

Four Lakes Sierran

The Newsletter of the Four Lakes Group Sierra Club

Winter 2015

2015 - Let's Set it Right

A Call to Action

2014 was a year fraught with many disappointments, from PSC backed regressive rate increases by MGE and two other Wisconsin utilities, to attacks on transit, expanded tar sands and Bakken oil transport through Wisconsin, added water quality threats from CAFOs and high capacity wells, and continued iron and frac sands mining concerns. We won't even talk about the election results.

It was also a year where we may have turned corners on many fronts. The utilities received strong pushback to their rate proposals, with the PSC receiving unheard of numbers of comments. Plans by Walker, the legislature and the DOT are under increased fire for prioritizing new highway construction while costs skyrocket, infrastructure crumbles, and transit needs are increasingly poorly met. Enbridge plans to expand the flow of tar sands line met strong opposition, and they face a major battle over a proposed new pipeline. Rail transit of these toxic materials is also receiving increased scrutiny. The DNR lack of oversight of CAFOs is being looked at askance by the courts, and Dane County passed a high capacity well resolution. Despite the state legislature bowing to every GTAC request, the Penokee mine is running into increasing impediments, and its future is dim. Likewise, frac sands mining faces increased opposition and local moratoriums.

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Chair's Corner

The winter season is a natural time to reflect on the recent past while looking forward to the promise of a coming new year. 2014 was very busy as with many volunteers helping us with education and outreach on local water and energy issues. I expect 2015 to be just as busy and productive but our success depends on member volunteers who generously give their time and energy.

One highlight of 2014 was the first Four Lakes Group fundraiser held in many years. Liz Wessel hosted this event at her home on Madison's west side where we watched the Packers play the Buffalo Bills and enjoyed great food and beer donated by Madison's Ale Asylum. Thanks to Liz and her husband, Bill for making their beautiful home available. Thanks to the many volunteers who pitched in to make the event successful despite the Packers inexplicable poor play. And thanks to the donors who helped us raise needed funds for the important 2015 conservation campaigns.

I'm proud that the Sierra Club has taken a strong stance in support of a much more inclusive movement that recognizes environmental injustice. The Club's stance is in response to the spike in racial violence and injustice in 2014 and is a statement of solidarity for communities of color that almost always more directly impacted by pollution. We have much more work to do to reach the goal of a more inclusive and color-blind movement but recognizing injustice when we see and encounter it is an important beginning.

We've scheduled lots of activities at the beginning of this year that we hope will interest members. This newsletter includes details on great hiking and education outings, along with opportunities to volunteer this year. Our annual Volunteer Appreciation event is scheduled for Thursday, February 26th at the Brocach Tavern in downtown Madison.

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MGE: Determining Our Community's Future

Part of the die is cast. The day before Thanksgiving the Public Service Commission granted MGE's request for increased customer connection fees. The Walker majority PSC voted 2:1 for MGE to raise customer's fixed electric fees by 82% to \$19/month and natural gas fees by 79% to \$21.87/month, resulting in an increase in fixed rates of more than \$200 per year for residential customers. Nor were businesses spared large fixed fee increases. Despite their reduction in risks, MGE's rate of return was not lowered. While MGE may have been thankful, for many customers the PSC decision seems more like the seasonal bird.

However, thanks to RePower Madison's efforts and the community's response opposing MGE's regressive billing scheme, MGE withdrew their original atrocious proposal (fixed electric rates of \$48.66 in 2016 and \$68.36 in 2017 for electricity), and agreed to hold a public listening process in 2015. **It is absolutely critical that Sierrans and the entire community turn out to have our voices heard. Without public pressure, MGE will not change its course.** There are many reasons this is needed.

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SIERRA CLUB
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Let's Set it Right - a Call to Action

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Let's not forget too that the largest climate rally ever was held in NYC just a few months ago, including 3 busloads from Madison supported by the Four Lakes Group. The US and China have an agreement for curtailing greenhouse gases, and the EPA is proposing strong new emission regulations. We also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness act. Locally, another 198 acres of land were preserved at Muir Park, John Muir's boyhood home, to remind people of the life and times of the founder of the Sierra Club.

