



# Four Lakes Sierran

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club newsletter, Winter 2020

## Alarming Ground Water Study

*Dave Blouin*

Four Lakes Group members should take note of the important and alarming early results of the Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater and Geology Study (SWIGG) released late in 2019. The SWIGG study is designed to determine whether there is bacterial and/or nitrate contamination in the water of the 44% of residents who have private drinking water supplies in Grant, Lafayette and Iowa counties. The study is also looking at how contamination reaches groundwater and wells where soils are generally thin and bedrock is highly fractured.

The first round of testing in November, 2018 found pollution in 42% of tested wells, and a second round in April, 2019 found 27% with pollution. These results demonstrated wells polluted by fecal material from humans and livestock along with nitrates and indicates that farm and field runoff and septic systems are contributors. Some of the sampled wells tested positive for salmonella and/or cryptosporidium. The study will ultimately sample in all four seasons to help determine seasonal factors. Updates will be available at each county's land conservation office website.

In mid-November, Lafayette County officials attempted to prosecute journalists and discipline local officials for how they handled information about the ongoing groundwater research. A furious public backlash from local residents and free speech advocates forced the officials to back down.

Results of an Environmental Law and Policy Center public survey released in December show 82% of voters in SW Wisconsin ranked safe drinking water as very important. The survey polled voters in the 3 SWIGG study counties, along with voters in Crawford and Richland counties. Voters there also strongly supported measures to such more protections from livestock feedlots and allowing counties to adopt stricter local standards to protect drinking water.

The water testing and polling results show the importance of holding local officials and the legislature accountable for the steps they take to address these issues. Thanks to the many members who attended state budget and the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality hearings in 2019. We'll all need to step up this year to support any clean water measures in 2020, especially legislation based on recommendations by the Task Force.

## Chair's Column

*Liz Wessel*

### 2020 - A Year to Get in the Game

2020 feels like a year where we will all need to get in the game one way or another. There is so much already happening from the release of the Dane County Climate Action Plan, to a high turnover in Dane County Board, and renewed efforts to move our utilities and communities off coal to clean energy. The Four Lakes Group provides you with many opportunities, both fun and serious, to participate. So, with opportunity knocking, will you answer?

I want to provide a run-down of your 2020 Executive Committee members. The election returned Dave Blouin, also the political and mining chair for the state John Muir Chapter. Dave served as chair for the Four Lakes group in the past and brings his political experience in a year when elections and Sierra Club turn out is critical.

**Opportunity #1** You can help with the election turn out effort. Watch for more details as our mobilization plan crystallizes, or contact Dave Blouin at [burroak15@gmail.com](mailto:burroak15@gmail.com).

We're welcoming Ronda Conner to the Four Lakes Executive Committee. Ronda started volunteering with the Beyond Coal Campaign and the MG&E fight, and is a member of our Climate Crew, working on

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## **Beyond Coal – And Gas!**

It's now old news – but the planet's heating up. The latest International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report is a dire warning that we must respond quickly. But how to react? **Now is the time to stop burning not only coal, but all fossil fuels. Adding decades more CO2 and methane is simply not an option if we are to avoid the worst climate change impacts.**

A lot occurred last year, with even more to come this one, so let's bring you up to speed on what's occurred, what's planned, and what you can do. The key thing is, **with the help of our volunteers, we ARE making a difference**, and putting pressure on the utilities and our state and communities to act more proactively.

### **Madison Gas & Electric**

A basic fact is that Madison Gas and Electric still uses way too much coal. (Of course, any is too much!) Of the electricity MGE delivers to customers, about half is from coal plants they own. They also purchase a fair amount of electricity off the grid, mostly from coal and fracked gas. MGE's plans for 30% renewables in 2030 is well behind what's needed. And their intent to have net zero emissions for electricity by 2050 still falls short of the optimal 100% renewable energy.

In part due to continued pressure from Beyond Coal and our MGE activist's team, MGE is installing and purchasing more renewable energy, including a new wind farm in Iowa, and will be purchasing a total of 100 MW of power from two solar farms. But with a number of cities and Dane County in MGE's service territory aiming for 100% renewable energy, we need MGE to do better. MGE is still part owner of the old, dirty Columbia coal power plant in Portage, and the rate case coming up this year provides an opportunity for us to demand that they do better and get off coal.

