



Every Kid Outdoors

Liz Wessel

Do you have a memory of an outdoor experience with your family? One of my fondest memories was picnicking with my family. My father was a quadriplegic who as a young boy developed a love for the Sierra Nevada Mountains where he camped, hiked and fished. He also loved trains. For our picnics, he knew all the scenic spots with shade trees in the foothills of the mountains next to a railroad track.

During the pandemic, families discovered nearby public lands and spaces that offered recreation options and places to unwind without a facemask. The Center for Disease Control recommended spending time outdoors because it's harder for the virus to spread and nature provides physical and mental benefits. While few places my family picnicked required a fee, state or federal entry fees might make the difference in whether or where a family will enjoy a day outdoors.

Reducing fees to enhance parks access

New programs have emerged to address barriers to the outdoors like entry fees which can keep families from enjoying some of our most iconic and beautiful public lands. The Every Kid Outdoors (EKO) program, started in 2015 by the Obama Administration, targets 4th graders and their families. Families of 4th graders can be provided with a free park/federal lands pass that provides access to hundreds of federal parks, forests, monuments and wildlife reserves for a year.

In the program's first two years, more than 2 million fourth graders signed up for the pass. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration did not propose renewed funding for the program. However, an alliance of 100+ organizations including the Sierra Club formed the Outdoor Alliance for Kids (OAK) and opposed cutting the program. OAK not only saved the program, but also won its authorization for seven years - the Every Kid Outdoors Act of 2019.

Today, OAK supports several Congressional bills, including an Outdoors for All Act and Transit to Trails Act, which would expand

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Chair's Column

Ronda Conner, Co-Chair

Greetings from the Sierra Club Four Lakes Group!

As summer comes to a close, I am thankful to have enjoyed gardening, boating, hiking, disc golf and even tried out a paddleboard for the first time which I greatly enjoyed. My hope is always that I do as much as I can outdoors in the summer so that I am ready for more time indoors for the cooler weather in fall and winter.

Our Four Lakes Group continues to meet virtually this summer but there are some exciting opportunities for in-person work. I just volunteered for Recycling Away from Home at the Orton-Front Festival and it felt so good to be immersed in my community celebrating summer like I have for decades. We will also have a booth and assist with the recycling at the big Willy St Fair, September 18 & 19, so please sign up for a shift if you can. (See article.)

We are working on bringing back outings and planning a training for those interested in leading outings. So far, only limited local outings are allowed under COVID safe conditions. We are trying to get transit to public parks so that everyone will have

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parks and public lands in underserved communities and provide transit and equitable access to public lands.

The benefits of EKO programs

Studies have shown spending at least 2 hours outdoors every week is connected to improved health and well-being, and can enhance school performance. A recent study found that spending even 10 minutes in nature can make students feel happier and lessen physical and mental stress. The pandemic has demonstrated how important it is that everyone can access natural areas.

4th graders are a perfect age group to explore Wisconsin's outstanding state parks, and help kids develop a sense of place, and what Wisconsin looks like. My children learned a lot about Wisconsin in fourth grade. At Lincoln Elementary School, Dave Spitzer (recently deceased conservationist) emphasized getting out of the classroom to experience Wisconsin and see the landscape left behind by glaciers, that are now forests, farms, effigy mounds and cranberry bogs.

Wisconsin support for the EKO program

States have started to piggyback on the Every Kid Outdoors program including Idaho, Maryland, New York, Nevada, and New Mexico accepting the national pass at state parks. A number of other states do not have state parks entrance fees, ensuring easy access for all.

In states like Wisconsin, where national parks or federal lands may not be close by, extending the pass to state parks can make a world of difference! With your support, Wisconsin can open the door for so many more families to recreation, learning and better health by adopting the Every Kid Outdoors pass.

95% of Wisconsin residents participate in some form of outdoor recreation and 60% of residents rely mostly or entirely on public lands and waters when participating in their favorite outdoor activity. Knowing outdoor recreation is a part of Wisconsin culture, Sierra Club members and others worked to get resolutions into the 2021 Conservation Congress hearings to gauge conservation community support. Participants overwhelmingly supported the EKO resolution.

The program was introduced in Governor Evers' budget, but unfortunately was not in the Republican budget

ultimately signed into law by the Governor. Because of strong support by the Conservation Congress and outdoors activists across the state including Sierra Club members, individual legislators have introduced versions of the program as separate bills in both the Wisconsin Assembly and Senate.