Looking forward

What 2015 will bring will depend in part of you. It's your opportunity to engage on the issues that matter to you and provide a world that is healthy and secure for future generations. Working with the John Muir Chapter and the Four Lakes Group, we can show leadership, move ourselves off of toxic fossil fuels, and restore social and environmental sanity. The Sierra Club provides support and training to accomplish our mission, and has a track record of successes when we dedicate ourselves to working together.

You can help effect the change you want. Below are several (but not our only) opportunities. To get involved, or if you have thoughts or questions, contact the person(s) listed below for each activity.

MGE Public Process

MGE was granted their regressive rate increases by the Public Service Commission. (See page 1.) However, RePower Madison, with the support of the Four Lakes Group and others, led a strong public pushback, resulting in MGE agreeing to a public listening process in 2015. The Four Lakes Group could send MGE a strong message that they need to act in accord with the community's priorities and policies if they are to be our community energy company. To help organize our response to MGE, please contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 or d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

Transit

Transportation is a major factor in climate change, with emissions a major health issue, but it also has strong social ramifications for many people's mobility and access to services. However, mass transit as well as other automobile alternatives, are lagging needs, as we prioritize our transportation dollars for new roads. Bus Rapid Transit is on the radar in Madison, but many other areas also need better services. Are you being well served where you live? Get active on the transit front by contacting Elizabeth Ward at 608-256-0565 or elizabeth.ward@sierraclub.org.

Water Sentinels

People may discuss peak oil or peak other fossil fuels, but discussions of peak water are lagging. If you're concerned about clean, healthy and plentiful safe water supplies, and educating people about the issue, please consider joining our Water Sentinels team (see page 6) that is a joint effort of the Four Lakes Group and First Unitarian Church. Please contact Liz Wessel at 608-238-9934 or lizmwessel@gmail.com.

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Mining

We may value our precious Wisconsin natural resources, but so do many others who wish to remove them! The Penokee mine tops a list of bad mining proposals Wisconsin has seen. We've also become frac sands central, with many firms looking to extract mass quantities of our silica sands. Both these mining options will, or are causing considerable harm to people and the environment, and must be stopped. To learn more and get involved, contact Dave Blouin at 608-233-8455 or burroak15@gmail.com.

RAH

We've had success with our Recycling Away from Home for years, and would like to expand its reach to more events, and its scope to composting, and to elevate discussion on a City of Madison digester. If you'd like to RAH, contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 or d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

ICO

There are many children, even here in Madison, with a nature deficit disorder from lack of exposure to our natural environment. The Four Lakes Inner City Youth Outings program has stepped up in a big way to address this issue and take kids on fun and educational outings. You can help by contacting Ron Haeger at 608-444-0612 or rhaeger@gmail.com.

Outings

Could you be the next John Muir, Bill Bryson (A Walk in the Woods), or Ansel Adams? Or perhaps you just enjoy biking, kayaking or other outdoor activities. If you enjoy these things and would like to invite others to share your passions, perhaps being an outings leader is an option to consider. Please contact Kathy Mulbrandon at kmulb@charter.net to inquire further.

You get to choose what you care about, take a stake in things that give you personal satisfaction, connect with others who are of a similar mind, and provide for a future that we all want. Please don't sit on the sidelines. You'll feel better for being involved – and so will future generations.

Thank you for your dedication to and support for the Sierra Club.

Sierra Social Media Mavens Needed

Are you constantly connecting via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social media? Would you like to do more to share your environmental concerns or passions? We are in need of people who can offer some time on an ongoing regular basis to provide posts and share info via social media and keep people up on our issues and concerns, and sometimes provide alerts on actions to take or places to be at. You may also have local items to share that don't get attention, especially if you're not in Madison.

This is an important, but unfortunately underutilized communications avenue for our Four Lakes Group. Anyone who is willing to help us on a regular basis would be greatly appreciated. This needn't be a major time commitment, just some regularity on staying up on Sierra stuff so we can keep spreading the word on key issues and events. However, if you are someone with writing skills, we do have a blog that is another option to write about issues in more depth.

If any of the above fits for you, contact Lacinda Athen at lacinda.athen@gmail.com.

Winter/Spring 2015 Outings

For all outings, wear weather and activity appropriate clothing, and good footwear. For work outings, wear work clothes and gloves. Bring fluids to drink, and a snack or food, and sun screen, a hat, and insect repellent if needed. If carpooling, please be a little early. Please contact the leader to RSVP, if you have questions, or with concerns about weather and to cancel. Check the Four Lakes Group web site or Facebook page for updates or added events.