### **We Energies**

Despite shutting down the Pleasant Prairie coal plant in 2018, We Energies still has two large dirty coal power plants in Oak Creek that have been showering local residents with coal dust as well as creating large amounts of other toxic pollutants and global warming emissions. That's unacceptable, and a strong coalition led by support from the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal team is keeping up the pressure to shutter these plants.

As part of We Energies rate case last year, they (again!) proposed a fee for solar homeowners, despite any supporting evidence. We helped convince We Energies to withdraw this proposal. Unfortunately, despite a Sierra Club analysis showing that continuing to operate their coal power plants would cost customers \$75

million per year more than moving to renewable energy, the Public Service Commission voted to allow We Energies to continue to profit off dirty coal. However, we were successful in stopping the proposed regressive fixed fee increases.

### **Proposed Gas Plant in Superior**

Not to leave northern Wisconsin out of the fossil fuel fiasco, Minnesota Power and Dairyland Power Cooperative are seeking to build the Nemadji Trail Energy Center (NTEC), a 525-megawatt (fracked) gas power plant, in Superior. At a time we need to get off fossil fuels, and Dairyland and other utilities are acquiring additional renewable energy, this would be fossil foolish, and be a major step backwards.

This is especially true since fossil fuel-based plants are quickly becoming costly dinosaurs. A report by the Rocky Mountain Institute last fall found that 90 percent of 88 proposed natural gas plants, including NTEC, would cost more than if the utilities instead invested in wind, solar and energy efficiency. That makes the NTEC proposal an especially dubious proposition – for the environment – and ratepayers.

Since the power would be used by both a Minnesota and a Wisconsin utility, it requires approval by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and Wisconsin PSC. Due to NTEC being sited in Wisconsin, the Minnesota PUC initially punted on an Environmental Impact Statement to the Wisconsin PSC. The PSC's EIS found issues of environmental concern, and the new PSC appointment by Governor Evers may offer more hope the PSC will reject NTEC. In addition, a Minnesota's Court of Appeals said the Minnesota PUC must also include climate change impacts before approving the contract. Hopefully, the Minnesota PUC will prove rate payer friendly and respond to climate change concerns, and reject the NTEC plant.

### ***Taking Action !!!***

**As the latest IPCC report made clear, the time to speak up and act is now.** Not by chance, we have a number of excellent opportunities to get involved and push back on utilities and forward on clean energy.

### **MGE Activist Team**

MGE still uses far too much fossil fuel, and falls short of Wisconsin's new goals. (Any is now too much!) We have an appropriately named MGE Activists Team which is a great opportunity to get involved since we need a lot of different skills and capabilities, so if you're interested in clean energy solutions, there's a

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*Chair's column - continued from page 1*

local efforts to make the changes needed for the looming climate crisis. She's a great addition to have on board working on climate issues and as a link to the Chapter's broader clean energy campaign. She also brings a love of art and helped organize our well-received December outing to the Chazen museum.

**Opportunity #2** – Join our Climate Crew and help us mobilize and create changes in our communities that will address climate change! Meetings are posted on the Four Lakes Group's website calendar, or contact Liz Wessel, [lizardsc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizardsc@yahoo.com) or 608-238-9934.

Ronda and Dave join Don Ferber, continuing Executive Committee member and local conservation chair, who runs the Recycling Away from Home (RAH) program. With volunteer power, the program provides recycling and waste reduction tools as well as support and education for neighborhood festivals and other events in and around Madison. Don is the lead many of our outreach and tabling efforts at the Garden Expo, Farmers Market, and elsewhere., and also has been organizing our Cruisin' for Cuisine social dinner series.

**Opportunity #3** – Consider volunteering with the Four Lakes Group at the Garden Expo (Feb 7 - 9), Canoecopia (March 13 - 15), Farmers Market (starting in April) and other events, including RAH at the east side Madison summer festivals. Or join a Cruisin' outing. Stay tuned for opportunities via our Enews or web calendar.

