



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
MARCH 2020

*"Grieving for what is happening to the planet also now brings me gratitude for the smallest, most mundane things."
Dahr Jamail, The End of Ice*

TUESDAY, MARCH 31 at 7 p.m.
2020: The Year of Electric Vehicles
with Jeff Springer, Dairyland Power Co-op
Ho-Chunk Three Rivers House
(8th & Main, La Crosse)

electric vehicles from private cars to trains, trucks, and buses. We'll also learn what the CRSC board has planned for the new year, talk about upcoming events, and let members know how they can get more involved.

March 3 and 7 - Aldo Leopold

The annual La Crosse area Aldo Leopold celebration will include an evening with a Teddy Roosevelt reenactor, a talk about "Birder in Chief - Teddy Roosevelt's Bird Conservation Legacy," and a hike led by UWL students.

At 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3, Joe Wiegand will perform as Teddy Roosevelt at Viterbo University's Fine Arts Center. On March 7, events will be held at the Brice Prairie Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitors Center. The events are free and open to the public. More details may be found at www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/leopold-celebration.

Since 2004, Wisconsin has designated the first weekend in March as a time to honor Aldo Leopold and his conservation legacy. The local event is planned by a group including the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics and Leadership, Friends of the Marsh, Friends of the Refuge, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitor Center, Brice Prairie Conservation Association, and Viterbo University.

A fundraiser for the Friends of the Refuge - Pools 7 and 8 will feature Mr. Wiegand as Teddy Roosevelt at a dinner at the Cargill Room at the Waterfront Restaurant on Wednesday, March 4. Ticket info is available at www.for78.org

E-Vehicles are cleaner, more efficient, easier and cheaper to maintain than fossil fuel vehicles, and they are key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Why do industry analysts call 2020 the Year of the Electric Car? What are the EV facts, opportunities, and challenges for individuals, businesses, and communities? We'll hear from Jeff Springer, Manager, Energy Efficiency and Technical Services at Dairyland Power Cooperative and talk about how we can support the important shift to

March 28 Climate Action Fest

The Sierra Club will table at the fifth annual Climate Action Festival hosted by Coulee Region Climate Alliance. For more information, visit the event page: tinyurl.com/2020caf



The Coulee Region's 5th Annual

Climate Action Festival

Saturday, March 28, 1:00-4:00
at First Congregational Church
2503 Main Street, La Crosse

Local groups and activists will be present to show what they're doing to combat climate change and to share actions **YOU** can take to make a difference!

Find our event on Facebook by searching for "Climate Action Festival 2020"

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."
- Jane Goodall



Solar on Schools

The Couillard Solar Foundation (CSF) established the Solar on Schools program to accelerate the expansion of solar power among K-12 schools in Wisconsin.

In partnership with Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), Solar on Schools aims to subsidize solar installations on at least 100 Wisconsin public schools over the next four years. The aim of this program is to show students how clean, affordable energy can be produced on their school and get communities working together to not only reduce emissions from the burning of fossil fuels but also to reduce school district money spent on utilities.

Learn more at www.couillardsolarfoundation.org/solar-on-schools/

A group of La Crosse area students, parents, and community members is forming a local CLEAN SCHOOLS group to urge local school districts to commit to installing solar on their school buildings and grounds. If you would like to get involved, please plan to attend the first meeting on Thursday, March 5 from 5 to 6 p.m. at JavaVino in La Crosse OR email crsierraclub@gmail.com.

Solar for Good

RENEW Wisconsin's Solar for Good initiative fosters the expansion of solar power among mission-based nonprofits and houses of worship in Wisconsin. Through a partnership with Couillard Solar Foundation, RENEW Wisconsin awards solar panels to nonprofit organizations, helping them switch to clean, renewable, solar energy. Solar for Good also offers small grants for technical assistance to get projects started and see them through to success.

Solar for Good has already helped over 70 nonprofits save money on their electric bills that they can reinvest in their missions.