Sierra Club volunteers and staff attended a hearing on AB 375 this summer. Stories were related how early outdoor experiences form a lifelong passion for outdoor recreation and grandparents and families can strengthen the connection to nature through visits to parks – or even backyard camping! But these EKO bills remain unpassed in the legislature.

How you can help

- 1) Get involved in our ongoing efforts to improve access to public lands and parks. Join our **Four Lakes Group Access and Equity Team** or the **Wisconsin Chapter Public Lands & Forests Team**. Contact Liz Wessel at 608-238-9934 or lizard59sc@yahoo.com.
- 2) Contact your legislators to support the passage of the Wisconsin EKO program.
- 3) Promote the federal EKO program, especially to school and church groups.

Resources

More information can be found on the Four Lakes web site, the Wisconsin Chapter blog, and the websites of the Outdoor Alliance for Kids and the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Beyond Carbon

Beyond Coal may be a familiar Sierra Club term and campaign. But we're partly the beneficiary of our own success with two more announcements of coal plant shutdowns this year, and also continued interest in the energy arena for fracked (aka 'natural') gas. Further, transportation is becoming the number one source of emissions in the country as we continue to clean up the grid as we transition to renewable energy – and all emissions count.

To reflect this, we've changed our Facebook page name to Wisconsin Beyond Carbon. Many of the same battles remain, including stopping the proposed Nemadji Trail

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Energy Center gas plant in Superior. We're challenging a previous decision by the Public Service Commission to approve the plant when it turned out that a commissioner was considered for the Dairyland CEO position shortly after resigning from the PSC.

We have several coal plants remaining in Wisconsin, but the Elm Road Generating station came online in 2010, and one large unit of the Weston plant came online in 2008 which creates more challenges for shutting them down in the near future. The other one is the Madgett plant between La Crosse and the Twin Cities where we hope Dairyland Power will see the light and shut down that plant soon.

Our tar sands pipeline fights continue unabated with challenging Enbridge's plan to reroute Line 5 in northern Wisconsin around the Bad River Tribe's lands (which would still leave them at risk), and the new Line 3 in Minnesota that would transport more tar sands oil to Superior. That could put more pressure on our Wisconsin pipelines and potentially for Enbridge to look to build a new pipeline in Wisconsin to transport the added oil.

We continue to ardently oppose the I-94 expansion in Milwaukee and support added mass transit, including electrification of buses, cars and other vehicles. Building more energy intensive highways is not a climate change solution – or for traffic congestion. Plus, there are major equity issues around transit and people who cannot or choose not to drive being able to have mobility options.

All of these energy sectors add to our carbon emissions (and methane which we include too), and as per the recent IPCC's dire report, we need to make the changes that we know are available now. Burning more fossil fuels and adding more carbon to the atmosphere are not viable options – no matter where that carbon comes from. Consider getting involved with one of our teams if you'd like to help find solutions to our carbon problems.

Volunteer Tabling at the Farmers Market

The Dane County Farmers Market has returned to the Capitol Square, and we have a table there on Saturdays. Contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net to help promote the Sierra Club and our activities, or simply sign up at <https://signup.com/go/MQyvvgCg>.

equal access to parks. In line with that, we are co-sponsoring what should be an outstanding webinar with Emily Ford, a Black woman who thru-hiked the Ice Age Trail in winter! We have been working on providing input to the state budget in the hopes that the environment is being considered in every proposal.

But there is important election news and ways for you to get involved. Please vote for candidates for our Four Lakes Group board. (Ballot and statements on page 7.) In addition, critical legislative redistricting will be occurring in Wisconsin, and your voice is needed to help ensure that this time we have fair maps, and our voices will be heard at the ballot box.

There are so many opportunities for people to get involved. We are hoping to get more connections in the surrounding 8 counties so that we can better represent the interests of members in all of the 9 counties that we serve. We are also working on some more regular meetings for anyone and everyone to join. Stay tuned for opportunities to join us and let us know if you have any ideas, questions or concerns. This work brings me hope and connection which are critical in these trying times.

Please stay safe and take care of each other!