Erik Pettersen, another continuing ExCom member and an avid biker and Francophile, helps to keep the Four Lakes Group books up to date as co-treasurer. He volunteers at events representing the Sierra Club. Erik can be found at Garden Expo or Canoecopia helping spread the word about the Sierra Club and getting new members. Erik also helps with the behind the scenes work like mailings for the John Muir Chapter.

**Opportunity #4** – Join us for an outing or event. Visit the calendar on the Four Lakes Group web site to see what's coming up. The calendar has volunteer opportunities, including the second Wednesdays Volunteer Party nights, organized hikes, paddles, snow shoe and skiing opportunities, and more!

Mary Reames also continues to serve on the Executive Committee. Mary is committed to building local sustainability and resilience. She likes to be outdoors enjoying the recreational opportunities in our area, especially kayaking. Mary helped start the Climate Crew and helps plan and support its activities. Some of you may have seen our Clean Energy holiday tree on

State St that Mary's contribution was essential to!

And I'm Liz Wessel, current Chair of the Four Lakes Group. Mary and I work together with the others to lead the Four Lakes Group and create a strategic plan appropriate for our efforts at the local and regional level. But what I find most exciting is our Climate Crew which brings together so many of the activities and the potential of the Four Lakes group.

**Opportunity #5** – Communications! Help us get the word out. If you prefer on-your-own volunteer time, helping with our newsletter or web site, creating posts for Facebook and other social media, or keeping the Sierra Club calendar up to date, that would be very helpful. For more information, contact Don Ferber at [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net) or 608-222-9376.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Beverly Speer one more time who served on and off for many years on the Executive Committee. Beverly is the Outreach and Advocacy Director at the Democracy Campaign. I know that the Campaign will be busy working on campaign finance reform and shining the light on big money in politics in our state.

I look forward to meeting you at a Climate Crew meeting or one of the upcoming events, activities, advocacy efforts in 2020. **In 2020, the sideline is not the place to be..., so please join us!**

*Coal – continued from page 2*

place for you. We're planning a number of different events and activities and we have fun while we do them! Everyone is encouraged to participate and take ownership in whatever interests you.

To find our more, contact Cassie Steiner at [cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org](mailto:cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org) or 608-256-0565. Or our meetings are generally the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month starting from 6 - 7:30 pm at 754 Williamson St., and you can just drop in to learn more and get directly involved.

#### **Four Lakes Climate Crew**

MGE's goals are not in line with many of the communities they serve. Madison, Monona and Middleton have ambitious climate plans, and Dane County is just now releasing a forward-looking plan. However, just as the devil is in the details, implementing these plans is where our local governments need fresh ideas, support, and prodding to make more and faster progress.

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## Four Lakes Outings, Winter 2020

For all outings, please wear weather and activity appropriate clothing, and good 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. Please 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 or watch our eNews for updates or added events.

*(Outings led by Master Naturalist Alex Singer are in conjunction with Madison FUN (Friends of Urban Nature) and other partners including Madison Parks, Madison Audubon, Sierra Club, Friends of Edna Taylor, and Aldo Leopold Nature Center. Bring binoculars or a camera if you have one.  
<https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/events/bird-nature.cfm>.)*

### Leader Contact Info

Don Ferber, [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net) or 608-217-2959  
Kathy Mulbrandon, [kmulbrandon@gmail.com](mailto:kmulbrandon@gmail.com) or 608-215-9706

Alex Singer, [alexcsinger@gmail.com](mailto:alexcsinger@gmail.com) or 608-698-0104  
David Smith, [smithdc75@yahoo.com](mailto:smithdc75@yahoo.com) or 608-233-1210

### Saturday, January 18, 10 am - Snowshoe or hike, Prairie Moraine County Park

Enjoy a snowshoe hike at Prairie Moraine County Park southeast of Verona. We'll snowshoe (if snow) or hike (if no snow) through prairies and woods where you can enjoy Dane County's most visible section of the glacial terminal moraine. This hike will take about 2 hours. Families welcome! Take Hwy 18/151 southwest of Madison to exit 79 (Cty PB). Turn left on PB and go 1 mile south to Prairie Moraine parking lot on the left. Meet by the IAT kiosk. RSVP to Kathy Mulbrandon.

