

**Land Access and Equity Team – Volunteer opportunity
A 2022 Retrospective and Look Ahead to 2023**

Liz Wessel

2022 Accomplishments

Access to public lands and parks can be limited by a variety of things – transportation constraints, familiarity and experience with gear, comfort with challenging conditions like snow, and cost of admission where park or trail permits are required for example. In 2022, the Land Access and Equity team participated in and worked on a variety of events and projects addressing challenges to access.

Our team had a productive year, starting with a cold day in the snow. We partnered with Dane County Parks to create a fun event where people could feel comfortable with and enjoyment in being outdoors in winter. Participants had an opportunity to try out snowshoes, learn about winter camping, and enjoy the warmth of an outdoor campfire.

At the Environmental Fun Fair in July, we brought a variety of tents and summer camping gear to offer a hands-on tent experience. Families worked together setting up and taking down tents. The tents proved a perfect selfie spot as kids and sometimes their adult friends sat inside. We also provided a resource sheet with a list of where people could find used camping gear or rentals, and a shuttle from South Madison to the William G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park where the event was hosted by the Dane County Parks Department.

In August, Dane County Parks hosted a special fishing day at Stewart Lake County Park. Participants, after rotating through a variety of learning stations, earned a fishing rod. Our team also created a freshwater insect BINGO game, with fishing bobbers, Culver’s Custard coupons and gift certificates from the local Mt. Horeb history museum as prizes. The game proved very popular with people of all ages.

An overarching theme for every event was letting families know about the Every Kid Outdoors program run by the National Park Service (NPS). This program, that runs from Sept 1st to August 31st each year, provides a free National Parks pass to fourth graders

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Chair’s Column

Mary Reames, Co-Chair

Greetings from the Four Lakes Group of the Sierra Club!

The snow is falling gently outside my window, and everyone is gearing up for the holidays as I write my last Chair’s Column for this newsletter. Since I began my tenure on the Four Lakes Group Executive Committee in 2017, so much has happened in the world. While bad news – pandemics, war, climate disasters – tends to dominate the headlines, it’s crucial to reflect on the good things we have experienced and the great strides we have made. And there have been many good things, in the world at large and in the Sierra Club, to celebrate.

In the last five years, the Sierra Club has participated in a number of successes at the national, state and local level:

- Closure of numerous coal-fired power plants and the increasingly rapid adoption of renewable energy
- Victories at the polls in the presidential, senate, gubernatorial, and local races
- Adoption of climate- and conservation-supporting legislation and action plans
- Stopping natural gas pipeline proposals
- Preservation of critical national monuments
- Improved access to parks and natural areas

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Madison's Transportation Challenges

Transportation matters, not only for climate change issue in reducing driving and emissions, but as an equity issue for people who choose not to drive, or cannot drive or afford a car. It's also an economic concern for access to jobs, and for businesses to access more potential employees and customers. The Four Lakes Group has been weighing in on transportation – recently the proposed Madison bus route redesign and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and looking forward will be focusing on the proposed Beltline expansion by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Bus Route Redesign and Bus Rapid Transit

As cities grow and evolve, so must our transit systems. Madison's bus system has basically been static for many years, but our city has grown considerably and our bus system has deficiencies, especially in getting people quickly to where they want to go.

BRT has been discussed for decades, and, aided by federal funding, we are finally nearing a new system design that will include east-west, and north-south core BRT routes. The Four Lakes Group supports the advent of a BRT system, but have concerns whether the secondary routes will provide equitable service to those most in need in outlying areas. These groups are chronically not heard and underrepresented, but if our community is to live up to our equity goals, they must be fully accounted for in the system redesign.

Since a bus system alone cannot affordably serve all those in need of transit support well, Madison's transit analysis should be complete enough to understand when and where people will not be well served by a redesign, and provide a basis to discuss ancillary service needs. (Madison does have paratransit services, but many users have expressed considerable dissatisfaction with it.)

The federal government requires an Equity Analysis, but the limited requirements and oversight do not guarantee the needs of Madison's transit-dependent residents will be fully met. Madison Metro chose to have the primary focus on ridership over coverage. Added ridership, especially with an eye towards low-income residents, is welcome, but does not ensure equitable transit options for those in need in outlying areas.

Downtown and student populations who regularly have good bus service, heavily weight ridership numbers. High employment locations also strongly influence ridership. Without eliminating downtown populations, it is hard to get a good picture of how well people in need are being served in outlying areas, some who may

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The Four Lakes Group has contributed in no small way to these many successes. We have marched, demonstrated, delivered comments at public hearings, held meetings with local officials, planted trees, hosted events, gathered petitions, thanked bus drivers, reviewed local and state plans, attended equity trainings, offered scholarships to conferences, and so much more.