Emily Ford - Thru-hiking the Ice Age Trail October 7, 6:30 pm (online)

The Wisconsin Chapter is hosting an Environmental Justice Series, and on October 7 the Four Lakes Group will co-sponsor a presentation by Emily Ford, the first Black woman to thru-hike the Ice Age Trail. She will be speaking on race and outdoor education. This is linked to the Four Lakes Group's Land Equity Access campaign to provide better access to outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone regardless of race, gender or abilities.

Other than a four-legged companion, Emily accomplished her hike solo during a very cold stretch of Wisconsin winter, and completed her 69-day hike on March 6, 2021. She'll have fascinating stories to tell about her adventure, as well as can provide a good perspective on recreation opportunities and experiences as a Black woman.

More information about the Environmental Justice series is at <https://bit.ly/3h3nUJq>. You'll also find links there to register for any of the talks in the series.

Volunteer Spotlight - Char Arner

Zane Klavina



After attending a virtual volunteer fair and learning about various projects the members of the Four Lakes Group were working on, Char Arner realized that the Sierra Club would be the right organization for her to join. Char has stepped up and become a core member of our Land and Equity Access team working to provide better access to parks and recreation opportunities for all.

Char recently retired from a career in Financial Planning and Analysis and currently is volunteering for the Land Equity Access Team within the Four Lakes Group. “During my career in FP&A, I didn't have very much time for volunteering,” she says. “Once I retired, I decided I wanted to get involved in an organization that was working toward positive change in our community.”

Char says that her fellow volunteers at the Four Lakes Group are the ones that provide a lot of motivation for her. She describes them as selfless and committed to making it easier for others to access the great outdoors. “They are also very well connected to others in the community and throughout the Sierra Club organization

which enables them to be effective leaders,” she says.

Outside of the Sierra Club, Char has volunteered for Occupaws, an organization in Madison that raises and trains guide dogs for blind people. “Volunteering fulfills part of my purpose in life,” she says. “To help others and our environment.”

When Char is not volunteering, she enjoys hiking with her family, golfing and traveling.

Good riddance, gas mowers!

What's one of the noisiest, most polluting tools people often use – and your neighbors may not appreciate. If you said a gas lawn mower, you're spot on. Not only do most gas lawnmowers create more emissions than your car, especially if it has an older two-stroke engine, but the pollution is spewed almost directly in your face. Not a good idea!

While there have been alternatives for quite some time (a good manual reel mower cuts reasonably well if the grass isn't too high), battery powered mowers have now come into their own, and are the equal, if not better than, gas power mowers – even riding mowers. They start easier, run quieter, have no exhaust fumes, and no oil and gas to bother with.

However, a drawback is that they often are more expensive to buy. But Madison is looking to adopt an idea some other communities have already implemented a lawn tool rebate program where someone looking to purchase a mower is given a rebate certificate good towards an electric or manual mower at the store of their choice as an incentive.

Currently working its way through City committees, we expect a pilot program proposal to come before the City Council to be administered and promoted by Slipstream, an energy consulting and management company. What many people don't know is that battery power mowers are cheaper to operate, and within 5 years may have a lower total cost than an initially cheaper gas mower. (Manual reel mowers are even cheaper – and you get more exercise!)

But this program needn't be limited to Madison, nor just to lawn mowers. Some communities include other lawn power tools. Madison's proposal has also been shared with Fitchburg, Middleton and Monona. What about your community? Interested, or want more info or to get involved and help advance the program? Contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

Wisconsin Redistricting

The Sierra Club has long weighed in on elections, working to elect legislators who support good environmental policy as well as other issues related to our mission. We've made a difference in many elections, but after the highly partisan gerrymandering in 2011, having an impact on Wisconsin Senate and Assembly races has been much more challenging.

In fact, the most significant impact in these races over the next decade will be based on redistricting from the 2020 Census. Districts are first drawn at the county and municipal level, and then the state. The Republican dominated state legislature will draw Senate and Assembly maps, and then send them to Governor Evers to sign or veto. While Assembly Speaker Robin Vos stated he will send maps to the Governor that he will sign, many are highly skeptical, in which case, it will go to the courts.

Governor Evers proposed a non-partisan redistricting commission, which the Republicans rejected. The Governor also created a People's Maps Commission, allowing Wisconsinites to suggest how they think districts should be drawn. Especially since 56 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, 70% of the population, and every referendum held have supported non-partisan redistricting, it is hoped that this and the people's voices on maps will be heard by the courts. Assembly Speaker Vos has been feeling the pressure, and also has a page where you can provide your suggested maps.