### Saturday, January 25, 10 - 11:30 am - Bird and Nature Outing - Edna Taylor Conservation Park What are Critters Doing?

Join Master Naturalist Alex Singer for a free family friendly nature outing at Edna Taylor Conservation Park. Learn about different ways critters adapt to the cold and get through winter in Wisconsin. No pets allowed. Park at 330 Femrite Drive in the first lot on right and meet at the Aldo Leopold Nature Center lobby area. RSVP to Alex Singer.

### Saturday, February 22, 10 - 11:30 am - Bird and Nature Outing, Edna Taylor Conservation Park - Syrupping isn't just with Maples

Join Alex to learn about Maple Syrup and the other trees that have sap rising in spring, and tree nutrient flow in

general. Enjoy a mock demonstration of maple syrup extraction. No pets allowed. Park at 330 Femrite Drive in the first lot on right and meet at the Aldo Leopold Nature Center lobby area. RSVP to Alex Singer.

### Sunday, March 15, 1:30 - 3 pm – Bird and Nature Outing, Warner Park - Pushups, Dreys and Cavities

Here's an opportunity to learn about the clever structures and survival strategies of muskrats, squirrels, and other animals that overwinter in Wisconsin. (Pushup is the winter muskrat lodge made of vegetation, and a drey is a squirrel nest made of mostly dead leaves.) Meet at the Warner Park Rainbow Shelter by Warner Pond lagoon, 2930 N. Sherman Ave. RSVP to Alex Singer.

### Saturday, April 4, 10 am - Spring Hike - New Glarus Woods State Park

Join David for his annual 4 - 5 mile hike through prairies and forests at New Glarus Woods State Park. This is a moderate hike with rolling hills and ravines, and is a great opportunity to observe and learn about spring ephemerals and succession as they start to bloom and trees bud out.

To carpool, meet David at 9 am at the Verona Park & Ride, Hwy PB and Verona Rd. Otherwise, meet at New Glarus Woods State Park parking lot off State Hwy 69, 2 miles south of New Glarus. Vehicles need a Wisconsin State Park pass, which can be purchased at the Park. RSVP to David Smith.

### Sunday, April 5, 1:30 - 3 pm – Bird and Nature Outing, Cherokee Marsh - Season Creep, Pros and Cons

Alex will lead this outing on the earlier advent of spring and the delay of autumn that are effects of climate change noticed by more and more people. Differences in the customary changes of temperature and precipitation can positively and negatively affect plants and animals in ways we're only realizing as they play out in real time and are exposed via long-term research. Meet at the North Unit main parking lot at end of curved gravel entry road, 6098 N Sherman Ave. RSVP to Alex Singer.

### Saturday, May 17, 1:30-3 pm – Bird and Nature Outing, Warner Park – Now is the month of Maying

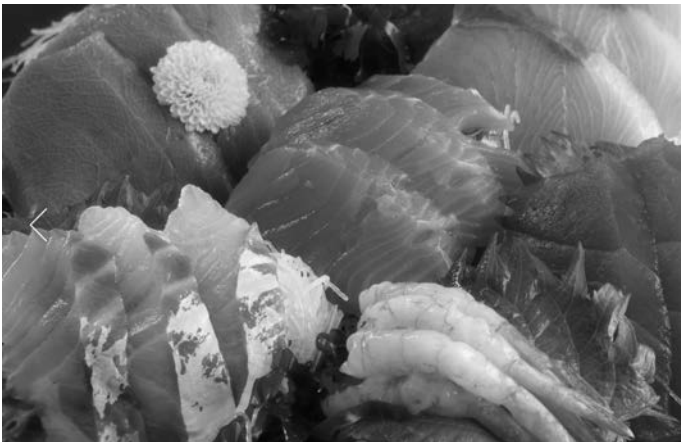
Yes, even educated fleas do it – but what's the impetus? Join Master Naturalist Alex Singer for a fun, free family outing to learn some of the visible, auditory, and olfactory signs of love among plants and animals. Explore the beautiful trails at Warner Park to look for spring birds and wildflowers and other signs of emerging life. 2930 N. Sherman Ave, meet at the Warner Park Rainbow Shelter by the Warner Pond lagoon. RSVP to Alex Singer.

