

**Autumn Assembling – for a Cause**  
**October 2 – 4, Perlstein Resort, Wisconsin Dells**

Not just for a cause, but because we value the world we live in, and we want to explore, enjoy and protect it now – and for future generations. In the spirit of John Muir, we ask you to ‘climb’ your way to this year’s Autumn Assembly to share your glad tidings and come receive some additional ones – even if there are virtual mountains we have to climb to receive them. Together, we can find and receive those tidings for our cause.

It’s also because we value you and your participation in the John Muir Chapter, and also your local group if you are in an area with one. You are a key component of our chapter and your views and interests are valued. The Autumn Assembly is your opportunity to join and meet fellow Sierrans from around the state.

The three-day Autumn Assembly on October 2-4 at the Perlstein Resort in Lake Delton is a fun, family-friendly event featuring indoor and outdoor activities for people of all ages, including hands-on activist workshops with three great keynote speakers. Many sessions will provide opportunities to learn and connect with fellow Sierrans,

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**Volunteer Opportunities**

**Webmaster**

**Description:** Love pixels and code? We need you! Our website is in WordPress, but moving to Drupal. Knowledge of CMS platforms, HTML/CSS, and Photoshop or other graphic program. This is an administrative role, to make edits and changes, and support other editors.

**Time commitment:** ~ 1-2 hours a week to ensure info gets to members in a timely fashion.

**Contact:** Lacinda Athen

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**Chair’s Corner**

I want to personally invite Four Lakes Group members to this year’s statewide **Autumn Assembly on October 2 - 4** at the Perlstein Resort and Conference Center near the Wisconsin Dells. The Sierra Club’s annual gathering is being held this year in a beautiful setting on Lake Blass in Lake Delton, and is a great opportunity to meet fellow members, hear inspiring speakers and learn about our local and state programs.

We had anticipated that **Sierra Club National President Aaron Mair** would join us at this year’s Autumn Assembly. Mair is the first African-American President of the Sierra Club and has extensive experience including 30 years of environmental activism and justice work, and over 25 years as a Sierra Club volunteer.

However, a major March for Justice is being held in Detroit on October 3, and Detroit’s justice leaders have requested his presence. Detroit has suffered many major challenges, with minority communities being directly impacted by coal power plants and other toxic pollutant sources. The Sierra Club is standing with the citizens of Detroit to fight back against these injustices, and President Mair’s presence reflects this support. But we look forward to President Mair joining us in the future, and will inform you when that occurs.

Our **Community Night benefit night at the Madison Mallards** game on July 17 ended up getting rained out

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*Perlstein Resort dining hall overlooking Lake Blass*

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and we'll honor a number of environmental champions at the Saturday night dinner awards ceremony. Remembering our roots as an outings organization, we also have several very special optional outings. Friday, we have an early afternoon tour of the International Crane Foundation, and after that, we'll visit the Aldo Leopold Center with its net zero Legacy Center and visit the famous "Shack". We'll close out the Autumn Assembly on Sunday with an optional geology boat trip of the Upper Dells after a presentation on the geology of Wisconsin by noted geologist and author David Mickelson.

Three keynote speakers on Saturday will offer insights into political change and connecting with nature:

- **Mike McCabe**, author of *Blue Jeans in High Places* and former executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, is one of Wisconsin's leading political analysts and influence trackers. Mike will provide fundamental insights into what's wrong with our political system, the link between the environment and democracy, and ways to set both on a path back to health.
- **James Edward Mills**, author of *The Adventure Gap*, is a freelance journalist and independent media producer who specializes in creating stories about outdoor recreation, environmental conservation, acts of charitable giving and practices of sustainable living. James will share his vision and insights on connecting more people with nature.
- **Scott Wittkopf**, a political communications consultant, and director of the *Forward Institute*, is noted for his skills in creating progressive campaign messages. Scott will discuss how to effectively frame messages to reach others – and will lead a workshop allowing participants to enhance their messaging on specific issues or campaigns.

