



Four Lakes Sierran

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club newsletter, Fall 2020

2020 Four Lakes Group Political Activities

Dave Blouin, Political Chair

Four Lakes Group members face critical votes in the 2020 elections that affect our goals of reversing the harms to our environmental protections at both the state and federal levels. The Sierra Club has endorsed Joe Biden and Kamala Harris to replace the Trump administration’s unprecedented assault on our environment that threatens our climate, air, water, public lands, wildlife, and oceans.

We’ve endorsed candidates in Four Lakes Group territory in each of our Congressional Districts as well as nearly all state Senate and Assembly races. Our choices for Congress are Mark Pocan in the 2nd District and Jessica King in the 6th. We have endorsed too many candidates for Senate and Assembly to list here. You can view the current list at: <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/lobbying-elections/political>. You can preview your ballot before the election to find out who is running at: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PreviewMyBallot>.

The choice in all of these races is between our proven environmental champions over candidates and incumbents with terrible voting records and commitments in favor of unchecked and thoughtless polluting industry and development. Four Lakes Group members can play a critical role in taking control away from polluting interests in this election.

The Sierra Club has launched the largest grassroots member activation in our history and it includes getting our members and supporters to vote via using texts, emails, calls, and letters. Review the list of endorsed candidates in your area and contact their campaign offices to learn how to volunteer, and be sure to remind candidates that you are a proud Sierra Club member wishing to help them. Look to our political pages on the Chapter website at <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/lobbying-elections/political> for more info on how to join the mobilization to work on the Presidential, Congressional and state Legislature campaigns. You can also find info there on how to register and request an absentee ballot, but be sure to make your request and return your ballot as soon as possible to ensure your vote is counted.

continued on page 2

Chair’s Column

Liz Wessel

The week before Labor Day, I took some time with my husband to camp and hike. We left work behind even though I knew I would be slammed when I got back – but it was a moment to recharge. We are both lucky and grateful to still have our jobs and to be able to take time off work to reinvigorate ourselves. Camping for us is a pretty simple event in terms of gear, with a tent, a 35-year-old backpacking stove, and some basic food items for meals we plan a bit in advance. We are also privileged to own a car and can drive to the state park and feel safe in the campground.

But this is not true for a lot of people, particularly people of color and those of limited income. A growing focus in our Sierra Club work is access to the outdoors. My recent trip made me realize that when we talk about access, multiple issues need to be addressed.

- Do you have parks or outdoor spaces nearby?
- Do the facilities meet your needs?
- Do you have or can you afford or access the gear you need to participate in the recreation activities of your choosing?
- Do you feel welcome on the trail, on the water, in the park, or at the campground?

continued on page 2

In This Issue

<i>2020 4 Lakes Group Political Activities</i>	1
<i>Chair’s Column</i>	1
<i>Climate Crew: The Costs of Sprawl</i>	2
<i>Volunteer Spotlight: Cathie Kwasneski</i>	3
<i>Beyond “Beyond Coal”</i>	4
<i>Sierra Club’s COVID Response</i>	5
<i>Four Lakes Group Contacts</i>	6
<i>Four Lakes ExCom Election ballot</i>	7
<i>Don’t Get Bored – Get Involved!</i>	8

The COVID-19 pandemic has only underscored the urgency of our work to unseat Trump. In the face of uncertainty about public health developments, we are doubling down on our remote voter contact strategy, and will be prepared to quickly shift gears and massively ramp up if the pandemic makes in-person voter contact unlikely.

The Sierra Club is still the most effective environmental organization in the country because we vote and act on our principles. Let's make a difference in this year's elections! Please contact me at: burroak15@gmail.com or (608) 220-4040 if you have any questions about our political activities.

Thank you and don't forget to vote on November 3!