But we're not waiting. A lot is at stake here, and the Wisconsin Chapter has joined the Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition to lobby for fair maps in Wisconsin where electors pick their representatives, not the other way around. Here is how you can make your voice heard:

1. Draw the maps you would like to see via the People's Maps Commission: <https://www.fairmapswi.com/pmc>.
2. Let Assembly Speaker Robin Vos know your maps preferences as well at <https://drawyourdistrict.legis.wisconsin.gov>.
3. Get involved locally by searching for redistricting in your county or municipality to find the process and timing in your area.
4. Contact State Senator Duey Stroebel (sen.stroebel@legis.wisconsin.gov) and State Representative Bob Swearingen (rep.swearingen@legis.wisconsin.gov) and ask them to hold hearings on SB389 and AB395 respectively on banning gerrymandering.
5. Sign up for the online Fair Maps Lobby day on September 27 at https://bit.ly/FMC_LobbyReg.

Please get the word out and join with others to take action. Wisconsin's environment and future depends on it.

Storage Space?

We have a special request that would help support the Four Lakes Group. Do you have a large storage area (at least 10 x 10 ft) that is in or close to Madison that can be secured, but easy for our volunteers to access, that we could use on an ongoing basis? We would need for it to be locked, but where we could get in when we need, with room to put up shelves, and a place where our materials could be kept dry and safe. We're currently paying for a storage locker, and it would help if we could reduce or eliminate that cost. Please contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net if you can have an appropriate place you would consider letting us use.

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

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

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

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Liz Wessel*, 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

during the recall of Scott Walker and have worked on many political campaigns. I also regularly volunteer at schools and work well with kids and adults.

I see opportunities to improve awareness while bringing more people to our initiatives. I see opportunities in simple causes partnering with school clubs and groups to improve impact. I'm interested in planting trees, clean water initiatives, prairie restoration, pollinator preservation, and much more.



Patrick Stoffel

My main focus if elected to the Four Lakes Group Executive Committee would be working to get CAFO's outlawed and replaced with locally produced food from small family farms and cooperatives. I am passionate about this and believe the future of our state depends on it. Outlaw CAFO's and great improvements with water quality, climate change mitigation, and animal care and welfare naturally will follow. Our groups' resources and memberships will increase if we can make progress in this effort. To that end, I will use my passion for writing, researching, and looking for the truth. I have written many articles and letters to newspapers, magazines, and political leaders some published.

I love science and have Masters in Sustainable Systems Engineering (UW Madison) and Space Science (UND), and a Bachelors in Biomedical Science. I would also share my experiences with home solar energy production and energy use reduction. I was driven to install solar panels and energy saving renovations installed when I purchased my new home in 2019 to save money and the environment. I've worked for the State of Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance since 2008, and just like unemployment insurance, our committees' effectiveness changes depending on the skills and motivations of those who run it.

Madison Transit

Our society relies on mobility, so transit is a critical issue, but some people don't have the options others of us do. Sometimes it's just an inconvenience, but too often, it's more than that. What if you can't easily get to the grocery store, or a doctor's office, or have to limit what jobs you can consider? Those can be significant constraints. Or it may force some people (who can) to purchase and use a car, often an expensive hardship.

Sometimes difficult options limit going places to see something, or visit friends or relatives – or go to a park. Dane County has a great park's system, but how many of them are accessible by bus. Hardly any. That's a sad state of affairs for providing access to public resources we all pay for and should have the ability to enjoy – but don't.

It's also a climate change issue. Forcing people to get or use cars more adds significantly to our emissions. Madison and Dane County are working hard to reduce their carbon footprints, but with transportation the number 1 source of greenhouse gases locally, we have to do much better. Mass transit is a key component of providing solutions and lowering our emissions. Even with electric vehicles, individual vehicles require a lot of materials and energy to manufacture, and then require roadways, services and maintenance that also add to our carbon footprint.

Fortunately, Madison is looking at solutions. They are planning a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that would reduce travel times and hopefully increase ridership, and also reroute current transit lines to better serve those in need. For information on the rerouting and BRT plans and how to provide your feedback, go to <https://www.cityofmadison.com/metro/routes-schedules/bus-rapid-transit/transit-network-redesign>. Or join our Land and Equity Access team to talk about how transit integrates with access to parks and recreation. Contact Liz Wessel at lizard59sc@yahoo.com to ask about these issues and how you can get more involved.

