



Four Lakes Group Sierra Club newsletter, Summer 2022

Four Lakes Group Land Access and Equity Team

Every Kid Outdoors update

Liz Wessel

Despite this time of partisan politics, the Wisconsin *Every Kid Outdoors* (EKO) program was strongly supported across the state during the April Conservation Congress, and bills this year in both the state Senate and Assembly received bipartisan sponsorship. Both bills received hearings and a favorable vote in Committee, and were available for a floor vote in both the Assembly and the Senate. However, neither bill was scheduled for a floor vote before the session ended, which means the bills died.

The Four Lakes Group, along with the Chapter's Land & Wildlife Team, are continuing to build support for this program and reintroduction of bills in the next session. Members of both teams are collecting signatures of people across the state, and working with allies that support this effort in order to build a bigger and broader coalition to get behind the legislative effort.

The proposed Wisconsin *Every Kid Outdoors* program would piggy-back on the National *Every Kid Outdoors* program implemented by the National Park Service where families with fourth graders can apply to the national program and receive a pass that allows them and their families free access to 400 national parks and millions of acres of federal lands and waters. The Wisconsin program would enable 4th graders to use this same pass at Wisconsin State parks, providing Wisconsin's 4th graders greater access and incentive to visit our fine state parks system.

In addition to building support for the Wisconsin program, our team continues to educate families about the national program which runs from September 1st to August 31st of the following year. The 2021/2022 pass is still good for trips made this summer. For more information, go to everykidoutdoors.gov.

Looking forward

The team and Four Lakes Group volunteers hope to participate in several events over the summer starting with National Trails Day

continued on page 3

Chair's Column

Ronda Conner, Co-Chair

Greetings from the Four Lakes Group of the Sierra Club!

I hope you are enjoying the warmer weather, and have had a chance to enjoy the spring blooms and trees budding all around. I find so much hope and inspiration this time of year in the great outdoors. Everything comes to life, and I am reminded that summer is fast on its way. Summer is my favorite season.

I also find hope and inspiration as a volunteer. Did you know that the Four Lakes Group is a volunteer led organization? I am just amazed at how much extra time that I can find in a day to volunteer. I am also amazed by all the volunteers that I work with. It speaks volumes that people could be doing anything but choose to volunteer in their spare time. It is empowering to work with people who are passionate about protecting our environment and providing access for all to enjoy the great outdoors. As you read the newsletter, I am hoping that you will find meaningful ways to engage with us as well. We have many ways to volunteer both virtually and in-person.

We will continue to have a presence at events around Dane County, and hopefully beyond!

continued on page 2

In This Issue

<i>Land Equity Access Team Update</i>	1
<i>Chair's Column</i>	1
<i>Recycling Away from Home</i>	2
<i>Join the Four Lakes Group Board</i>	2
<i>Becoming a Sustainable Good Guy</i>	3
<i>Four Lakes Group Contacts</i>	3
<i>Tree Planting Project</i>	4
<i>Volunteer Spotlight – Lisa Szela</i>	5
<i>Madison Metro Redesign</i>	6
<i>Promoting the Sierra Club</i>	6
<i>Focus on Energy</i>	7
<i>Volunteer Nights</i>	7
<i>FREE bus to the MREA Energy Fair</i>	8

Recycling Away from Home – and More

It's been since 2019 that we've had a full complement of east side Madison festivals. And that means our waste reduction efforts are in demand. We're ready to respond, which not only gives us the opportunity to bring attention to waste, but to table at these events to engage a receptive audience regarding our issues and work.

But the evolution of dealing with trash is also providing another opportunity to move forward with waste reduction. Increasing attention is being paid to the costs and problems with waste (including climate change), and the need to do more. More events are going zero waste or even composting, with businesses too looking to be more community-minded and reduce contributions to landfills. In addition, Dane County's landfill is filling up, and they are looking at an additional site where they can have an entire advanced sustainability campus.

The pump is primed, and with additional contacts and interests identified, we're trying to coordinate with others to strategize how we can produce less waste and a more sustainable future. If you're interested in helping create more fundamental change by connecting with others and developing more structured broad scale approaches and policies and implementing changes in our community, contact Don Ferber to be part of this effort.

For those focused on recycling at the festivals, or to help table, the list of where we'll be at and where to sign up is below. If you want to help coordinate further or help find RAH volunteers, please contact Don to discuss.