Climate Crew: The Costs of Sprawl

Some may remember the old Sierra Club slogan "Sprawl costs us all". Funny how some things come full circle. When the slogan was originally coined, the main concern was the loss of farmland and forests, but now with climate change, another major concern is added transportation emissions caused by sprawl, with not only more driving, but more concrete and infrastructure. A secondary concern with sprawl is more impervious surfaces, with flooding a growing problem.

Fortunately, no matter where you live, it's something anyone can easily get involved with since many decisions are made locally. Not by chance, that's why our Climate Crew decided to prioritize land use and transportation. Right now, our major focus is in Madison and Dane County, but if you have concerns about these issues in your community, we'd love to connect with you and support your work in your area. This is a great opportunity to not only share information and strategies, but learn from and help each other.

We know the risks of not dealing with sprawl. Worsening climate change with air pollution and traffic congestion. Poorly planned developments in larger cities that don't support good mass transit, and in smaller communities, a hodge-podge of building that is not welcoming or functional for the community or visitors. We're seeing more problems from flooding as major rainfalls tax the current infrastructure and result in disastrous, costly events. We need to plan and build for a future that is much more complicated and challenging than what we identified 60 years ago.

You may be concerned about what your neighborhood or community will look like as development occurs, see transitions you don't think are fitting, or want certain things to change that aren't. Maybe better

continued on page 6

Access to the outdoors starts with proximity and accessibility. Are there places nearby? Can you get there? Recent studies have highlighted the need for additional local parks. The UW School of Medicine and Public Health (<https://www.wihealthatlas.org/oom>) has clearly identified access to outdoor recreation as a parameter that matters for physical and mental health. They produced the Wisconsin Outdoor Opportunity Map to help put a spotlight on areas that need improvement, including adding additional parks, but also removing physical barriers such as the lack of safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructures.

As activists, we can use these tools, as well as conversations with our neighbors, to identify local needs and advocate for changes in how things are done. Local budgets are a great place to start where the allocation of funds for land purchases and recreational infrastructure happens. And the state and local transportation budgets determine public and shared transit investment that enables non-car owners to access parks and other recreational spaces.

As a backpacker and a camper, the right gear makes a difference. Depending on what you want to do, do you have the equipment to make the experience enjoyable? (Sitting inside a leaky tent with nowhere to go is not enjoyable!) I take this for granted a lot of times. As a hiker, I have always enjoyed winter hikes, and never purchased snowshoes, but was able to rent them when I wanted to try it. College campuses often have loaner programs for gear, and some outdoor recreation companies offer rental options. Let's get creative on how we can make more gear available to more people and open the door for people across our community to try new types of recreation from snowshoeing and

continued on page 6



Volunteer Spotlight

Cathie Kwasneski

Zane Klavina

Cathie Kwasneski joined Sierra Club in 1975 and since then has been a passionate climate activist, advocating for sustainable agriculture practices, removal of pesticides, and clean water and air in Wisconsin. Originally volunteering in Illinois, Cathie moved to Brodhead, Wisconsin eight years ago, and soon after joined the John Muir Chapter and the Four Lakes Group.

Cathie's involvement has mostly been geared toward the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, alongside attending volunteer events and climate marches. When she became aware of the environmental injustices happening back in the 1970's, Cathie knew she had to join the fight.

"The administration was and currently is destroying everything I believe in," Cathie says. "I grew up spending summers in Northern Wisconsin, and my parents introduced me to the love for science and respect for nature."

Volunteering during a pandemic has been a challenge for Cathie and many other volunteers, but she says that everyone is trying to make the best of it and stay active despite the circumstances.

Regarding the community of Sierra Club, Cathie says she is surrounded by phenomenal and welcoming people. Some focus on pipelines, some on power plants, some on water issues, and some battle the injustices in disadvantaged neighborhoods. All of these aspects of environmental activism are under one umbrella, and it is a movement toward a common goal, she says.

"The staff and the volunteers at Sierra Club are passionate about the local environmental damage that needs to be repaired, and focused on the collective avenues to propose positive solutions," she says.