Four Lakes Group Executive Committee Elections

Thank you for helping democratically elect your local Sierra Club representatives! The candidate statements are below. You may vote online instead of by mail by filling out the form at <https://bit.ly/2Vfw1ef>. If we receive both paper and electronic ballots from the same member number, only the electronic ballot will be counted.

Your member number can be found on your Sierra Magazine label, or go to www.myaccount.sierraclub.org and log in if you have an account, or sign up if you don't, to find your member number. You can also call Member Care at 415-977-5500 or email member.care@sierraclub.org.

Please vote for up to three 2021 Four Lakes Group board candidates. Both members in a joint membership may vote. Only ballots from active members are valid, so please cut the portion of the back page with your name and address on it. If your ballot is not from a Four Lakes Sierran mailed copy, please write your name and membership number on the back. Please mail ballots to: Lacinda Athen, 4909 Sherwood, Madison, WI 53711 by December 1, 2021.

Voter 1: Ronda Conner Jake Johnson Patrick Stoffel

Write-in: _____

Voter 2: Ronda Conner Jake Johnson Patrick Stoffel

Write-in: _____



Ronda Conner

Environmental conservation has been a consistent passion of mine as long as I can remember. As a child, I enjoyed learning about the world around me by spending countless hours camping, boating and being a student of the great outdoors. I went on to obtain a degree from UW-Madison in the Biological Aspects of Conservation with a certificate from the Institute for Environmental Studies.

I have been concerned about climate change for a long time which inspired me to become a member of the Sierra Club in 2006 and to seek more opportunities. I have been volunteering with the Sierra Club for the last 2.5 years and have been part of the Executive Committee for the past 2 years. I have also been working on the Beyond Coal team, Climate Crew, National and local texting team, Amplify team, Mailings team and now Digital team. I have been leading texting volunteers and graphics volunteers on volunteer nights. I hope to continue to put my passion to work in the Executive Committee to connect people to the local issues in tangible ways that connect people to their power to effect change.



Jake Johnson

I strongly support the efforts of the Sierra Club. I am a passionate environmentalist who has led volunteer efforts in our community including tree plantings, invasive removals, park clean-ups, and fundraisers. I started a scholarship fund for local students who volunteer with kids in our community with \$6000 awarded to date. I served on the Fitchburg City Council as a progressive who pioneered several park projects, public transit initiatives, tree policy, and safety measures.

I serve on the board of Movin' Out, a not for profit that builds and maintains housing for people with disabilities and their families, (President, VP, & treasurer) and we have grown the organization exponentially. I have strong accounting skills, working with multi-million-dollar budgets at MO & Fitchburg. I served as district captain in Fitchburg

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Four Lakes Group Sierra Club
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<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>



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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 page. If we don't have your email address, we mail you a hard copy – or you can 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.

Recycling Away from Home

While pandemic isolation has been tough on everyone, with good vaccination rates in Dane County, many events have returned – and among those are some of Madison's festivals. However, as some festivals have returned, so have the old issues with trash and recycling.

Despite last year's hiatus, with many years of experience to draw on, we remember what to do. In fact, we've already been doing it – at AfricaFest on August 21, and the Waterfront portion of the Orton-Front Festival on August 28 & 29. We also have plans to be at WORTstock in Madison on September 12, but the major event where we are extending an invite to one and all is the **Willy St Fair, September 18 & 19**.

The Willy St Fair on the 800 – 1000 blocks of Williamson St is a great 2-day celebration of Madison with several stages of great music, and 3 blocks worth of food, fun, drinks and exhibits that marks the unofficial end to summer in Madison. (Not to mention the always fabulous Sunday morning parade!) Each year, it gets a tremendous audience of fair goers, many eager to talk with us about our Sierra Club activities and sign petitions – but also which creates a lot of trash and recycling.

That's where you come in. It's a wonderful event to be at anyhow, so why not join us for a few hours at our booth or wandering up and down the Fair helping keep the recycling sorted to reduce landfill waste? You're sure to have fun and you'll be supporting the Sierra Club at the same time. We'll provide any orientation you need, so all you need to bring is your Sierra Club spirit and enthusiasm.

Just go to <https://signup.com/go/xQGwEZJ> to sign up. Questions? Contact Don Ferber d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.