Atwoodfest, July 30 - 31

Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/VGMUUTj>

Africa Fest, August 20

Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/rOrcGfB>

Orton Park Festival, August 26 - 28

Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/tphfUsA>

Willy St Fair, September 17 - 18

Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/GUcwFLp>

We hope you'll join us to help show your support for community waste reduction at these events. Contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Our outreach provides a great opportunity to talk directly with new, old and potential members about the Sierra Club while doing good. Our Recycling Away from Home team continues to provide organizational and logistical support to major community events and festivals. I can't wait to be a part of these fun and rewarding events!

In this issue, you can also read about volunteering at the MREA Energy Fair (or even take a free bus there) and elsewhere, learn about our Land Equity Access team and how you can get involved, help reduce people's energy bills; or join our board if you want to help set the direction of our Four Lakes Group. And we always welcome volunteers such as Lisa Szela. Maybe we can spotlight you next!

Let's make sure to engage in whatever ways we are comfortable and treat each other with kindness. A lot of people are feeling the ripple effects of the pandemic. It takes less energy to smile than frown, so let's spread those smiles around!

Join our Four Lakes Group Board

If you're a dedicated environmentalist who has been wondering how to make a difference, joining our Four Lakes Group board is a great way to do just that. It gives you an opportunity to pursue your interests and lead on issues you care about while helping make decisions and setting directions and priorities for the Four Lakes Group. It allows you to follow your passions, but also delve into expanding current skills or gaining new ones. Non-profit leadership experience can also be good for your resume and future endeavors.

The board generally meets once a month. Time commitment is generally an hour or two a week – more if you wish. Much of the learning is on the job, but we also provide support as needed to help you feel comfortable and find your niche.

Candidates may submit their application by August 31 at <https://tinyurl.com/4LGboard>, and please send us a photo as well. Our elections are then held in the fall. For more information, contact Mary Reames at mlreames@sbcglobal.net.

Adventures in Becoming a Sustainable Good Guy

Patrick Stoffel

I want to be a good citizen, a good American, a decent person. I want to help others when I can. So, what can I do to reduce climate change global warming? I am one person; are my efforts meaningless and/or negligible? No. The cause of our problem with climate change is that a bunch of me's – added together and accumulated over time – created this mess. What I do is being done by billions of other people around the world. I eat, commute to work, purchase things, live in a home with a furnace and air conditioner, and I produce trash. I cannot control those billions of others; I can barely control my own actions. But I can make decisions and do things myself, to contribute to the solution. I can do my part. I can do whatever I can to encourage other people to do their part - what is needed. And I can support leaders who will work to implement things that need to be done.

So, I can only do things to help on a small scale – by altering *my* actions. I can change my behaviors, my actions, to try to bring about the changes that need to be implemented by everyone, one person at a time starting with me. And that has been my goal to become self-sufficient and to live in a sustainable way. Buzz words, right? I want to be a net source of energy, a net source of food and water. I want to have zero net garbage production – find purposes for all that I use, or don't use it. And along the way, help as many of Earth's creatures as possible. I want other people to see the benefits of this and implement changes in *their* behavior. If I can change or help one other person to see the wisdom in this, then I have been successful. I have done something to reduce climate change. I have been a good citizen, a good American, a decent person. I have helped others.

First up – solar panels

I rented the same apartment when I moved to southern Wisconsin in 2005 until Halloween 2019. I had finished a masters engineering program at UW Madison on Sustainable Systems Engineering in 2016 and wanted to do something back then to contribute to sustainable living. I suggested putting solar panels up on the apartments to save money and reduce carbon emissions. I'm sure my conservative landlord resented that a supporter of Bernie Sanders had given her *any* suggestions, much less suggestions to improve HER business. When I finally bought my first house, moving in November 1st, 2019, I was determined to put my education to some use. So I made the decision to have solar panels installed on the roof.

To be continued.....

equity access update continued from page 1

on June 4th. We also hope to participate at an environmental fun fair June 10th at William G Lunney Lake Farm County Park, and a fishing event July 23rd at Stewart Lake County Park near Mt Horeb. Volunteers can participate at all of these events with a variety of simple but fun tasks. We also sometimes focus on our equity and access work at our Saturday Farmers Market table, another great place to be to connect with people.