Situated on lovely Lake Blass, the Autumn Assembly also offers plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Attendees can enjoy canoeing, early morning bird walks, campfires, films, and a silent auction filled with eco-friendly treasures.

Registration deadline is September 20, or contact the Chapter office after that. Learn more and register online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/2015-autumn-assembly>. Registration is \$55 per person for Saturday only or \$70 including Sunday. Lodging options and prices are on the website. Some scholarships are available for Autumn Assembly volunteers.

Please come assemble – for our cause.

## **Farewell to Shahla**

July 29, we were finally able to thank Shahla Werner for her over 7 years of service as Executive Director of the John Muir Chapter. Our Locally Grown, Nationally Known fundraiser at EVP Coffee on Mineral Point Rd was an appropriate place and occasion for this celebration and retrospective. One of Shahla's many talents was raising funds for the chapter, so having her farewell be at another successful fundraiser was fitting.

Many chapter leaders, some who came from a considerable distance, were in attendance, along with such luminaries as Spencer Black of the national board, Bruce Nilles, Deputy Director of Conservation, and Joanne Kloppenberg, running for Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice. The event was again skillfully planned with wonderful appetizers prepared under the leadership of Liz Wessel and Caryl Terrell – and even exceeded our fundraising goal!

Not only were we able to revisit some of Shahla's many special moments with the Chapter, but we heard from Shahla how much she is enjoying her new entomology position with the Wisconsin Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection. We know she'll be of great service to the state in her new position, and that she left our Chapter on solid foundations.

## Fall 2105 Outings

For all outings, wear weather and activity appropriate clothing, and footwear. For work outings, wear work clothes and gloves. Bring fluids to drink, and a snack or food, and sunscreen, a hat, and insect repellent if needed. If carpooling, please be a little early. Contact the leader to RSVP, if you have questions, or with concerns about weather or 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, kmulbrandon@gmail.com

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

### **Saturday, October 10, 10 am**

#### **Fall Hike, Lodi Segment, Ice Age Trail**

Join us for a 6-7 mile moderate difficulty hike on the Lodi Segment of the IAT. You'll learn about wetlands and glaciated landscapes, and about the restoration of the prairie and woodland areas on this very scenic Trail segment. Take Hwy 113 north of Madison 2.5 miles past the Village of Dane. Turn left on Lee Rd. for 1 mile, then north on Lodi Springfield Rd. for 0.8 miles to the parking area on the left with the kiosk. To carpool from Madison, meet at 9 a.m. at the Hill Farm State Office Building (DOT) west parking lot on Sheboygan Ave. RSVP to David Smith.

### **Saturday, October 17, 10:00 am**

#### **Autumn Hike, Table Bluff Segment, Ice Age Trail**

Enjoy a colorful autumn trek on this beautiful section of the Ice Age Trail. This Trail segment is in the driftless (unglaciated) area where you can observe and learn about the marvelous restored prairies and oak woodlands, as well as driftless area topography and geologic history. Take Hwy 14 west of Cross Plains to Cty KP. Go north for 2.3 miles to Table Bluff Rd. Turn left for .3 miles to parking area on the left. RSVP to Kathy Mulbrandon.

### **Saturday, October 24, 9 am**

#### **Vermont Creek Streambank Restoration**

Join Trout Unlimited and Dane County to help with streambank restoration, learn what we cut and why, and what's involved. Plus you can learn about fish habitat and good fishing spots! We'll cut and haul brush, and will probably burn brush piles. Take Hwy 14 into Black Earth. Turn left at the stoplight on Mills St. Go .2 mi south to Webb St, turn right and then stay right on Danz Ln. We'll park off the lane near the Creek. RSVP to Don Ferber.

### **Saturday, December 5, 9 am**

#### **Primrose Creek Streambank Restoration**

Another Trout Unlimited/Dane County outing to help with

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## Cruisin' for Cuisine

Our motto is explore, enjoy and protect the planet – so come explore some of the Madison area's fine culinary spots, enjoy gastronomic delights, and protect your inner environment with good food! Plus, we'll include the company of fellow Sierrans so you can broaden your horizons (social and intellectual) as part of the adventure. Wanna join? RSVP Lacinda a week ahead to reserve a spot, and she'll provide the dinner time.