Leader Contact Info

Lacinda Athen, lacinda.athen@gmail.com or 608-274-7870

Don Ferber, d_ferber@sbcglobal.net or 608-222-9376

Kathy Mulbrandon, kmulb@charter.net

David Smith, smithdc75@yahoo.com or 608-233-1210



Tuesday, February 3, 6:15 pm - Full Moon Ski/Snowshoe/Hike Prairie Moraine County Park

Enjoy a winter evening ski/snowshoe/hike under a full moon at Prairie Moraine County Park southeast of Verona. We'll ski/snowshoe/hike through prairies and forest at Dane County's most visible sections of the glacial terminal moraine that you can enjoy on a (hopefully!) full moon night. Families are welcome!

Take Hwy 18/151 southwest of Madison to exit 79 (Cty PB). Turn left on PB and go .7 miles south to Prairie Moraine parking lot on the left. Meet by the IAT kiosk. Contact Kathy Mulbrandon for more info.

Saturday, April 4, 10 am – Spring Hike - New Glarus Woods

Join us for a 4 - 5 mile hike through prairies and forests at New Glarus Woods State Park. The hike is moderate with rolling hills and ravines and a great opportunity to observe and learn about spring ephemerals just as they are starting to bloom and trees are budding out.

Madison carpooling meets at 9 a.m. at the west Hill Farms State office parking lot, 4802 Sheboygan Ave. If driving, meet at the parking lot off State Hwy 69, 2 miles south of New Glarus at 10 a.m. A State Park sticker is required for cars. Lunch optional at a local Swiss restaurant afterward if interested. Contact David Smith to RSVP or for more info.

Tuesday, May 12, 6:30 pm - Night Time Spring Hike Ice Age Trail Junction Verona Segment

Join us for an easy 3-4 mile hike through mostly prairie on the Ice Age Trail in Verona. If the weather cooperates, we should be hiking with a lovely moonlight. It's a great time to learn about prairie plants and see the prairies and woods in bloom and should be before most mosquitoes.

Take Hwy PD west of Verona Rd toward Hwy M. The parking lot is on just past the High Point Rd stoplight near the top of the hill on the south side of PD. Bring a flashlight or headlamp. Contact Kathy Mulbrandon for more info.

Streambank Restoration – Dates to be determined Falk Wells Wildlife Area on the Sugar River (south of Verona)

We'll be having several outings along with Dane County Parks and Trout Unlimited and our Water Sentinels to continue the restoration and streambank clearing work on the Sugar River. It's great for learning about native and invasive plants, streambank management and fish habitat. Plus, you'll have fun and get good exercise. We'll likely be burning brush piles as well, so cooking out will be an option.

Stay tuned on our web site and contact Don Ferber if you want to be informed as soon as dates are set.

Cruisin' for Cuisine Dinner Series

Cruisin' is a rotating social dinner group that visits local restaurants in and around Madison for an evening of conversation and camaraderie. Each meal we do separate checks, so you can order what you like, and this is open to non-members, so anyone can feel free to join us and bring a friend.

RSVP to lacinda.athen@gmail.com or

608-274-7870 and she will provide the dinner time.

- Wednesday, January 14 - [Sujco](#), 10 N Livingston Street, Madison
- Tuesday, February 17 - [Oliver's Public House](#), 2540 University Avenue, Madison
- Thursday, March 19 - [El Dorado Grill](#), 744 Williamson Street, Madison
- Thursday, April 9 - [Lao Lang Xaan](#), 2098 Atwood Avenue, Madison



Thank you to our Donors



The Sierra Club – Four Lakes Group thanks these generous donors for their contributions at our Packers v. Bills game fundraiser on December 14.

Lacinda Athen and Marshall Mundt, Judi Duncan, Mary Jenny. Guy Lofts, Mary Lutz, Lee Maddox, Kathy Mulbrandon, Richard Reinke, Theresa Stabo and Jeff Schimpff, Eric Uram, Don Wichert, Carousel Bayrd, Bruce Jamison, Michael Vickerman, Kate Blumenthal,

Katharine Odell, Pam Porter, Bill and Liz Wessel, Phyllis and Jim Athen, Don Ferber, Gary Werner, Ellen Taylor-Powell, Beverly Speer, Dave Blouin and Claire Gervais, and Don Hammes.