Dane County has contracted for a survey that will look directly at access issues for county public lands and parks – including the Henry Vilas Zoo. If you are interested in access to public lands and parks, we encourage you to volunteer to help with the Dane County Parks survey. For more information about this effort, please contact Susan Sanford at [sandford.susan@countyofdane.com](mailto:sanford.susan@countyofdane.com).

continued on page 5

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

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

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

Ronda Conner*, Co-Chair, 608-245-3931

rondaconner@hotmail.com

Don Ferber*, Conservation Chair, Outreach, Newsletter, RAH, (608) 217-2959,

d_ferber@sbcglobal.net

Erik Pettersen*, Co-treasurer (608) 515-4426,

erik.pettersen14@gmail.com

Jake Johnson*, (608) 443-6117

jake@paradymeproductions.com

Mary Reames*, Co-Chair (608) 310-3290,

mlreames@sbcglobal.net

Patrick Stoffel*, stpa0001@hotmail.com

Liz Wessel*, Co-treasurer, Land Equity

Access team, (608) 238-9934,

lizard59sc@yahoo.com

Kathy Mulbrandon, Outings Chair, (608)

215-9706, kmulbrandon@gmail.com

Tree Planting Project with the West High School Green Club

The Four Lakes Chapter of the Sierra Club partnered with the Madison West High School Green Club to plant a number of trees and shrubs at Pinnacle Park in Fitchburg on May 21st. This is part of the Four Lakes effort (see Land Equity Access Campaign Update) to create more equitable access to green space and improve the green spaces people visit and use.

Pinnacle Park is a newer undeveloped small park in northeastern Fitchburg on Post Rd near Madison's south side, and is located in a part of town without many parks or outdoor amenities. The tree planting, coordinated by Jake Johnson, was originally scheduled for April 30th as part of the Nature Conservancy's City



This event garnered some media interest as well, and we were gratified to have WKOW-TV 27 show up to film part of the event which can be found [here](#). The students found this was both fun and educational and a great way to start enhancing a local park. In addition, each tree and shrub will help sequester carbon, and is part of helping mitigate climate change – and something we all can do.

Volunteers are also working with the Fitchburg Parks Department to survey area residents as to the amenities they would like to have at their neighborhood park. The tree planting is designed to provide some future shade in certain areas, along with making the park more attractive, but not to intrude on future park development that may be desired.



Nature Challenge, but the threat of severe weather forced us to reschedule the event to May 21st. Unfortunately, this limited the number of students who were available on the 21st, but the three who came had a great time, and we had several other community leaders who helped as well.

Fitchburg Parks pre-dug the holes in preparation for the event. Volunteers from the Four Lakes Group first provided instruction on how to prepare the site and the tree for planting, how to treat the root ball, and how to properly plant a tree, and then worked with the students to plant the trees and shrubs in the designated locations around the park, including a bur oak, a redbud, a witch hazel, and a hazelnut.



Volunteer Spotlight – Lisa Szela

Zane Franke

Originally from the Green Bay area, Lisa Szela is research specialist at UW-Madison and an active member of the Four Lakes Group Land Equity & Access Team. Lisa started volunteering for the Four Lakes Group at the beginning of 2021 when the team was first launched.

“As I've gotten more involved with the outdoors,” Lisa says, “I've gotten more and more interested in volunteering, doing advocacy work and trying to help as much as I can with various issues concerning climate change and outdoor recreation.”

She says that it piqued her interest because she had noticed equity and diversity issues within access to her favorite outdoor activities, and this team seemed to be a great way to make a difference.

“I feel like you can actually do something on a local basis. Sometimes, it feels almost more impactful than the big campaigns,” Lisa says.

Together with the team, Lisa has worked on the *Every Kid Outdoors* campaign, planned different outings for National Trails Day and Gear Day, and helped with surveying the people in Dane County on transportation access needs.

“The team members are super passionate and considerate,” she says. “They're doing this outside of their normal jobs and have other commitments, but they're just so excited to be working on some of these projects. People are very welcoming and they seem to value everybody's input.”

Lisa's volunteering doesn't end with the Sierra Club – she is involved with Friends of Devil's Lake State Park, Wisconsin Climbers Association, Ice Age Trail Alliance, and North Country Trail Association's Next Generation Coalition. In between work and volunteering, she can be found cross country skiing, backpacking, climbing or section-hiking The Ice Age Trail.

When it comes to finding motivation, Lisa says that she feels a collective sense of immediacy in facing climate change and wants to be a part of the activism movement.

“We can't sit around anymore,” she says. “If you're able to help, you probably should.”