### **Tuesday, October 13: Cruisin' for Cuisine – Edgewater Boat House**

Located at lake level in the historic Langdon Building, The Boathouse is part of a long Wisconsin tradition of casual waterfront spots where people meet from land and lake to enjoy great company with burgers, brats, classic fish fry, and the best selection of cold craft beers. RSVP to Lacinda Athen.

### **Thursday, November 19: Cruisin for Cuisine to the Stamm House**

Join us at the newly remodeled Stamm House to see if they really do have one of the best fish fries in town! Built around 1847, this building has character AND great food - a winning combination. RSVP to Lacinda Athen.

*Volunteer Opportunities - cont. from page 1*

### **Outings Leader**

**Description:** One of Sierra Club's primary missions is to encourage participation in outdoor activities. If you enjoy hiking, cycling, camping, paddling outdoors, and are willing to help others do the same, we'd love to hear from you. Outings leadership is a very rewarding opportunity.

**Time commitment:** Varies, based on outings led

**Contact:** Kathy Mulbrandon

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*Outings - continued from page 3*

streambank efforts, and learn about restoration and fish habitat. We'll cut and haul brush, and may burn brush piles. The location is southwest of Verona, but contact Don for directions or visit our web site. RSVP to Don Ferber.

**Sunday, December 13, 6:30 pm**  
**Annual Winter Bonfire at Picnic Point**

Join us for our annual celebratory Winter Bonfire to share good cheer and enjoy a crisp earlier winter evening with fellow Sierrans and other outdoor lovers. Bring beverages (warm or otherwise) and a snack to share (or something to roast on the fire), and stories to share or holiday songs, and we'll have a merry old time! Picnic Point is off University Bay Drive. Free parking available. Meet 1 mile in at the farthest fire pit. Wear a warm hat, gloves or mittens, and boots! RSVP to Kathy Mulbrandon.

**Thursday, January 21, 6:15 pm**  
**Full Moon Ski/Snowshoe/Hike Prairie Moraine County Park**

Enjoy a full moon winter evening ski/snowshoe/hike at Prairie Moraine County Park southeast of Verona. We'll ski/snowshoe or hike through prairies and woods where you can enjoy Dane County's most visible section of the glacial terminal moraine on a (hopefully!) full moon night. Families 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. RSVP to Kathy Mulbrandon.

**Fighting Bobfest – September 19, Madison**

Going to Bobfest at Breese Stevens Field? Then consider volunteering at the Sierra Club Table. Contact Don Ferber at [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net) to volunteer for a shift.

***Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts***

On the web: [www. http://4lakes.org](http://4lakes.org) • Like us on Facebook  
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\* Executive Committee members

**John Muir Chapter  
Welcomes New Director**

Replacing Shahla Werner as John Muir Chapter Executive Director was not easy. We were very fortunate to obtain the services of Bill Davis as our new Chapter Director. Bill has a long history in the environmental movement, having worked with a number of leading environmental organizations, been the executive director of three of them, and served as a private environmental consultant. His extensive experience will serve us well and put us on solid footing for more successes in the future.

Bill's familiarity with our issues here is a real plus. In addition, his wife, Jane Elder, is Executive Director of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, and has also worked with our chapter on strategic planning efforts in the past. These are all strong connections to build on as we welcome Bill into the fray.

*Volunteer Opportunities - cont. from page 3*

**Board Member**

**Description:** Do you love the natural world, and want to protect it? Then our local Sierra Club board should be on your radar. The Four Lakes Group addresses issues in Madison and South Central Wisconsin. Serving over 4,400 area Sierra Club members, the Board coordinates volunteers efforts, partners with other organizations, and communicates advocacy and policy information to leaders and public officials.