Apart from Sierra Club, Cathie also belongs to the Democratic Party of Dane County and volunteers for a recycling program with St. Clare of Assisi Parish in Monroe, Wisconsin. Each month she collects recyclables, including light bulbs, ink toners, cartridges, styrofoam, and old shoes, and brings each item to different collection sites.

"It is gratifying to see all of the participation, and to know that we're keeping a bit out of the landfills," she says.

To anyone who wants to join Sierra Club and start making a difference, Cathie encourages to think about these questions: How badly do you want a change and how passionate do you feel about it? How confident do you feel about the safety of your own future and the future of generations to come?

"It would be a lot easier to fight the climate crisis under a different management, but hopefully that will change soon," Cathie says. "Every single voice counts."

Beyond “Beyond Coal”

Beyond Coal. It’s been the name and slogan of the Sierra Club’s biggest campaign for years. But with the scope of the campaign and our work growing, what lies in and beyond that name now?

Coal – It’s gotta go!

Of course our first aim is to get beyond coal – the dirtiest and most polluting energy source we have. It’s not only been the top contributor to climate change, and it produces toxic emissions that reads like a list from the who’s who of heinous pollutants. That’s not to mention the destruction that comes from mining, the health impacts on miners and communities in the vicinity of mines, the coal dust harms to communities from shipping and coal piles, and the toxic chemicals in waste coal ash.

Fortunately, we’re seeing changes due to climate change and our response to coal’s impacts, especially on low-income and communities of color. But there’s more to do, with 5 remaining coal plants in Wisconsin. 3 of them, Madgett, north of LaCrosse on the Mississippi River, Columbia near Portage on the Wisconsin River, and South Oak Creek on Lake Michigan near Racine, are over 40 years old. According to Sierra Club analyses, both Columbia and Oak Creek cost more to run than installing new renewable energy – which make them even more logical targets to shut down.

Beyond Climate Changing Fossil Fuels

It’s highly unlikely we’ll see any new coal plants proposed. General Electric just announced they’re out of the business of building coal plants. But the same is not true of fracked gas plants, with two utilities proposing the Nemadji Trail Energy Center (NTEC) in Superior. Gas doesn’t have coal’s toxic waste problem, and its use can readily be ramped up or down depending when power is needed, and currently, it’s less expensive than coal. But with the problems with fracking, and methane escape involved in extraction and shipping, gas is no better for climate change than coal. Currently, gas plants may be less costly to run than coal, but are also becoming more expensive than installing new clean energy. We’re working to stop the NTEC plant, as well as gas plants everywhere.

Discarding Old Business Models

Old utility business models are based on large centralized power plants where utilities supply the power and they have monetary incentives to sell more power by building more power plants. As an incentive to businesses, they provide lower economies-of-scale quantity discounts to lure and support large customers, while captive residential customers pay higher rates.

Utilities pay off their investments in large power plants and other infrastructure over time through utility rates. These rates have long disadvantaged residential users, but with energy efficiency and increasingly uneconomic power plants, utilities have increased fixed fees that are paid regardless of how little energy is used that further shifts costs to low energy users. This creates an added disincentive to investing in energy efficiency or solar. It’s a model in need of overhaul if we want to reduce climate change impacts.

Clean Energy is our Future

Customers today want clean affordable energy that doesn’t worsen climate change. Wind, solar, and now even batteries, have become economical sources of power. Especially large utility scale wind and solar farms now provide cheap electricity, with more flexibility in locating them. Batteries are becoming increasingly cost effective, and are good for times of low energy production or to add power during expensive peak demand times.

For home owners, wind is less feasible than solar. However, solar is not affordable or workable for some home owners, and unfortunately, utilities have opposed third party solar in Wisconsin which would make it accessible for more people. But with incentives and tax credits, solar is increasingly attractive to home owners and many businesses.

Customers can own their own energy production, including having backup storage, with the utility only needed for supplemental energy or to provide backup.