Lisa Szela hiking the Ice Age Trail

equity access update continued from page 3

We are also supporting Dane County Parks planning process for Indian Lake and Halfway Prairie County Parks. You can find the survey online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RBRS82K>. We will have a table at Indian Lake on National Trails Day, Saturday, June 4th to talk about this planning process and let people know what our team is doing, so come out and visit us there, or contact Liz to volunteer and enjoy a great day in the park.

We're continuing to work with partners to develop a pilot shuttle service that would provide better access to Vilas Zoo and Park in Madison, and William G Lunney Lake Farm Park just southeast of Madison.

Please consider joining our team to provide better access for all to nature! We have so many projects and opportunities for you to pick and choose from, so contact Liz Wessel at lizard59sc@yahoo.com to talk about your interests.

Madison Metro Redesign

Madison Metro is in the process of revising their bus routes. In part, this is in preparation for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and will emulate that with current buses until they acquire the new (electric!) buses that will run on the BRT routes. The basic idea of the redesign is to serve people better, encourage more ridership (and less driving), and also provide better service for those who want or need public transit options.

Why does this matter? Buses are a much more efficient and climate friendly form of transportation than cars, and part of the solution to reducing vehicle miles traveled and cutting climate change emissions (as well as other pollution) from transportation. Buses also are an essential means of transit for many people who cannot or choose not to drive for accessing work, schools, or other destinations. Hence good mass transit is also a critical equity issue, and without good service, too many people will not have access to essential aspects of their lives. Finally, with our concerns about equitable access to nature, where buses go can impact who can access some parks and natural areas.

The Four Lakes Group did our own analysis of the draft proposal based on a number of criteria and issues. While the proposed reroute and BRT would provide faster transit times and extended service hours in some areas, there was also some reduction in geographic coverage – a constant struggle and balancing act with bus routing. While there will always be winners and losers from route changes, we wanted to focus on minimizing negative impacts and maximizing the positive ones for those who most need mass transit.

Based on our analysis, we expressed concerns on several issues, the most significant being providing good service especially to low-income areas and those who most rely on convenient bus access when and where needed. The initial draft plan looked at equity for low-income ridership community-wide, but it included students downtown who already had good bus service and were less impacted by the redesign. We urged Madison Metro to do a re-evaluation minus the downtown low-income student population to ensure outlying low-income areas that are generally more diverse will be better served by the proposed rerouting plan.

We had particularly heard concerns on the north side regarding loss of service for low-income and people with disabilities, or that it only ran at peak hours – but many

people do not work 9 to 5 jobs. In addition, the reroute would result in a lack of direct access to an affordable grocery store where many north side residents shop. We also voiced concerns regarding less frequent late evening airport service since there are many late evening flight arrivals and a lot of employees who work late hours.

Since we have been working with Dane County Parks regarding better access to several of our fine County Parks, we also analyzed how access to these parks would change with the proposed redesign. It appears that the net change will be minimal, although access to the Jenny & Kyle preserve (an accessible park on Madison's south side) will be lost.

Based on concerns expressed, a number of proposed amendments have been laid out to deal with many of the issues raised, especially on the north side. There is a Transportation Policy and Planning Board meeting on June 6th, and the Madison Common Council is expected to vote on the plan on June 7th, and both are opportunities to still voice your opinions.

Promoting the Sierra Club

So many great events, so little time, and so much to do! That's where you come in. As a grass-roots organization, we depend on volunteers, and with all the critical issues we are working on, we need help to engage with people on the issues we care about.

Included in this newsletter are a listing of some east side Madison events we table at, the MREA Energy Fair – and the Saturday Dane County Farmers Market on the Capitol Square where we have a prime spot. But we get invites to other events, and there are many more we never hear about – especially outside Dane County.

Do you know of other events we should be at? Would you be willing to consider being there at those events and talking with others about the Sierra Club? We're happy to talk with you about what's involved, what you need to know, and get you set with materials. One good option is to join us at one of the events we're already at to get a better sense of what's involved.

We're rarin' to hear from you. Just contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

Let's Focus on Energy - Equitably

What if there were a program that would help people save money on energy bills and reduce their carbon footprint – except that you couldn't use it because you had to invest your own money first – money you didn't have – to utilize the program? Or you weren't eligible since you didn't own the building you wanted to make more energy efficient or install solar on? Or perhaps the whole process seemed too complicated and the process was outside of your comfort zone?