**Time commitment:** Board meetings are about 2 hours each month. Committee or campaign work can add a few hours a week.

**Contact:** Dave Blouin

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# Community Energy Conversations: Determining our Energy Future

## The Past

Last year, MGE proposed the most radical and regressive rate restructuring in the country, taking residential electric fixed rates from \$10.40 to over \$68/mo. in 2017. That's more than low energy users pay in total for electricity, including use!

A loud community outcry to this billing scheme resulted in MGE proposing a \$19 fixed residential electric fee in 2015 and withdrawing their 2016 and 2017 proposals. Despite continued strong opposition to an 80% increase and a similar fixed fee increase on natural gas, MGE proceeded with this request that the Walker dominated Public Service Commission (PSC) approved. Businesses received even higher fixed rate hikes.

## Your Present

These regressive rate hikes create disincentives to save energy, take energy efficiency measures, or install solar. They burden low energy users, many of whom are low income, minorities or elderly, and create a less welcoming business environment for start ups and low energy use businesses.

With no community input, MGE developed a terrible proposal. When the community responded, MGE tempered their request. MGE is now holding Community Energy Conversations to get your feedback on our energy future. Subsequent to the conversations, a town meeting will be held this fall to derive directions and recommendations, and a community energy partnership formed next spring to develop a 2016 rate proposal to the PSC.

## Our Future

What's at stake here is our energy future. Will MGE (and us) continue to rely on nearly 88% fossil fuels in the face of climate change, or will we reduce energy use and use renewable energy?

We urge you to sign up to participate, and ask friends and neighbors to also sign up. If you are involved with any community organizations, get them to take a stance on our energy future as well.

What do you, and we, really want as a community, and what should you ask MGE for when you participate in a Community Energy Conversation?

- A plan to divest from ownership in the Elm Road and Columbia and coal power plants;
- Reduce fixed rate charges to previous levels for both residential and business customers;
- Work with Dane County and the cities of Madison, Middleton, Monona and Fitchburg on a coordinated plan for energy and greenhouse gas reductions with specific goals;
- Implement strong residential and business incentive programs for energy efficiency and solar, with support for low income residents;
- Support the EPA's Clean Power Plan;
- Advocate for a higher Renewable Energy Standard (RES) for Wisconsin;
- Develop an ongoing community partnership for future rate designs and energy plans.

Sign up for the Community Energy Conversations:  
<https://www.mge.com/community-conversations/>

Where to go for more information:  
<http://www.repowermadison.org/>  
or RePower Madison on Facebook

It's your opportunity to help determine our energy future. Raise your voice to make sure our community values of equity, fairness, and a sustainable future will be heard and adhered to.

## Tar Sand Pipeline Update

The Enbridge Line 61 tar sands pipeline issue won't go away – not that Enbridge and the state legislature haven't done their best (worst?). After the Dane County Zoning and Land Regulation (ZLR) Committee required Enbridge to carry additional Environmental Liability Insurance to build a Line 61 pump station, the state legislature passed a law stopping counties from requiring pipeline insurance. Enbridge claims they had nothing to do with this. So, who was this done for, and why at this time?

Whether the issue is settled remains to be seen. Based on that the county's original requirement Enbridge provide added assurance to meet their obligations in the event of a spill was appropriate, the ZLR committee is now considering a trust fund. The legality, as well as potential response by the state legislature, is being considered.

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*Tar Sands – continued from page 5*

However, an additional specter has reared its ugly head – that Enbridge may build a “twin” tar sands pipeline in the same corridor. Given the current price of a barrel of oil, and that tar sands are expensive to extract and refine, the financial wisdom seems questionable, but Enbridge seems blinded by the prospects of additional profits.

The added tar sands being slated for shipment overseas raises some interesting quandaries. First, another pipeline would likely require additional land. This would entail a foreign corporation being granted eminent domain over U.S. property where owners would not willingly sell the land. In addition, eminent domain is granted for activities in the public interest. How are the profits of a foreign corporation for products we don't benefit from (but do take the risk) in our public interest? This precise question is being raised in courts in the east where natural gas pipelines are being proposed to ship natural gas overseas.

