with people calling the police on him while out in nature. As a black birdwatcher and professional nature photographer, his presence with a camera can arouse suspicion among white people. He has had people accuse him of being drunk, or on drugs, or taking photos of people's homes in order to come back later and rob them."

- from *The realities of being a Black bird-watcher* by Eric Levenson [www.cnn.com/2020/05/27/us/birdwatching-black-christian-cooper/index.html]

Stewardship Business Alliance

Crawford Stewardship Project has launched the Stewardship Business Alliance; a network of farmers, businesses, entrepreneurs, and job creators united in stewarding water, soil, and a healthy environment. "The foundation of a diverse rural economy is a sustainable and profitable relationship with our ecosystems and the natural world." If your business is interested in being a part of this initial phase; please reach out to Eli Mandel, 608-632-4213, or emandel@crawfordstewardship.org,



It seems that almost anywhere researchers look, there is more evidence of deep racial disparities in exposure to environmental hazards. In fact, the idea of environmental justice—or the degree to which people are treated equally and meaningfully involved in the creation of the human environment—was crystallized in the 1980s with the aid of a landmark study illustrating wide disparities in the siting of facilities for the disposal of hazardous waste. Leaders in the environmental justice movement have posited—in places as prestigious and rigorous as United Nations publications and numerous peer-reviewed journals—that environmental racism exists as the inverse of environmental justice, when environmental risks are allocated disproportionately along the lines of race, often without the input of the affected communities of color.

- from *Trump's EPA Concludes Environmental Racism Is Real* by Vann R. Newkirk II [www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/the-trump-administration-finds-that-environmental-racism-is-real/554315]