We've also reached out and benefitted from wonderful new volunteers. That's what our Club thrives on, and I hope you will consider becoming one this year in an area that interests you – and we have so many opportunities! And in this edition of the newsletter, we feature a special article from a volunteer in Nigeria who wanted to offer some information on their experiences with climate change.

I am proud to say that I am a lifetime member of the Sierra Club and, although I am leaving my position on the Four Lakes Executive Committee, I will always participate in and support this wonderful organization. I urge you to join me in working toward the Club's successes over the next five years and beyond.

Because, without doubt, there is more to be done. Please read on for ways that you can contribute to the Club's work at the local level, and thank you for all that you do.

2023 Team Kick Offs

January 11

Thinking about getting involved in 2023? On January 11, we'll have initial kickoff meetings and planning for the Coal, Lands, Tar Sands, Transportation, Water, and Wildlife Teams. Even if you can't join us then, go to <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/volunteer> to learn more. You can join us any time!

Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/teamkickoff> and we'll send you the details!

and their families who apply. Volunteers at many events including the Dane County Farmers Market, Canoecopia and National Trails Day, explained how fourth graders and their families could get the park pass, and handed out a volunteer-designed postcard with all the information.

The Four Lakes Group along with the Wisconsin Chapter's Land and Wildlife team, championed the passage of bills in the Senate and Assembly, and got people to sign petitions that would extend the NPS program to allow fourth graders and their families a free pass to Wisconsin State Parks. While the bills had hearings, neither had a floor vote and died at the end of the legislative session.

2023 Plans

Which brings us to planning for 2023. As part of our 2023 work, the team will be supporting the reintroduction and passage of the Wisconsin Every Kid Outdoors bills in the 2023/2024 legislative session. But that's only the start.

Here are some of (but not limited to) our anticipated activities for 2023:

- Continue to champion extending the Every Kid Outdoors program to Wisconsin State Parks
- Offer outdoor education programs geared towards K-5 students in partnership with One City Schools in Madison; we have six programs picked out, and need volunteers to help with each program
- Have an event on National Trails Day highlighting our trails and access to them
- Participate in Dane County Parks events including the Environmental Fun Fair in July
- Continue our tree planting programs and partnerships to support added greenery in underserved areas

Do you love the outdoors and want to share your passions with others? Would you like to help ensure that everyone has good access to and feels comfortable in the outdoors? Then now is the perfect time to join the Land Access and Equity Team and help plan, define and carry out our 2023 efforts and focus. We will be hosting a video planning call on January 17th where we will be setting out our ideas and goals for the coming year. Please contact Liz Wessel, lizard59sc@yahoo.com or 608-238-9934 if you would like to learn more or sign up to join the call on the 17th. We'd love to hear from you!

We hope you will join us to help everyone explore, enjoy and protect the outdoors, and bring your perspective and ideas to the Team!

(And check out our Outings article if you have other interests and have an interest in leading outings.)



Canoecopia – Volunteer Opportunity **March 10 – 12**

Alliant Energy Center

When we're advocating to get people to explore, enjoy and protect the outdoors, why not attend an event where that's what the eager masses want to do?

Canoecopia, an event hosted by Rutabaga Paddlesports, is just such an affair – and place – and we'll have a well-stocked (and hopefully staffed!) booth there to engage with an avid watersports outdoor crowd. We'll be promoting the canoe and kayak outings and clinics led by our River Touring Section, protection and proper management of wolves (and other wildlife) with our Wildlife Team, and equitable access to the outdoors by our Four Lakes Land and Equity Access Team.

Your presence is needed to converse with attendees about your (and their) environmental (and other) interests. No training needed – just your willingness to engage people in discussion, and we'll get you up to speed on our issues and opportunities. Volunteering for a shift will also get you free access to all the exhibits and programs that are part of Canoecopia – something you don't want to miss!

Ready to volunteer? Just **sign up at** <https://signup.com/go/MffsNvH> for the shift of your choice. (There is an \$8 fee if you park at the Alliant Energy Center.)

More info on Canoecopia can be found at <http://canoecopia.com/>.

Questions? Contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

not be going to high employment destinations. Given Madison's long-standing concerns over equity, we should have a good understanding of who may not be well served with the redesign.

Uncertainty also stems over assumptions being made about the distances people traverse to the proposed bus stops. The report indicates that if any portion of a Block Group (a U.S. Census designation that groups a number of blocks) is within ¼ mile of the stop, then the entire Block Group's population is counted. While Madison Metro's chief stated that only the portion of the Block Group within ¼ mile is being used, this not been verified, and is a critical aspect of determining accessibility. Even ¼ mile for some people, or in some conditions, may pose barriers.