We salute the dedicated activists from 350 Madison and the WiSE Alliance in their pipeline battles. To further enhance the work, 350 Madison obtained a Patagonia grant to hire a coordinator, Carl Whiting, and applied to Patagonia for a second one to continue this effort. In addition, the Sierra Club has become more involved under the leadership of JMC Conservation Programs Coordinator Elizabeth Ward, with added support from national Sierra Club Beyond Oil staff. We obtained some funding to support this work and hire Carl on a limited basis, and are working to raise additional funds to support these efforts.

More information is available on our chapter web site under issues and Moving Beyond Oil. If you wish to get more involved or support our efforts, contact Don Ferber at [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net).

## **Water Sentinels – Moving Forward**

Dane County, blessed with amazing freshwater resources that provide for robust communities, economic activity and recreation, is home to over 500,000 people. Water dominates our landscape. Our lakes and streams may be fishable, but many would question a swim in Lake Monona or Mendota. The lakes and streams suffer from phosphorus and nitrate pollution causing algae

blooms. There are signs chlorides or "salt" are a problem, with increased levels in surface and ground water that pose a significant risk to aquatic life and impact the taste of our drinking water.

What can we do? The Water Sentinels, Sierra Club members and supporters, along with members of the First Unitarian Society of Madison have come together to both understand the threats to our local freshwater resources and also to take action to protect them.

Over the last year, we offered two Introduction to Water Monitoring workshops. Some went on to get involved with citizen stream monitoring organized by the Rock River Coalition. Citizen monitors sample water at designated sites to help understand changes in county water quality.

Water monitoring is winding down until spring, but you can still join a water team or take an Introduction to Water Monitoring workshop. Check the Water Sentinels updates for monitor training or to get involved. See below for updates.

Dane County's hidden water wealth is what lies below the ground as groundwater. Groundwater supplies over 95% of the various water uses from residential to agriculture and industry. Groundwater is key to the vitality and viability of the community. In recent years, Dane County has experienced groundwater "drawdowns".

Lower water levels, dry creek beds and reversed flows are all indicators that water withdrawal is exceeding water recharge or replenishment. Taking the cue from activists and counties north of Dane, several members of the Water Sentinels started to work on a groundwater resolution that would make water quantity and specifically groundwater a priority for the county.

The groundwater resolution team talked to County Supervisors, members of the various Committees involved and showed up at public meetings.

Ultimately the resolution passed in February 2015. We are now reviewing the implementation in Dane County and if groundwater resolutions could be introduced in other Four Lakes Group counties.

Water Sentinels invite you to propose an outing/field trip that expands our understanding of

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*Chair's Corner - continued from page 1*

after a couple of innings. We did have a great time until the rain chased us away and still raised funds for both the Four Lakes Group and the John Muir Chapter. Thanks to everyone who bought tickets and braved the weather. Thanks to the Madison Mallards organization for the support and we hope to do it again next summer!

A big thanks to members who helped contribute to a \$5,000 donation to the **Friends of Dane County Parks Endowment** in honor of the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dane County Parks. The endowment helps expand and support volunteer efforts, education, interpretation and recreation in the Parks. The Dane County Parks system is an area jewel that benefits our economy and quality of life and we are proud to help provide support that will ensure their protection and expansion for the future.

I want to thank and send best wishes to two Four Lakes Group Executive Committee members who moved on. **Judi Duncan** resigned to devote more attention to other issues that she is committed to. **Sierra Pope-Munoz** also resigned after several years of service on the Committee when her husband took a job at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts. We fully expect Sierra will continue working as an environmental educator as she did at Aldo Leopold Nature Center. We'll miss the passion and talents of both Judi and Sierra!

This is your opportunity to help out. (*See page 4.*) The Four Lakes Group needs more talented and committed members like Judi and Sierra to join our Executive Committee. The Committee generally meets once a month and is responsible for oversight of the activities of members and committees of the Group. We're always interested in your input and feedback and also recruiting members interested in serving on committees including the Executive Committee. We also have other opportunities for you to contribute to the workings of the Four Lakes group and share your skills or interests.