But utilities see the writing on the wall (and their financial spreadsheets), and are shifting to wind and solar farms that supply the clean power customers want at a lower cost than running existing coal plants. The issue is paying off the fossil fuel power plants. Older ones are near the expected retirement age, but utilities had planned to pay off the newer ones over decades. However, as operating costs escalate, that becomes more problematic – as well as who bears the cost – customers or shareholders. But coal’s days are numbered, and the march beyond coal will continue.

Energy that’s Safe and Reliable

Often forgotten is that gas is dangerous. At best, it can negatively impact indoor air quality, especially from gas stoves. At its worst, it can destroy houses and take lives. The major explosion in Sun Prairie from a few years ago was from construction hitting a gas main.

So far, electric heating has been too costly in northern climates. But as heat pumps become more efficient in lower temperatures, allowing a move away from resistance heating, having a house or business running solely on electricity becomes more cost effective. It can also reduce building costs, and eliminate one utility meter and set of charges.

The other significant factor is that using fracked gas adds to climate change. Heating (and cooling) powered by renewable energy does not, and communities cannot meet 100% renewable energy goals as long as buildings use gas for heating. That means the heat is on to move away from gas!

A Just Energy Future

Heat and power are vital to live in today’s world. That’s recognized here in Wisconsin where residential heat and power cannot be shut off in winter. However, affordability for some has been a critical issue, one that’s made worse with investor owned utility profit motives that give big customers breaks and saddle low energy and income residential customers with higher cost burdens.

It’s also true that Black families pay a much higher percentage of their income for utility bills than do white customers, and are more likely not to be able to pay utility bills and have their heat and power shut off. This adds to the inequities and burdens people from communities of color experience. We can build buildings that have low to no net energy use and relieve those burdens, and move beyond those disparities, but just rates and business models are also needed.

Taking the Next Steps

All these options are on the table now, as we advocate for utilities to shut down old coal plants, stop a new gas plant, reexamine utility business models, and move to 100% clean energy heat and power for everyone. We invite you to get involved with our Beyond Coal team, or work in your local community to effect change. Go to our Sierra Club Wisconsin web site and under “Issues”, check out our options under “100% clean energy” to see what we’re doing.

It surely looks like that getting beyond coal is moving beyond the realm of possibility – to become a reality.

Sierra Club’s COVID Response

The Sierra Club continues to protect staff and volunteers, with all in person meetings and outings cancelled through February, and staff working from home. The Club is evaluating the potential for very limited local outings that could be conducted safely. In the meantime, we continue to have a multitude of volunteer opportunities. We do a video blog that you can see on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubWI> each Monday, along with a second Wednesday Volunteer Night with opportunities to get involved from the convenience of your own home – and have fun! We also post other events, opportunities and actions on our Facebook page, so please like us and stay connected.

and more equitable bus service and other transit options are a concern. Perhaps you want more electric vehicles, but don't see the necessary support systems. Your community may also have experienced flooding problems. Or maybe you're concerned about parks and green space – or access to them.

These all provide great opportunities for you to get involved where you live, to connect with others in your community who share your concerns, and help impact what your local environment will look like in the future. Local decision makers are generally accessible, allowing your voice to more easily be heard. It really is where a small group of committed citizens can change the world.

With today's technology, and constraints due to COVID-19, it's easier to connect with people across distances. Our meetings are online via Zoom or Google meet, so getting connected is (generally) much easier regardless of location. (And your carbon footprint will be lower!) Interested? Contact Liz Wessel at lizard59sc@yahoo.com or Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net to discuss your community's directions, and connect with others who share your concerns.

We also have a state transportation team if you want to get more involved with statewide transit and highway issues. It's your choice where and how you make a difference.

