



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

October 2022

### **Sierra Club - Four Lakes Group**

- Over 5,500 members in 9 Counties of South Central Wisconsin: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Rock and Sauk



### **2021 Sierra Club Foundation Report - Four Lakes Group**

The Four Lakes Group started the year with most events and activities as virtual events. Despite this, we were able to make progress on transportation issues in the greater Madison/Dane County area, and continue to grow our Equity and Access work in parks and public lands.

#### **Transportation:**

In 2021, the Four Lakes Group climate and transportation work focused on the redesign of the Madison Metro transportation system. The city has proposed to change the backbone of the system from hubs to intersecting Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. The remaining routes would then tie into this system. Because the operating budget for the system is not projected to grow, despite projections in ridership growth, the proposal will likely result in somewhat reduced geographic coverage across the city.

Throughout the process to date, the Four Lakes Group has supported a system that serves low income neighborhoods, neighborhoods of color, people with disabilities, and people who do not own a car or do not choose to drive. An effective system would also take steps to address climate change by reducing vehicle miles traveled, expanding ridership and decreasing automobile emissions. We have worked with others to raise the importance of access to supermarkets and jobs based on the [2018 Arrive Together report](#). And we have highlighted that everyone needs to access our local parks and public lands.

**Equity and Access Project:** The Four Lakes Group members and supporters invested both their volunteer time and funds to create a project around access and equity - specifically, to raise awareness and action around parks, trails, mobility, and access.

Under the leadership of project intern, Laura Buska, the Land Equity and Access team developed a campaign plan that centered on transportation access to public lands and parks. The project continues to grow, with team members bringing ideas and energy to our work.

We kicked off 2021 with a 'Virtual Cafe' to learn more about equitable and inclusive playgrounds. Fitchburg planned to create a playground at McKee Farms Park that would open in 2022. Fitchburg Alders Julia Arata-Fratta and Gabriella Gerhardt, as well as Fitchburg Community Development Planner Wade Thompson, joined the Virtual Cafe and led the efforts to get the playground built. Attendees were able to ask questions and there was a good discussion of what being inclusive means to individuals.

*...to protect and defend the wild places of Earth...*

Over the next few months, the Team continued to learn by collecting and listening to stories about access in Dane County and looking at what we know about parks and public lands in our communities. Our team helped Dane County Parks survey members of the community about access issues for parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities.

We also looked at neighborhoods and proximity to open space parks highlighted in the annual report produced by the Trust for Public Land that rates local government park systems based on a 10 minute walk to a local park. While the City of Madison was ranked high (12th in the country in 2020), we know that barriers still exist due to historic practices like redlining and deeded discrimination when neighborhoods were created.

The placement and construction of the beltline has created additional physical barriers and transportation challenges for nearby south side neighborhoods, in addition to creating unhealthy air and health impacts for nearby residents.

This led the team to look at the redesign of the Madison Metro system (See Transportation above). Dane County Parks had included a discussion and map of access to its park properties in its last five-year plan. With over three million park visitors every year, public transit only reaches five of the sixty-six Dane County parks. With interest from Dane County Parks, the Four Lakes Group started a collaboration to look into opportunities to improve transportation access to the park system.

**Outdoor Access Education** Together with the Wisconsin Chapter, members of the Four Lakes Group raised awareness of the National Parks' Every Kid Outdoors program which provides a free national park pass to 4th graders upon application.

We also co-hosted a webinar with the Chapter with Emily Ford, the first woman and the first person of color to thru-hike the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in winter. Over 200 people attended the online event.

**YWCA 2021 racism conference:** In 2021, we continued to sponsor and support the 2021 YWCA racism conference. As a part of this commitment, several members of the Executive Committee attended the conference.

### **Beyond Coal**

For years, Sierra Club volunteers including Four Lakes Group volunteers have been working together to shut down coal plants across the state. In 2021, in good part due to Sierra Club pressure regarding the costs of operation and impacts on customers, we received notice that the Columbia coal plant located in Portage, and the South Oak Creek power plant in Oak Creek would be retired. These are significant victories as 2 of 6 remaining coal plants in the state, and promises to help reduce local emissions and spur clean energy adoption.

In addition, our Beyond Coal efforts have focused on energy justice, including, but not limited to, communities of color in Milwaukee who are paying a high percentage of their income for their energy bills, and are suffering high rates of energy shutoffs. With energy being a basic necessity for people, we have been working to get the Public Service Commission and the utilities to provide support for people in need to lower their utility bills and prevent shutoffs.

Another aspect of energy justice has been pushing for reduced fixed fees on utility bills, and our work paid off as Madison Gas and Electric agreed to lower inequitable fixed fees on electricity from \$19/mo to \$15/mo over the next two years.

We have also supported clean energy projects, including utility solar installations in southern Wisconsin that are necessary to support the transition to clean renewable energy.

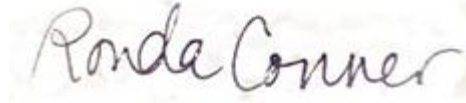
On behalf of all the members and volunteers of the Sierra Club Four Lakes Group, we thank all of our generous donors. You contribute directly to our local efforts like those listed above. It inspires us to work harder to mobilize more of our members and volunteers to be active on local conservation issues and to enjoy our local natural resources, getting more people out to the parks, on the trails, and on the water.

Below is a summary of the Four Lakes Group’s financial information for 2021 (unaudited).

<b>Sierra Club Foundation Account - Four Lakes Group</b>			
<b>2021 Summary of Activity</b>			
REVENUE			\$6,236
EXPENSES			
	Programmatic:		
		Equity and Access Project	\$1,373
	Educational:		
		Emily Ford event	\$250
		Newsletter	\$1,276
	Outings:		
		Outings equipment	\$1,212
	Operational:		\$662
TOTAL EXPENSES			<b>\$4,773</b>
NET 2021			<b>\$1,463</b>

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact Liz Wessel, co-treasurer of the Four Lakes Group. Liz Wessel - 608-238-9934 or [lizard59sc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizard59sc@yahoo.com).

With gratitude on behalf of our members,



Mary L. Reames                      &                      Ronda Conner  
Co-Chairs – Sierra Club Four Lakes Group

Sierra Club - Four Lakes Group, 754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703