Chair's Corner

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This fun event gives us a chance to recognize our volunteers in a great setting with good food and drink, plus discuss plans for our 2015 issue campaigns. Please see page 8 for details.

2015 is also an election year for local elections and members interested in Sierra Club involvement in the political process are invited to help out by joining our Political Committee. Our endorsement is an important honor sought after by many candidates and only those who are strong advocates for the environment receive Sierra Club approval. Once endorsed, we work to help elect these candidates so they can make a difference in public policy. Please contact me if you're interested.

A new local issue with important state and even national impacts is that the MGE rate case. Our conservation committee Chair, Don Ferber, has been a leader in the effort to oppose the costly increases to utility users proposed by MGE and recently passed by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Much more work remains to be done and volunteers can help by joining in our efforts to support and work through Madison RePower. See pages 1 and 5 for details and contact information.

Our Water Sentinels program has quickly become one our most successful volunteer program. The Water Sentinels volunteer team is working to learn more about our local water resources and how to protect them. We live in a region that is water-wealthy but one that is also under constant threats from environmental degradation. The team will be working to help educate all of us about these threats along with ways for us to protect these resources. Look for an update on their activities on page 6.

Please take time to fill out your election ballot for Executive Committee members on page 8. The ballot includes two returning Committee members in Beverly Speer, and me, along with a new candidate, Judi Duncan. You may also write in candidates. Serving on the Executive Committee is another important member function. Committee members are all volunteer leaders who serve as administrators of our finances and resources while setting our policy and advocacy goals. We're always looking for more interested members considering working from the inside to keep the Group vital and involved.

Please contact me if you're interested in taking a more active role with the Group. There are myriad ways you can help that don't involve a lot of time or resources. And as always, please give me a shout if you have any questions or concerns. See you on the trails!

Autumn Assembly

Autumn Assembly you say? But it's winter! True, but in 2015, the Four Lakes Group will host the John Muir Chapter's annual Autumn Assembly, and it's never too early to get a jump on the planning. The date and location are already picked out – October 2 - 4 at Camp Perlstein in the Wisconsin Dells – so what we really need is a team of volunteers to help us organize this fun event.

As the host group, we want our annual statewide meeting to be a special event that will attract Sierrans from around the state, and offer interesting speakers, fun outings, and opportunities for learning, engagement and sharing. With such a wide variety of activities, this provides a great opportunity for you to help us organize this fun event, even if you

have no experience. If you have an interest, or are just curious and want to find out



more, we invite you to join us at our first meeting on January 21, location to be determined. Please contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net or 608-222-9376 if you are interested or have questions.

Camp Perlstein is secluded away in a scenic setting on Lake Blass in the Dells, and offers rustic, but very comfortable accommodations. More information can be found at

<http://www.gojcc.org/perlstein-resort/>. We'll also be taking advantage of some special features or places in the area with outings, and we'd welcome assistance in planning those events as well.

Most of all, we want you to attend our 2015 Autumn Assembly, so please mark it on your calendar and stay tuned for updates.

- MGE's original proposal was beyond comprehension
- MGE's proposals and the rate increases are socially and environmentally regressive
- No need existed for this billing scheme that hurts the poor and rewards the rich
- MGE admitted that their rate restructure would be a disincentive to clean energy
- The rate changes were blamed on distributed solar energy, rather than MGE's addiction to coal
- MGE has contracts on coal to 2038 and beyond that make up 70% of their electric power
- MGE refused to withdraw the rate case despite strong community opposition and over 1100 comments to the PSC opposing this change

What you can do

We can either accept more anti conservation, anti low income, and anti solar fees in the future (in fact, PSC Chair Phil Montgomery basically instructed MGE to stay the course), or clearly demonstrate to MGE that our community will not tolerate this path. To take effective action, you can:

1. Join the team the Four Lakes Group will be forming to actively oppose MGE's direction
2. Attend hearings and voice your opinion; bring friends and neighbors
3. Discuss this issue with community organizations you are involved with and have them weigh in
4. Sign RePower web site petitions, such as the current one asking for a full and open public process and circulate petitions to get more signatures
5. Donate to the Four Lakes Group or RePower Madison to support our efforts

Contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 or d_ferber@sbcglobal.net to take a stake in our energy future. We'll keep you posted via our Enews, web site and Facebook page. The RePower Madison web site is a good place for information or to sign up for emails.

