

Dane County Climate Action Plan - It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work!

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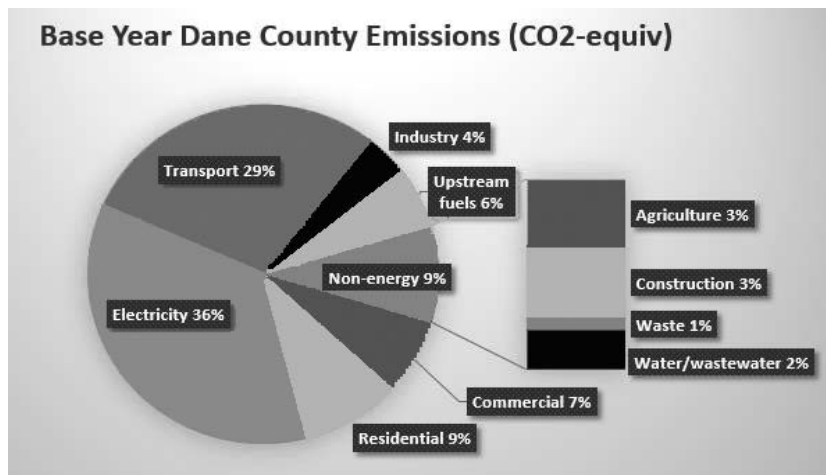
On April 20th, Dane County released its long-awaited Climate Action Plan (CAP). The Sierra Club has been actively involved with the workgroups and providing comments on various plan elements over the last 12 months. This critical plan, and how it gets implemented, will determine Dane County's success in achieving its climate goals and becoming carbon free by 2050.

With over 100 action recommendations in the plan, the CAP provides great opportunities for our Four Lakes Group Climate Action Crew to roll up our sleeves and get involved. The easy-to-accomplish recommendations are likely to occur readily. But that leaves plenty else for us to work on.

We are looking at which issues the Sierra Club will champion, and are ready to draw on the work and expertise of the Chapter's Beyond Coal/Clean Energy and Clean Transportation Teams. Even in these times, we can and are making a difference with our combined efforts and the amplified voices of our volunteers and supporters.

Transitioning Transportation - Clean, Just, and Resilient

Based on 2017 data (see graphic from Dane County's CAP), the transportation sector accounts for 29% of emissions in Dane Co. Simply electrifying vehicles won't solve the inequities and other negative impacts of our transportation system. It is vital that we work for walk- and bike-able communities for all, and to get people out of their cars and into shared transit services.



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Chair's Column

Liz Wessel

Greetings to members, supporters and friends.

I am at my desk writing this to you and imagine many of you working at home, caring for family members and sheltering in place in the best way you know how. Our hearts go out to those in the Sierra Club family and beyond that have gotten COVID-19 and especially to those who have lost friends and family to the disease. This is a huge toll on all of us in Wisconsin and the nine counties of the Four lakes Group.

This time indoors and with minimal travel has sharpened my senses to the transitions in nature outside my door. The pair of Cooper's hawks courting in the mature trees of a local park; the arrival of the different birds and the garden coming into bloom. And in our virtual world, we can find comfort and appreciation for nature too. The lamb photos shared by Kriss Marion in Blanchardville from her farm and Bed & Breakfast. The wonderful pictures of our dogs and cats. And on Earth Day, some of us posted pictures using #Nature of inspiring plants, animals and landscapes.

I'm also reminded of the incredible value of being able to meet face to face. As Joni Mitchell lamented "You don't know what you've got until it's gone". But, when tested, we can still keep doing great work from a digital platform. Pictures, while not the real deal, still help all of us get through this time with the inherent hope that exists in the cycles and resilience of nature. And a Zoom huddle with a team of activists can bring us together across the region or state, and inspire us to go and create change in our communities.

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Our Climate Crew has prioritized the transportation sector which contributes the second highest load of greenhouse gasses in Dane County. This spring we took actions to push for clean, just and resilient transportation in our area while staying safe and social distancing.

Transportation Work Update

- Transportation Equity Day Feb 4th: To honor Rosa Parks' birthday and her efforts to bring change, members of our crew walked around the capitol square engaging bus riders and others regarding their opinions on public transit. (There was strong support!)
- Transitioning Transportation Workshop, March 8th: The Climate Crew hosted a workshop to look at changes we need to make beyond electrification, such as reducing vehicle miles traveled through public transit, land use planning, and other means. See workshop info below.
- Get on Board Day, April 16th: The statewide Transportation Team used this a day to thank our frontline transit workers. Members of our Climate Crew held signs supporting bus drivers at Madison's Bus North Transfer Point. We received thanks, including from a bus driver. Erik Pettersen's letter to the editor was also published in the Wisconsin State Journal.

Transitioning Transportation Workshop

Key strategies for emission reductions beyond electrification can be found in the *Road to Clean Transportation*, a report looking at a number of midwestern states. Here are some findings on emission reduction potentials by 2050:

- Smart Growth and Compact Development: 5 - 16%
- Public Transportation: 0.9 - 3.6 percent
- Active Transportation (walking, biking, etc.): 0.4 - 1.1%
- Shared Mobility (shared/multi-passenger options): 1 - 4%
- Smart Pricing (ending subsidies of high-carbon transportation): 3.6 - 10.7%

Other benefits including connecting people to jobs, attracting business, supporting tourism, health improvements, and addressing equity and justice issues. Bottom line – we can create climate and people friendly communities through better transportation-based policies. The full report can be found at <https://www.1kfriends.org/the-road-to-clean-transportation/>.

Local Climate Action

The Four Lakes Group Climate Crew generally meets the first Wednesday of each month from 5:30 to 7 PM. We now have phone or video conferences until we can meet in person. For more information or if you have questions, please contact: Liz Wessel at lizard59sc@yahoo.com or 608.238.9934.