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>

<https://www.facebook.com/4lakesSierraClub/>

Dave Blouin*, Secretary, Political Chair, (608) 222-4040, burroak15@gmail.com

Ronda Conner*, rondaconner@hotmail.com, 608-245-3931

Don Ferber*, Conservation, Outreach, and RAH, (608) 222-9376, d_ferber@sbcglobal.net

Erik Pettersen*, Co-treasurer (608) 515-4426, erik.pettersen14@gmail.com

Mary Reames*, Vice-Chair (608) 310-32890 mlreames@sbcglobal.net

Liz Wessel*, Chair, Co-treasurer, Climate Crew (608) 238-9934, lizard59sc@yahoo.com

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

Kathy Mulbrandon, Outings Chair, (608) 215-9706 kmulbrandon@gmail.com

*Executive Committee members

skiing to kayaking and camping.

And finally, even if you can get to a park or natural area and you have the right gear for your activity, do you feel safe? Do you feel welcome? There are plenty of stories to substantiate that people of color have not been welcomed in the outdoors. This can take the form of outright hostile behavior or a simple statement like "What are you doing here?"

All of us have a role to play in changing this. On our camping trip, we stopped at a small park along the shores of Lake Michigan with cliff views of the lake. After a while, we were joined by a young black couple. After exchanging appreciation for the awesome location, we decided to leave them the romantic view. And on our return to the parking lot we passed an Indo-Asian family also exploring the dramatic coast. It's simple, but a heartfelt "hello" and "enjoy the view" coupled with a smile, is a start to making sure everyone is welcome.

The Sierra Club has a role to play in making sure that people of color and limited income not only have access to the wonderful recreation areas in our region, but also have access to gear that can open the door to a wide range of experiences. We need to make sure that neighborhood, local, state and federal lands are accessible, not only for those with different abilities, but also those who do not have access to a car. And finally, we need to ensure that we welcome everyone to the spaces we enjoy and make them feel and be safe for all.

The Nature Gap, a study presented by the Center for American Progress, examined and concluded that "*Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and low-income families are far more likely than white families to live in a place that is deprived of the benefits that nature provides, including nearby places that allow them to get outside safely and access clean water, clean air, and a diversity of wildlife.*" The study shows that in Wisconsin only 13% of white population by census tract vs 78% of population of people of color live in nature deprived areas.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2020/07/21/487787/the-nature-gap/>

Four Lakes Group 2020 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 four candidates. If your ballot is not from a Four Lakes Sierran mailed copy, please write your name and membership number on the back. Only ballots from active members will be valid, so please cut the portion of the back page with your name and number on it. Please mail ballots to: Lacinda Athen, 4909 Sherwood, Madison, WI 53711 by December 1, 2020.

Voter 1: Don Ferber Erik Pettersen Mary Reames Liz Wessel

Write In _____

Voter 2: Don Ferber Erik Pettersen Mary Reames Liz Wessel

Write In _____

Erik Pettersen

I've been an environmentalist most of my life and recently have done more Sierra Club volunteering. I canvassed south central Wisconsin for Greenpeace in the early 90's and worked on various political campaigns, most notably, Ralph Nader's in 1996. In October, 2013, I received Community Shares “Backyard Heroes Award” for my Sierra Club volunteering. I've written lots of Letters to the Editors to the Wisconsin State Journal and Capital Times on issues near and dear to the Sierra Club, such as the utility moratorium, the Columbia coal power plant, and the proposed I-94 expansion in Milwaukee. I use mass transit and ride my bicycle and don't plan on owning a car anytime soon. Transportation is the most important thing I work on and I would love to see a light or commuter rail system in southern and central Wisconsin. I look forward to assisting the Four Lakes Group treasurer and remaining on the Executive Committee.

Don Ferber

As an environmental activist, I want Wisconsin's environmental laws and regulations to protect all people as well as the environment, and provide environmental justice and end disparate impacts on Black and brown people. This includes empowering local voices to have a say in their own communities and the solutions they need. The Sierra Club has provided me great opportunities to learn, get engaged, and take a leadership role to restore environmental protections and a just democracy. I am most passionate about working with our Beyond Coal team to get off of fossil fuels and rely on clean energy. I also enjoy outreach and communications to engage more people in our activities, and acting as an liaison to other groups, and will continue working to get more people involved in Four Lakes Group issues.