What you should know

Fixed Rate Increases

MGE claims fixed rate increases are based on fixed costs (administration, power plants, transmission, distribution) and need to be increased to be fair. However, having high use customers pay the same fixed rates is not fair. Public policy (and formerly MGE's!) is to support progressive rate structures, ensure affordable heat and power to those of lesser means, and reward low energy users. MGE claims they do not make public policy, but their rate increases fly in the face of this. They claim the rate restructuring will provide more control over your energy bill, but in reality, you'll have less. With utilities guaranteed a rate of return, claims that fixed rate increases are needed are bogus.

Fixed rate increases disproportionately hurt low energy users, many who are low or fixed income, and include minorities,

elderly and students, and who will pay more, while high energy users pay less. Along with lowered energy use rates, this creates a disincentive to save energy or install solar.

The Solar Threat

MGE's filing to the PSC begins with talk about the threat of distributed solar energy. (Our utility sees a lower cost clean energy future as a threat!?) But the true costs underlying their rate restructuring is based on coal power. Their coal addition includes long term contracts for 70% of their electric power at two coal plants until 2038 and 2050! Only 0.03% of their power comes from solar. Claims that other customers subsidize costs of solar are also untrue as most studies show that benefits outweigh added costs.

Businesses Rates

A concern is that big businesses will leave if energy rates are high. MGE's rates are already far higher than most of the Midwest with no exodus or business avoidance due to energy rates. Many other factors that go into business costs and where they locate. But fixed rate increases, especially for smaller businesses who use less energy, is an issue of excessive costs or the inability to install solar. Many businesses, particularly local, start small and grow, but need a favorable start up climate. MGE's revised fixed business rates will pose an added burden on small businesses and startups.

At a time when innovative and forward looking companies such as Google and Apple are locating where they can rely on affordable renewable energy, MGE's reliance on nearly 88% fossil fuels does not create a positive business climate. There are also far more jobs in renewables and energy efficiency than fossil fuels, and MGE's revised rate structures will be detrimental to many builders and solar installers.

A Sustainable Future

The City of Madison's sustainability plan includes 25% renewable energy by 2025. MGE participated in this plan, but is now dismantling our goals and laying waste to our priorities. With the looming threat of climate change, MGE's plans are an affront to our community values and the direction we must move. Our community will suffer as those less well off are further burdened, our economy worsens from a less favorable business climate, we fall further behind on clean energy and continue our dependency on expensive fossil fuels, and we bury our heads in the sand as the climate deteriorates.

There is a better way that provides us the freedom of clean energy, invests in our communities, and will accelerate our progress into the future. We can be a leader on clean energy, revitalize our community, and live with a future that offers health and security. This is occurring elsewhere such as in neighboring Minnesota and Iowa, and there are business models and opportunities that allow utilities to succeed by embracing the future rather than viewing it as a threat and denying it.

The question is if MGE will be that utility. It's up to us to decide the future of this community, and what occurs in 2015 will be critical to our future. Please be part of it. ■

Tar Sands

Some things get better, some worse. Enbridge is evidently not content to rest on their failures. They're continuing efforts to increase our risk exposure by expanding tar sands shipment through Wisconsin, and thwarting federal regulations in bringing tar sands in from Canada. Not satisfied with a nearly 1 million gallon spill in Michigan four years ago, they are working to expand tar sands line 61 in Wisconsin to 6 times the flow of line 6b that ripped apart in Michigan. They claim upgraded safety measures will result in a rapid pipeline shutdown should there be any break. Of course, that's exactly what an Enbridge executive said in a congressional hearing 10 days prior to the 17 hour Michigan deluge.

However, the path for Enbridge to the expanded flow of line 61 has hardly been a smooth one. A number of cities and counties have passed resolutions asking the DNR for a full environmental impact statement on the pipeline and its expansion. Enbridge says the original environmental assessment covers this, but with Enbridge's record, a tripled flow of corrosive tar sands warrants added scrutiny.

Dane County Leadership

Leadership on the tar sands fight, started primarily by 350 Madison and members of the Sierra Club, has continued to evolve, with a new statewide WISE (Wisconsin Safe Energy) Alliance taking more statewide leadership on this issue. Elizabeth Ward, JMC Conservation Programs Coordinator, is playing a leading role with the Wise Alliance, as has Jim Kerler, JMC Board Chair, but we're looking for more Sierrans to help thwart transport of this deadly fossil fuel.