Looking forward, please watch our events and outings calendar to see when the Sierra Club gives the green light for in person organized events and outings. And I invite you to check out our work on transportation, parks and public lands, and clean energy.

I also hope that all of you do not take democracy for granted. Make sure to check your voting status, ask for an absentee ballot and participate in the August state primary (8/11) and November (11/3) elections. Every voter needs to vote and every vote must be counted!

If all goes well, you'll be able to find all of this and more background on our revised website we hope to complete by the beginning of June!

Our collected thanks go out to our local heroes; those who have continued to work and serve all of our communities during this time.

The Four Lakes Group continues to provide actions and volunteer opportunities that recognizes social distancing to protect the health and welfare of volunteers, staff and activists. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns or ideas for these times.



Be kind to each other!

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COVID, Climate Change, and Coal

It is said that if we don't learn from our mistakes, then we are bound to repeat them. While our current pandemic is not something we enjoy thinking about and wish would go away, perhaps it offers some positive lessons we can use to create a better and more resilient future. Isn't that something we all want?

What's happening

Well before COVID-19, we knew climate change was here, and that coal (and other fossil fuels) are the leading cause of human-caused climate change. (For those wondering about non-human caused global warming, one noted geologist's model suggested we might otherwise have been heading into a period of global cooling.)

While COVID escalated rapidly in relative terms, it is much shorter-term than climate change. And while we can develop a vaccine for COVID, solutions to climate change are far more complicated – and slow acting. But while the pandemic will likely be over within two years, climate change will carry on, probably for centuries with much more variable and difficult to predict impacts, and that are even more disruptive.

So, what lessons can we learn from the COVID pandemic that may help us with climate change?

What's to learn

One thing has become even more evident now – we must follow the best science and base decisions on facts, not politics. Climate change science has been clear for many years, with scientists from Exxon-Mobil and Shell over 40 years ago stating that atmospheric carbon from the burning fossil fuels is changing our climate.

We have empirical evidence to support what science is telling us, whether it's transmissibility of a virus, or changes in temperature from CO2 and methane. Modeling provides us with projections of future impacts that if anything, have underplayed the outcomes. How we deal with energy use and production will have much more dire impacts on us than COVID has.

Knowing how natural systems work, and how human behavior impacts these systems, can also allow us to both look at how different behaviors or actions might create different outcomes, and study various technologies to ascertain their effects.

While we can't control nature, we can make decisions as to our behaviors that will affect nature's impacts on us.

What's to do

Remember the old Henny Youngman joke where he says “Doctor, it hurts when I do that”, and the doctor says “Then don't do that”? Since climate change is caused by burning fossil fuels, we need to not do that. Knowing atmospheric CO2 lasts for 100 years, and the highly potent greenhouse gas methane lasts for over a decade, we need to cut back drastically now.

Coal and oil are being hit hard by the pandemic. Many people are out of work. The New Deal offers a model that would solve two problems at once. Putting people back to work on energy efficiency and adding new cheaper renewable energy will also reduce the threat of climate change. A Green New Deal could help ensure people are paid a living wage, and provide much needed equity to not have people left behind in our economy.

We can transform our transportation systems to be more efficient and effective so all people have safe, walk, bike and bus-able communities. Our agriculture needs to be less fossil-fuel based and more locally resilient, and offer more healthy plant-based diets that will be sustainable in the face of climate change. We must also be conscious of forests, soils, and ecosystems as carbon sinks that we need to maintain and expand, not eliminate.

Finally, we should stop consuming so much – not only energy, which we can certainly do with efficiency, but also material goods based on extractive technologies, and are questionable in terms of the happiness they provide. Make more reusable and (truly) recyclable goods to reduce our destruction of the earth.

We can learn from this experience, and make better choices going forward. We have the opportunity. Let's have the will – because there is a way.

Outings

One thing you will notice absent from this newsletter is outings. The national Sierra Club decided that our top priority is people's safety, and outings aren't consistent with this. However, we do encourage you to get outside and appreciate nature while honoring good practices and social distancing to stay safe. As Muir said:

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.



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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 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.

Sierra Club COVID Response

In response to COVID-19, the Sierra Club acted quickly to protect the safety and well-being of staff and volunteers, and not place participants in our activities at risk. While in person meetings have been cancelled and chapter and national staff are currently working from home, this has not stopped the Sierra Club from finding new ways to gather virtually, support one another, and take action.

We are continuing the advocacy and work you have supported us in doing. Much of our activities and work are now online, and the John Muir Chapter has weekday #ActAtHome actions, and webinars on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Watch for other activities and programs on our Four Lakes Group or Chapter Facebook pages.

As per this newsletter, there are plenty of ways to participate, so please contact any of our leaders (page 2) with questions or suggestions. Our staff remain available via email or letters to our office.

Call for Executive Committee Applications

The annual Four Lakes Executive Committee (local board) election will be held this fall via our newsletter and online voting. Up to five seats will be filled and those elected will serve a two-year term starting in January, 2021 and ending December, 2022. Committee members plan meetings, programs, outings, fundraising, and teams to accomplish our conservation and policy goals – all to protect the environment and increase our influence.

Four Lakes Group members are encouraged to apply to join our dynamic team of dedicated volunteer leaders, or can also nominate a candidate by petition. We meet approximately ten times per year, generally evenings, and most can be joined via phone or online, but travel mileage reimbursement is also available. The deadline for applications or nominations is July 1, 2020. A full description of Executive Committee member expectations is available, as well as a short application form. Please contact Dave Blouin at burroak15@gmail.com to learn more about this opportunity to serve.