The Spring 2020 grant cycle will open on March 1. Applications are due by April 1 with awards announced by April 15. Get more details about past projects and application information at www.renewwisconsin.org/solarforgood/



WI Conservation Congress

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress is seeking nominations for organizations, clubs (either local or statewide), and educators who have made a significant contribution to conservation in the past year. Nominations are due March 26, 2020. The nomination form is at dnr.wi.gov/about/wcc/award.html

Environmental Health Meeting

The annual Wisconsin Environmental Health Network Conference, *Making the Connection: Environmental Health in Wisconsin*, on Friday, March 6 is focused on helping to educate health professionals and the public about environmental health. Hosted by the John Muir Chapter Sierra Club, the conference will be held at the Health Sciences Learning Center, 750 Highland Ave., in Madison from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m. Register online at www.wehnonline.org.

Sierra #2003

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Coulee Region Sierra Club, 620 S 23rd Street,
La Crosse, WI 54601

Citizen Action Alerts

Citizen Action of Wisconsin's Rural-Urban Driftless Co-op Organizer, Ben Wilson, announced recently that Vernon Electric Co-op will roll out "on bill" financing to help members make energy efficiency upgrades to their homes to reduce carbon emissions and save money on monthly utility bills. If you are a Vernon Electric Co-op member, please attend the spring membership meeting on March 21st. You can thank the co-op for participating and learn how to sign up. RSVP: tiny.cc/VEC321Mtg

Members of other co-ops are encouraged to attend their spring membership meetings and ask their boards to participate in this program. You can get more details about the program and about upcoming co-op meetings from amymarie311@gmail.com,

Citizen Action of Wisconsin also wants to help everyone start using their spending power to let polluters know that we demand action to save our environment and fight climate change! Citizen Action's organizing director Kevin Kane is designing a campaign to help people move their money away from polluters. If you can help design the campaign, please schedule a 30-minute phone call at citizen-action-of-wisconsin.appointlet.com

Soil Health & Diversity

By CRSC members, Dave and Donna Swanson

Nearly 70 farmers and others interested in soil health and farming gathered on February 22 at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore to hear about "Soil Health & Diversity: Keeping Farms Economically and Ecologically Sustainable" The program featured Scott Mericka of Grass Dairy LLC, Dodgeville, and Mike Miles from Anathoth Community Farm in Luck.

Scott and Mike described the farming practices they use that improve soil health, retain soil and water on the landscape, and provide a comfortable, healthy environment for their animals. Each presenter also discussed how they have diversified their farm income to provide a more stable future for their operations. Following the presentations the audience asked questions and shared some of their own experiences.

Hosted by Grant County Rural Stewardship with funding from the Food, Faith & Farming Network, the event was co-sponsored by Crawford Stewardship Project, Valley Stewardship Network, Wisconsin Farmers Union, Grant County Farm Bureau and Organic Valley.

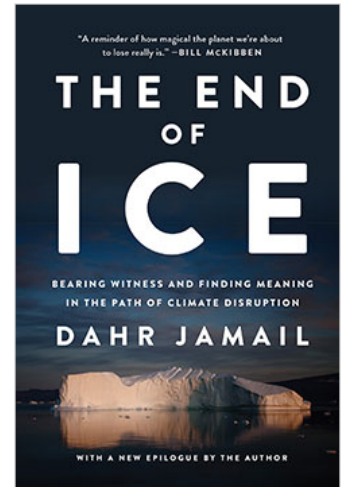
UWL Service Learning Students

Hi, my name is **Marc Carstens** and I am a senior graduating in May 2020 at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse majoring in Communication Studies with a Broadcast and Digital Media emphasis and minoring in Environmental Studies. I will incorporate skills I have learned from both my major and minor at UWL in CRSC blog posts. I enjoy watching and playing sports. My favorite sport to play in high school was baseball, but I still like to play basketball and golf for fun with family and friends. I also enjoy nature and being outside hiking, watching for wildlife and I have traveled to many national parks with my family over the years and always have enjoyed those family vacations. I am passionate about environmental issues, particularly global warming and in my blog posts through writing, images and in some of my posts audio podcasting research and discuss topics I find of particular importance to discuss in my blog posts. Also, I enjoy talking about renewable energy and the importance of clean water, anything to do with environmental sustainability I enjoy talking about with others. I have experience with podcasting from classes I have taken at UWL and I have my own radio show on the UWL student campus run radio station called RAQ Radio where I talk about sports. I hope to incorporate these skills into blog posts I create for the Sierra Club.