## Cruisin' for Cuisine

Cruisin' for Cuisine is a casual dinner outing at a locally owned Madison area restaurant to try new foods and mix and mingle with other Sierrans or anyone else who shows up. We order off the menu and everyone gets their own check. These dinners are open to the public. We're always trying different places, so please join us – or recommend a place you'd like us to try. Dinner is normally at 6:30 pm, but RSVP to Don Ferber at least 2 days prior to let him know you're coming.

### **Wednesday, January 29 – Red Lion Singapore Grill & Japanese Cuisine, 515 Cottage Grove Rd**

The Red Lion has already gained some notoriety with its excellent Japanese cuisine and sushi. Join us at this new east side Madison restaurant for some sushi or other eastern dishes and as a way to keep warm on a cold winter night. <https://www.theredlionmadison.com>



### **Thursday, February 27 - Bandung, 600 Williamson St**

Bandung is a staple at the Gateway mall near downtown, noted for its fine food and unique flavors of Indonesian cuisine and house made tempheh. Whether you are vegetarian or eat meat, you'll find something to enjoy. <https://www.bandungindorestaurant.com/#/>

### **Tuesday, March 17, Swad, 6007 Monona Dr**

Where else would you go on St Patty's Day than to an Indian restaurant? Tucked away on Madison's east side, Swad is easy to miss – but you shouldn't. It serves some of the best Indian food in Madison, and a trip there will reveal why. Excellent and attentive wait staff as well. <https://www.swadmonona.com>

### **Friday, April 17, Ichiban Sichuan Restaurant, 610 S Park St**

If you like Chinese food, but are looking for something more authentic or out of the ordinary than you might find at a typical Chinese restaurant, this is a fine place to go to get your taste buds tickled – or flamed! <https://www.ichibanmadison.com>

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

## Parks, Trails and Public Lands

The importance of our public lands cannot be underestimated, both for the health and well-being of people and wildlife, but also for the fight on climate change and developing resilience in our region.

The John Muir Chapter has a Land and Wildlife team that will be kicking off 2020 with a full day skill building and campaign planning. On January 25<sup>th</sup>, you can join the team and meet other activists from around the state. There will be trainings by staff and other volunteers, campaign and strategy planning, and getting down to work! The kickoff is in Madison, but all are invited from across the state. **Contact Kathryn Hogan at the John Muir Chapter office, [kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org](mailto:kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org) or 608-256-0565 to learn more and register.**

In 2020, The Four Lakes Group will be working on forests, public lands and land use as it relates to climate change and climate adaption in our region. Public lands and land use go hand in hand with transportation, our other main focus area. So, in addition to the ecological value of lands for carbon sequestration and resilience, we will be advocating for all abilities to have access to our parks, and the value of public land as green infrastructure.

## Updates

### **Blue Mounds State Park Master Plan Update**

In 2019, the Four Lakes group mobilized comments on the Blue Mounds State Park Master Plan revision. There was a second round of comments that closed in December 2019. Currently, we are awaiting the next version of any proposal for the park.

This gem of a park lies close to large population centers in southern Wisconsin, and also connects with the Military Ridge bike trail. Its location makes it a premier site for hiking and biking in the summer, and skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. It is very popular (for good reason!) and heavily used in all four seasons.

The Sierra Club Four Lakes Group has taken a position opposed to the proposal to create a new snow-mobile trail through Blue Mound State Park on the basis of our support for silent sports, concern for public safety, the existence of snowmobile trails already nearby, and the need to preserve the ecological integrity of the park.

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The DNR is currently compiling input and will post a summary on their web site. We anticipate that the update of the Master Plan will move into its final phase sometime in 2020, so stay tuned for updates, and possibilities for further input.

### **Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape Regional Master Plan**

This is a regional master planning process for the Southwest Savanna region of Wisconsin. The region includes state parks, state trails, state natural areas, fish and wildlife areas, and the Southwest Grassland & Stream Conservation Area. This major landscape area covers all of Lafayette County, and portions of Grant, Green, Iowa, and Dane counties.