Dane County is playing a key role in challenging Enbridge by requiring a conditional use permit for the proposed Marshall pumping station upgrade. The Dane County Land and Zoning Regulation Committee is doing due diligence to ensure the public's welfare is secured and there are adequate economic safeguards to restore the environment should a spill occur. In particular, a surety bond to ensure adequate funding for a true cleanup is being considered. The next committee meeting is set for 7pm, January 13 in Rm 351 of the City/County building. Though public testimony is not accepted, a show of support is welcome.

While permit conditions will likely be decided in early 2015, this has clear ramifications for the future. Enbridge is now proposing another pipeline in the same corridor, perhaps of equal capacity. While details are sketchy (no surprise from Enbridge), including its contents, Enbridge's dedication to expanded transport of climate changing fossil fuels and increasing our risk is quite evident. Holding Enbridge accountable for all real and potential costs of fossil fuel transport might result in recalculating if another pipeline is warranted.

More Risks Afoot

It's not only tar sands pipeline transport that is of concern. It's also Bakken oil from North Dakota. While not as corrosive as tar sands, it has a nasty habit of exploding. These oils are also transported by other methods, including rail which has its own risk factors, especially with many trains going through urban areas. Spills, and exposure to toxic chemicals and explosions all increase with the added rail shipments. Strong concerns exist with the safety of many current oil rail cars, the tracks they are transported on, and whether local emergency services are prepared for such catastrophes.

The result is that Wisconsin's citizens and environment are at added risk from oil spills and disasters. You should be concerned, and if you are and want more information or to get more involved, go to the Wise Alliance Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WiSafeEnergyAlliance>, the JMC web site at <http://wisconsin.sierraclub.org/Issues/TarSandsOil.asp>, or contact Elizabeth Ward at elizabeth.ward@sierraclub.org.

Four Lakes Water Sentinels Program

Where would we be without good clean healthy water? In addition to being necessary, it can provide us with so much enjoyment as well. In order to learn more and protect our precious water resources, the Four Lakes Sierra Club and the First Unitarian Society have joined together to create the Water Sentinel Ministry Team.

Activities in the line up of opportunities include:

- Water monitoring to learn more about our water resources and how we can clean them up
- Stream quality to discover differences between urban and rural settings and the issues involved
- Permaculture and water friendly gardening on managing water on our properties
- Snowshoeing and skiing to enjoy water when it's in frozen form
- Fishing for fun and also to understand more about water quality and supporting fish habitat

The Water Sentinels team offers these and many other opportunities to get involved. The goal is to provide a range of activities that will appeal to a wide variety of people. If you're interested in water issues or have special knowledge in this area, and want to join the Water Sentinel Team, please contact Liz Wessel, 238-9934 or lizmwessel@gmail.com or Cindy Rose, 271-6440 or crose5@att.net.



2015 Four Lakes Group Executive Committee Candidate Statements

Dave Blouin

This year marks 22 years of activism by me in the Sierra Club that began in 1993 with activism opposing the Crandon mine proposal. I served on the Four Lakes Group and John Muir Chapter Executive Committees in the 1990's. I continue to serve as Political Committee Chair to both entities as well as Mining Committee Chair for the Chapter. In an effort to revitalize our local activism, I became Four Lakes Group Chair in 2010. I'm proud of the work that we're doing locally and wish to continue the progress we've made and tackle new challenges in 2015.

Judi Duncan

I moved to Madison in November of 2013 and immediately joined the 4 Lakes Sierra Club. The major drawing card for me was the RAH group, as that is a passion of mine. I would like to help the RAH segment grow, and want to see a continued focus on alternative energy sources as the group has been doing so well. I think that the Club needs to cast a critical eye on the detrimental effects of animal agriculture, something that has not been a topic of much concern, yet I see it as major problem not only locally but world-wide. In addition, I'd like to see the club take a look at promoting a ban or tax on plastic grocery bags in Madison and/or Dane County. I wish to be on the Four Lakes board to help move these things forward in any way I can.