Mary Reames

I am a longtime Wisconsinite and environmentalist, and am committed to improving the area's environmental and societal sustainability and resilience. I was born and raised in Madison, and after practicing environmental law for several years elsewhere in the Midwest, I returned to Madison to raise my family and pursue a career in sustainability. I worked with the team organizing the Climate March in Madison in 2017, and continue to work with several Sierra Club campaigns. I joined the Four Lakes Group Executive Committee in December 2017 and currently serve as Vice Chair. I currently work for Leonardo Academy, a nonprofit sustainability consulting firm. When not working or volunteering, I kayak on Madison's waterways, garden, and make mediocre pottery.

Liz Wessel

I am Liz Wessel (she, her, hers) and am running for my third two-year term on the Four Lakes Group ExCom. I serve as Co-treasurer and now as the Four Lakes Chair. During the last two years, we engaged in local climate action. As a member of the Four Lakes Group Climate Crew advocating for a strong Dane County Climate Action Plan, I've been working on the transportation sector which includes addressing land use. Without compact, multi-use development, we'll continue to heighten the need for cars. Access to jobs and recreation, equity and justice issues, are also integral to this work. I hope to continue to work on access issues as well as help to build partnerships with community organizations that continue to be on the front lines of these issues. Finally, during the next two years, I want to implement our organizational plan and welcome new volunteers and supporters to the Four Lakes Group.



Four Lakes Group Sierra Club
 754 Williamson St
 Madison, WI 53703

<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>



Non-Profit Organization
 US POSTAGE PAID
 MADISON WI
 PERMIT #1002

Newsletter Mailing

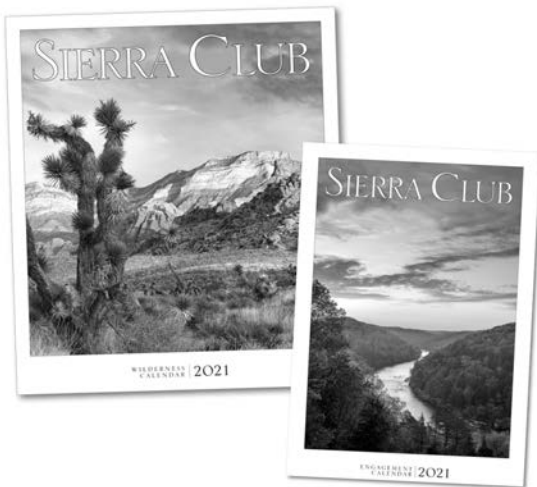
Our goal is environmentally friendly, cost effective communication with our members. Our primary modes of communication are this newsletter, the Four Lakes Enews, and our web site and Facebook pages. We mail a hard copy if we don't have your email address or you request one. Otherwise, members receive an email letting you know when the newsletter is available to download.

Please consider sending your email address to d_ferber@sbcglobal.net if we don't have it to save paper and the cost of mailing. Plus we can also send you our Enews to keep you better informed.



Enjoy, explore, and protect the planet

2021 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS



ORDER FORM

ITEM	COST	QTY	TOTAL
Wilderness Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$14.95	_____	_____
Engagement Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15.95	_____	_____

Subtotal: _____

Sales Tax: _____

Shipping: _____

GRAND TOTAL: _____

Please make checks payable to "Sierra Club" and mail to the return address shown on your newsletter.

SHIP TO:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Order your Sierra Club 2021 calendars. \$1 off each calendar for each extra calendar ordered. Contact Dave Blouin at burroak15@gmail.com or Beverly Speer at bjs4LG@gmail.com to get your calendar(s) or for questions.

Don't forget, they make great holiday gifts too!