As always, please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Hope to see you at the Autumn Assembly and on the trails this fall!

*Water Sentinels - continued from page 6*

local water resources or engages participants in actions to protect and conserve these resources. If you have an idea, please contact Cindy or Liz. Some activities over the last year include:

- Participated in stormwater labeling effort on UW campus with Sierra Student Coalition
- Participated in a Pheasant Branch Conservancy workday
- Toured Oshkosh Biodigester
- Toured the Arboretum to learn about non-point pollution and water management
- Participated in Streambank Restoration project with Trout Unlimited and Sierra Club
- Toured the Springfield BioDigester

To get updates, email [lizmwessel@gmail.com](mailto:lizmwessel@gmail.com). Put "Water Sentinels Update" in the header.

For more information, questions, or to propose an activity please contact: Liz Wessel, 608.238.9934 or [lizmwessel@gmail.com](mailto:lizmwessel@gmail.com) or Cindy Rose, 608.271.6440, [crose5@att.net](mailto:crose5@att.net). Water Sentinels is a joint project of the Four Lakes Group and the First Unitarian Society of Madison.

*Volunteer Opportunities - continued from page 4*

## **Newsletter Layout**

**Description:** Have a gift for graphics? A flair for fashioning text and photos? Please consider offering your talents to help make our newsletter more alluring and enticing. You'll work with the newsletter editor to develop press ready copy.

**Time commitment:** 3 newsletters a year laying out a 8 page newsletter.

**Contact:** Don Ferber

## **Social Media Manager**

**Description:** Are you a social butterfly? Then this position is for you! Need someone to get our messages to members and the public. You'll work to coordinate messaging on issues, outings, advocacy, events and more! Facebook experience required, Hootsuite and Facebook ads a plus. Twitter, Instagram, etc an option.

**Time commitment:** ~ 1-2 hours a week

**Contact:** Lacinda Athen

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Four Lakes Group Sierra Club  
222 S. Hamilton St.  
Madison, WI 53703

<http://4lakes.org>

Non-Profit Organization  
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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. We mail a hard copy if we don't have your email or you request it. Others receive an email letting you know when the newsletter is available- for downloading. Please consider sending your email to [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net) if we don't have it to save the cost and paper of mailings. Plus we can also send you our Enews to keep you better informed.

## Making the AA a Success

The Sierra Club is noted for its grassroots activism. That's where you come in. The Autumn Assembly is one occasion where you can help make our annual statewide meeting a success. Can you offer a few hours to help support this event? We'll be most appreciative, and you'll feel good about doing your part to make it a special event.

Assistance is needed in the following areas:

- Conference packet preparation
- Creating name tags
- Setting up activities
- Publicity
- Awards preparation
- Speakers committee
- Silent auction
- Outings support

Many of these activities can be done ahead of time, some on your own, and some at the Sierra Club office at 754 Williamson St. Others will be on site at the Perlstein Resort. Since you'll be coming anyhow, why not help out? To assist, contact Jacinda Tessman at 608-256-0565 or [jacinda.tessmann@sierraclub.org](mailto:jacinda.tessmann@sierraclub.org).

*Volunteer Opportunities - continued from page 7*

### Communications Manager

**Description:** Are you a whiz with email platforms? We use MailChimp to design and schedule eNews, alerts, and advocacy emails. Help manage our 1,000+ email list for growth and better messaging. Tasks include email management and writing press releases or PSAs. Knowledge of email templates, and graphic manipulation required. Marketing background a plus.

**Time commitment:** ~ 1-2 hours a week to layout and schedule emails, based on inputs.

**Contact:** Lacinda Athen

### Inspiring Connections Outdoors Leader/Board Member

**Description:** We're part of the Sierra Club's National Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) outreach program. ICO offers hiking and camping trips, boating and skiing outings, and other outdoor adventures to underprivileged youth in the area. ICO is seeking both administrative help, and outing leaders to take kids on trips. *Background check required to work with ICO.*

**Time commitment:** Varies depending on activities

**Contact:** Dave Blouin