CRSC Book Club

We have finished our first book, Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Overstory*. We have decided to spend two months per book to give more time for reading, pondering, and discussing. Our all-online book club is open to all, but we would especially like to invite Coulee Region group members. To join our Goodreads group, please use this link: tiny.cc/CRSCBookClub

Our book for March-April is Dahr Jamail's *The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption*. Dahr is an award winning war and climate reporter and this book was a finalist for the 2020 PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award and named one of Smithsonian magazine's Ten Best Science Books of 2019. Read more about it at thenewpress.com/books/end-of-ice



Hello, my name is **Carly**. I'm a senior at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. I'll graduate this spring with BA in English: writing and rhetoric and minors in environmental studies, photography, and psychology. I'll be working with the Coulee Region Sierra Club in my final semester, in the form of a service learning project for my Environmental Capstone class. This will lead my transition from the classroom to the real world. My vision for the Coulee Region Sierra Club is to bring back a John Muir-like spirit of environmental awareness, through nature journals and photography. I will be traveling weekly to different city and state parks in the Driftless region. At each location I'll slow down to listen and observe the dramas that play out in different near-by ecosystems. My insights will be shared through photography and thoughtful writings. Heated environmental politics on the morning news have drowned out the song of the mourning dove. 'Environmental' and 'issues' seems to roll off the tongue too easily. To quote Sierra Club's founder, John Muir, "*I am losing precious days. I am degenerating into a machine for making money. I am learning nothing in this trivial world of men. I must break away and get out into the mountains to learn the news.*" I hope to share this news with those who wish to read it.





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Pledge to CLIMATE ACTION: ENERGY USE!

Wisconsin relies heavily on harmful fossil fuels. Nearly half of our electricity comes from coal, and another quarter comes from gas. Wisconsin lacks fossil fuel resources of its own, so we spend \$14.4 billion a year importing energy from other states and countries. To address this disaster, we need to transition to clean, renewable energy sources. Inside this newsletter are programs available to help us reduce our home energy use. Changing bulbs, turning off lights, and using Energy Star appliances are a first step, but we have to go deeper.

Energy efficiency is the cheapest, easiest way to make an immediate difference. Replacing an old appliance with an Energy Star one, adding attic insulation, and sealing gaps will help. Consider ditching or reducing use of your clothes dryer. Use power strips and turn things off when they aren't being used - even computers and printers. Work to reduce air conditioner use. Get a home energy audit. Download home energy use data and track it. Pledge to reduce your energy use by a set percentage every month or year. Check out these tips and ideas at www.energystar.gov/campaign/home

Renewables are coming. Solar prices continue to drop. Battery technology continues to improve. Small solar products - portable solar chargers for your phone, laptop, and other small electronics are inexpensive and widely available. Solar/Wind clothes dryers (aka clotheslines) are easy to install and use. Solar panel prices continue to drop. If your site is suitable, consider having a site assessment and estimate. The City/County of La Crosse will soon be hosting a solar group buy program, and initiatives described inside may help others in the area.

Advocacy No matter what individuals do in their homes, the big differences will be achieved when businesses, schools, and communities make changes. Ask your school district to sign up for the Couillard Foundation's Solar on Schools program. Lobby your municipality to put solar on government buildings. Start a Ready for 100 group in your town or city. Advocate for a community solar garden. Start a Renewable Energy discussion and action team.

Volunteer Night

Thanks to those who came to the Myrick Park Center on Tuesday night to take part in our very first Coulee Region Sierra Club Volunteer Night. Cassie Steiner and Katie Hogan brought lots of tasks for people to do from data entry to graphics and social media updates. Some people wrote letters and we also welcomed suggestions for our display boards. We met several new members and hope to build on this night's success with future volunteer nights. If you would be interested in helping to host or set up an April or summer volunteer event, email crsierraclub@gmail.com.