Such is the case in Wisconsin which has a very good program administered by the Public Service Commission (PSC) called Focus on Energy (FOE) to support homeowners and businesses who want to install solar or energy efficiency measures. Funded by state-mandated contributions from utilities, the primary goal of this program is to incentivize home and business owners to reduce energy use and carbon emissions.

Every four years, and this year is one, the program undergoes a Quadrennial Review. As part of this, the PSC is inviting comments on the program's elements and how it should be restructured. There are three phases in the review process – a macro policy and priorities phase as to what the program should include and focus on, and phases 2 and 3 that will get into more details about goals, budgeting and cost-effectiveness, measuring performance and pilot programs.

But while the Focus program has been notably effective for returning nearly \$4 in benefits for each \$1 invested from the program, there are also significant problems with eligibility and access to the funding. For one thing, generally you need to be a home or business owner to take advantage of this program. Since many renters pay for their own utilities, landlords have little incentive to invest money in energy reduction or clean energy.

Second, since FOE provides rebates for funding investments in energy improvements, it requires home or business owners to have the money to perform the upgrades. Since a basic requirement for Focus is to provide equitable access to the funding, this raises significant concerns regarding distribution of funding.

This relates to the concern that some of Wisconsin's citizens, including in communities of color in historically red-lined areas in Milwaukee, already have

high energy burdens (the percentage of income that goes to pay utility bills). They are most in need of relief from their energy bills, and often have inefficient homes or apartments or appliances, and could most benefit from support for efficiency upgrades or solar, but can least afford it.

A further constraint is that some people are not really made aware of the FOE program or feel comfortable with all the paperwork requirements and dealing with contractors on home improvements, and while they could potentially benefit from the Focus program, are effectively shut out without having support to navigate the bureaucracy and deal with contractors and all the decisions and disruptions.

The Sierra Club has successfully brought the energy burden issue (along with utility shut-offs) to the attention of the Public Service Commission, and is advocating for the Focus program to better serve those most in need through added support for high energy burden customers, lessening of requirements, and incentives for landlords to utilize Focus funding that would benefit their renters.

Perhaps then they can change the name of the program to "Focus on Equitable Energy".

Volunteer Nights

Perhaps you've been thinking you'd like to volunteer with the Sierra Club and you're not sure what you want to do. Or perhaps you have time constraints, but want to help, and you can do an hour or two once a month.

Then our second Wednesday's Volunteer Nights might be just the thing for you. Led by our Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Hogan, sometimes with the assistance of experienced volunteers, it provides you the opportunity to learn about some of what the Wisconsin Chapter is doing – and then help out with some simple tasks that can be accomplished in an hour or so. And since they are currently online, you can do it all from the comfort of your own home!

Or perhaps the second Wednesday time frame doesn't work for you, but you're still interested and eager to learn more. Simply email Katie at kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org and she'll gladly set up a time to talk with you. If you have a specific interest in one of our teams such as Beyond Coal, tar sands, water, or lands and wildlife, she can also put you in touch with the staff lead for that team.

Happy volunteering!



Four Lakes Group Sierra Club
754 Williamson St
Madison, WI 53703
[http://www.sierraclub.org/
wisconsin/four-lakes](http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes)



Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Madison, WI
Permit No. 168

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. You can also visit <https://tinyurl.com/4LGnews> for our newsletters.

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.

FREE Madison Bus to the MREA Energy Fair

Saturday, June 25
7 am – 10 pm



What's one of the most economical and low emission motorized travel options? If you said "bus", you're right! And it just so happens that, once again, we're offering you the opportunity to travel in an environmentally friendly manner to one of the best clean energy and sustainability fairs around.

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association's Energy Fair will once again be back in its full three-day splendor, offering a plethora of great workshops and presentations, loads of exhibitors to talk with and learn from, terrific keynote speakers, great food options, and fine music – and it's a zero-waste event to boot!

If you want to come for just one day, Saturday is a great choice, and you can go up and back in a luxurious motor coach bus that starts in Middleton at 7 am with 3 Madison pick-up locations, and leaves to come back at 7 pm, getting to Middleton before 10. To get on the bus, simply **go to <https://tinyurl.com/energyfairbus> to sign up** and for more details on pick up locations and times. For address, please enter the pickup location of your choice.

To consider carpooling on other days, go to <https://www.theenergyfair.org/camping-hotels/#carpool>.

Happy trails, and see you at the Fair!