Beverly Speer

I have been a member of the Sierra Club for more than 25 years -- I must have been 4 when my parents signed me up [kidding]. I have served in a leadership capacity at the local and state levels off and on since 1992. I am particularly interested in resource recovery. I am chair of the Dane County Solid Waste and Recycling Commission and am involved with the Four Lakes Group's efforts to encourage and enable waste reduction and recycling out in the community through the group's Recycling Away from Home initiative. As an executive committee member I need to do a better job of seeking input from members and community organizers on ways to recruit new local volunteers and leaders for the Four Lakes Group to secure its purpose and viability in the years to come. I will also continue to encourage that the Sierra Club remain committed to building democracy, open government and getting private money out of politics.

Garden Expo - Get Your Green On!

By mid February, do you ever feel you've had enough of snow and winter's cold? Fortunately, Wisconsin Public Television's infamous annual Garden Expo will be at the Alliant Energy Center from February 13 – 15, 2015. It's a sure cure for those winter blues with lots of greenery and presentations about gardening and other outdoor activities.



It's a great audience for the Sierra Club, attracting people with a passion for nature and the outdoors. Each year we need two booths there to present information on our issues and sell our wonderful merchandise. Surrounded by warmth, lush green scenes, and outdoor vis-

tas, people are in the mood to hear about how to explore, enjoy and protect the environment.

Your serve as a Sierra Club ambassador, to talk with attendees about the Club, what we do, and what we have to offer. No special knowledge is required, just the same passions and concern that attracted you to the Club initially, and a willingness to engage with people. As an added benefit, volunteering gets you in free all weekend, including all the wonderful exhibits and seminars. More info is available at <http://gardenexpo.wi.com/>.

Volunteer shifts will be from 2:30 – 6 and 6 – 9 pm on Friday; 9 am – noon, noon – 3 pm and 3 – 6 pm on Saturday; and 10 am – 1 pm and 1 – 4:30 pm on Sunday. Sign ups are online at [VolunteerSpot at http://vols.pt/LbHbEc](http://vols.pt/LbHbEc) for the shift(s) of your choice. If you have questions, contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 or d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

Don't be green with envy for missing out on this wonderful event.

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

on the web: [www. http://4lakes.org](http://4lakes.org) • Like us on Facebook

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Claire Gervais, Healthy Lawn Team, (608)233-8455, cmgeriva@gmail.com

Ron Haeger, Inner City Outings, (608)444-0612, rhaeger@gmail.com

Kathy Mulbrandon, Outings Chair, kmulb@charter.net

*Executive Committee members



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Newsletter Mailing

Our goal is environmentally friendly, cost effective communications. We share info via this newsletter, the Four Lakes Enews, and our web site and Facebook pages. Members receive a hard copy newsletter if we don't have your email, or you request it be mailed. Otherwise, you'll receive an email when the newsletter is available for downloading. If we don't have it, please send your email to d_ferber@sbcglobal.net to save paper and mailing costs. Plus, we'll happily send you our Enews to keep you better informed.

Four Lakes Group 2015 Executive Committee Election Ballot

Please read the candidate statements for election to the Executive Committee and select your choices by putting an "x" before the name. Select up to three candidates. Please make sure your envelope contains name(s), address, and your membership number if you know it.

Voter 1:

Dave Blouin Judi Duncan Beverly Speer

Write In

Voter 2:

Dave Blouin Judi Duncan Beverly Speer

Write In

Must be postmarked By January 31, 2015

Mail to: Terri Gregory
840 Burr Oak Lane, Madison, WI 53713

Volunteer Party February 26, 2015

Brocagh Irish Pub, 7 W. Main St. Madison, 5:30-8:30 pm

In 2015, we want to increase our activism to achieve more of our goals. We know we have people up to the challenge, and each year we have a volunteer party to recognize them. If you're someone who has already volunteered, we want to thank you for your service. If you're interested in volunteering, this is a great occasion to learn more about how you can get involved and contribute. If you appreciate what others have done, we want you there to recognize their efforts and dedication.



In fact, the entire Four Lakes Group is made up entirely of volunteers. Our outings, our political activism, our energy and transportation work, our Water Sentinels, and Inner City Youth Outings all succeed because people like you stepped forward to make these activities a success. Whatever your interest in our issues and activities, we invite you to come to this special annual event. We'll be providing refreshments and food for your enjoyment, so please join us for an evening of information and socializing with leaders and other volunteers from the Four Lakes Group.

Please RSVP on VolunteerSpot at <http://vols.pt/Cq4aqq>. For questions, please contact Lacinda Athen at lacinda.athen@gmail.com. Look forward to seeing you there.