Two public meetings were held – June 5 at New Glarus Village Hall and June 6 at Mineral Point City Hall – and an online form and paper Public Input Form were available for the public to provide their feedback regarding this plan. Go to the Wisconsin DNR’s website (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/propertyplanning/SouthwestSavanna/>) to get a summary of comments.

We anticipate that a draft Master plan will be released sometime this year for public review and comment. If you are or have an interest in following this process, and helping us to keep Sierrans in the southwest part of the state and nearby up to date, please let me know! Liz Wessel – [lizardsc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizardsc@yahoo.com) or 608-238-9934.

### **Lower Yahara River Trail: Phase 2 Public Meeting – Information & Input**

On Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at the Pleasant Springs Town Hall, Dane County Parks hosted a public meeting to review details and research compiled during 2019 by KL Engineering Inc. This included an environmental review, topographic survey, design and engineering for a proposed segment of multi-use trail extending between Fish Camp County Park and Lake Kegonsa State Park. Dane County Parks is also coordinating with the Wisconsin DNR to plan an additional trail through Lake Kegonsa State Park to Williams Drive in the Town of Pleasant Springs. Public input on the plans and information is welcome.

For further information about the meeting and opportunities for further input, or with further questions about Dane County Parks lands, contact Chris James, Dane County Parks at 608-224-3763 or [james@countyofdane.com](mailto:james@countyofdane.com).

Our Climate Crew provides great opportunity to get involved in your community. Go to public meetings, meet with your alder, research what other communities are doing, get your neighborhood association involved, or work on new avenues or for more equitable energy solutions, plus other opportunities. Or perhaps you have an idea you’d like to share. Contact Liz Wessel at [lizardsc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizardsc@yahoo.com) or 608-238-9934 and she’ll be happy to talk with you.

### **Volunteer Party Nights**

Interested in the environment, but not sure what to do? Have an idea, but not sure if it’s doable? Have a skill that might be useful? Perhaps you have some free time, and want something new to do? Or maybe you enjoy socializing with like-minded people and want to learn more. Then join us on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm at our office at 754 Williamson St.

We have a wide variety of activities that changes month to month based on what’s occurring then, where you can just come in, help out for a while, and then go home with something accomplished. In addition, we have yummy food with pizza and vegan snacks, so you won’t leave hungry either! Contact Katie Hogan at [Kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org](mailto:Kathryn.hogan@sierraclub.org) or 608-256-0565 to find out more or discussion options and opportunities.

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

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

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

**Dave Blouin\***, Secretary, Political Chair, (608) 233-8455, [burroak15@gmail.com](mailto:burroak15@gmail.com)

**Ronda Conner\***, [rondaconner@hotmail.com](mailto:rondaconner@hotmail.com), 608-245-3931

**Don Ferber\***, Conservation, Outreach, and RAH, (608) 222-9376, [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net)

**Erik Pettersen\***, Co-treasurer (608) 515-4426, [erik.pettersen14@gmail.com](mailto:erik.pettersen14@gmail.com)

**Mary Reames\***, Vice-Chair (608) 310-32890 [mlreames@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mlreames@sbcglobal.net)

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

**Claire Gervais**, Healthy Lawn Team, (608) 233-8455, [cmgeriva@gmail.com](mailto:cmgeriva@gmail.com)

**Kathy Mulbrandon**, Outings Chair, (608) 215-9706 [kmulbrandon@gmail.com](mailto:kmulbrandon@gmail.com)

\*Executive Committee members

## Statewide Energy Opportunities

At the state level, there are important avenues to weigh in on climate change, fossil fuels and clean energy solutions. The Governor's Climate Change Task forces provides opportunities to impact policies and programs, as does the Public Service Commission on the regulatory environment.

### Governor's Climate Change Task Force

Last August, Governor Evers signed an Executive Order to create an Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy, and set a statewide goal of 100% clean electricity by 2050. In addition, he signed an order to create a Climate Change Task Force to strategize how best to achieve this goal and help Wisconsin's economy, adding an energy equity and justice lens.

This task force is being headed by Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes, but includes several other legislators, members of organizations, and private citizens with expertise on climate and justice issues. They will be holding a number of hearings around the state, and with 31 members, there will be opportunities to attend hearings or speak with members of the committee to provide your thoughts and views.

### Public Service Commission

As the regulatory body that oversees investor owned and municipal utilities, the Public Service Commission has a lot of (discretionary) power over utilities and what they are allowed to do. For the most part, the PSC has been very utility-friendly, especially under Governor Walker when he had appointed all three commissioners. However, the chair of the PSC, Rebecca Valq, has been appointed by Governor Evers, and has made clear she wants to hear from the public on rate cases. And with the news that current Commissioner Mike Huebsch is retiring, Evers will now get a second appointment to the PSC. (Hooray!) In our area, this may especially pertain to the MGE rate case this year. (See Beyond Coal article.)

We invite you to track utility rate cases this year, and weigh in. **With two Commissioners appointed by Governor Evers, now is a critical time for them to hear from you** as to what we want as ratepayers and citizens. As clean energy is becoming cheaper than even operating existing fossil fuel power plants, the PSC needs to hear from you that it's time to move off of fossil fuels and on to renewable energy. In addition to ratepayer costs, they also need to account for the costs of climate change when making decisions.

## Canoecopia – Volunteers Needed

March 13 – 15

Alliant Energy Center, Madison

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

Just saying the word “Canoecopia” should make you envision paddling your canoe or kayak on your favorite river or lake of clear blue waters, and equally blue skies. That means Canoecopia is a great place for people (such as Sierrans!) who like to explore and enjoy the outdoors to get ready for the 2020 water sports season – with all the right gear.

It's also an opportunity for us to have a strong Sierra Club presence. The River Touring Section will be there promoting their slew of popular outings and clinics they put on each year, and we'll also have a table with information about our other programs, activities and campaigns. To join us, just sign up at the link above for volunteering at our booth where you can talk with people about our issues and activities and whatever interests them. We'll provide all the training, materials and support needed. All we need is your enthusiasm!

We'll have a double booth in the outer area of the Alliant Energy Center. No pass is required, but passes are available if you want to see the exhibits in the main hall. There is a fee for parking in the Expo parking lot. Bike-orama will be occurring at the same time in neighboring buildings if you want to check out bikes or bike gear. More info on Canoecopia is at <https://www.paddlers.com/canoecopia/page.asp?pgid=1001>.





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

<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 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](mailto: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.

## Garden Expo - Reveling in Warmth and Greenery!

**February 7 - 9**

**Alliant Energy Center, Madison**

**Sign up - <https://signup.com/go/xuKujFb>**

In the middle of a Wisconsin winter, do you get that itch for warmth, green, and growing things? You could go to the Olbrich Gardens Conservatory for a little while, but what if you wanted to really revel in the sights, sounds and smells of Wisconsin greenery?

The fulfillment of that wish awaits you at the WHA Garden Expo, February 7 - 9. Simply sign up for one or more shift(s) of your choice, and you're in! We'll get you a pass to get you in FREE ALL WEEKEND, and when you're not at the booth, you'll be free to wander among the exhibits, and take in the sights, sounds and smells of the Expo, and attend seminars or workshops of your choice. There is a charge for Expo parking on the Expo lot.

The WHA Garden Expo is an annual fundraiser for public television, so you'll be supporting a good cause while also helping promote the Sierra Club and our efforts. No volunteer experience necessary - just a passion for the Sierra Club and to help save the planet. You'll staff the booth with other volunteers and we'll provide any necessary training and orientation. Contact Don Ferber at [d\\_ferber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_ferber@sbcglobal.net) or 608-222-9376 for more info.

More info on the Garden Expo is at <https://www.wigardenexpo.com>.

## Save the Dates

**January 24** - John Muir Chapter Open House, 754 Williamson St, Madison

**January 25 & 26** Transportation, Land and Wildlife, Water team trainings, 754 Williamson St, Madison

**January 30** Wisconsin Conservation Voters Clean Water Lobby Day, Monona Terrace, Madison

**February 7- 9** - WHA Garden Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison

**March 13 - 15** - Canoeecopia, Alliant Energy Center, Madison

**March 21** - Wisconsin Grassroots Network Festival, Mazomanie

**April 20** - Nelson Institute Earth Day Conference, Monona Terrace, Madison

**April 22** - Earth Day - 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!