The redesign time/distance calculations were based on assumptions about behavior and travel times (including waiting) that may not accurately reflect real-world experiences, and hence comparisons between travel times now vs after the redesign are called into question. Especially now that buses can be tracked on a smart phone, accurate data should be used to help determine the impacts of any changes.

It is also troubling that the same consultant who did the bus route redesign, also did the equity analysis – posing a concerning conflict of interest since they have a stake in the outcome. That's not how government should operate. A third party could also offer an additional valuable perspective.

The Transportation Policy and Planning Board and the Transportation Commission both reviewed the Equity Analysis, and both barely approved it on the chair's tie-breaker vote, reflecting a significant level of concern about the analysis. We also share that concern. While we remain committed to having a BRT and enhanced bus system, our view is that that a solid underlying analysis will help ensure that Metro's design is optimized, and that we understand as a community the challenges that remain in provide good transit services for everyone.

In 2023, the Four Lakes Group will continue to push for additional transit system redesign analysis to ensure the transportation needs of groups that rely on transit are served, and pedestrian and neighborhood safety goals are met. More info about the Four Lakes Group positions, comments made, and future activities can be found at <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes/public-transit>.

Beltline Expansion

Congestion on Madison's Beltline has been a source of concern and debate for many years. Recently, WisDOT added flex lanes to increase speed and volume during peak times, and in its seemingly non-ending quest to build its way out of congestion, wants to expand the Beltline further – despite evidence from across the country that adding lanes does not relieve congestion.

Our continued dependency on cars, including adding car-dependent sprawl, is not only very costly and environmentally damaging, it also discriminates against non-drivers and makes transit more difficult to expand. Rather than building more lanes and expanding the Beltline once again, we need to look for smarter, more equitable and environmentally friendly solutions, including expanding mass transit and other options, and ensure smart growth is part of the equation. Madison is already discussing transit-friendly development, but more is needed.

Your voice is needed!

Transportation impacts us all; we should all have a say in that future. The bus route redesign, surveys and refinements will be ongoing, providing opportunities for input and feedback, and the Beltline hearings will ramp up in 2023. Your voice can be an important part in helping us plan and develop our Four Lakes Group transportation policies and positions, and helping our community thrive. Please contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net if you have questions or want to get more involved.

Climate Change in Nigeria

Deborah Anfani Bandawa

(Deborah is a Nigerian law student who was looking for volunteer opportunities, and came across our United Way listing. In looking at our web site, she was captured by all we do. We invited her to write and provide a perspective on climate change in Nigeria. She says her purpose “is to help create an enabling society in every way I can”.)

As bad we think climate change is in our part of the world, many are often more harshly impacted, have less wealth and personal resources to fall back on, and often lack the support systems such as we have here in our country.)

Nigeria constantly experiences all-too-frequent flooding, deforestation and temperature fluctuation. This year (2022), flooding started early in the rainy season, and hence affected 33 states and harshly impacted well over seven million people in Nigeria, and hunger, malnutrition and disease are serious threats to many people.

Over 600 people died and 2 million were displaced due to flooding this year. Contaminated water sources led to several cholera outbreaks which resulted in many more deaths in Nigeria. People who were interviewed expressed their grief, and talked about the impacts of climate change in the part of Northern Nigeria where they are residents.

One woman, a fishmonger, mentioned that she is not sure what to do or where to begin, and is at a loss since her shop is completely destroyed and her house ravaged by flooding. Another young woman, a student at Taraba state university Jalingo, mentioned that climate change has had serious impacts on her health, and she has experienced frequent unexpected hospitalization due to typhoid, fever and cough.

One man who is a farmer stated that he cannot afford to move, and that climate change has utterly destroyed and decimated his land such that he cannot return to the farm to make a living.

Despite that climate change has continually and repeatedly affected the lives of a many individuals, rendering them destitute, homeless and jobless, there are some potential solutions and actions that could help limit climate change.

At the individual level, people in Nigeria can help minimize climate change through choices they make about food, energy, electricity and transportation. People have been advised to eat more fruits and vegetables, venture into farming, reduce food waste, and turn to renewable energy where possible. They have also been advised to plant more trees to help reinstate our forests and provide more greenery. People are also being encouraged to engage in local solutions for sustainable energy access and also can make money from recovering items of value from waste.

At the organizational scale, some people and non-governmental organizations have engaged in campaigns both in local areas as well as online to educate people on climate and environmental changes as to how best to respond and what actions they can take to provide more self-reliance.

In light of the fact that most people are not sure about where to go or what to do, there is a need for those affected by climate change to be supported on a regular basis by those with resources, including individuals and non-governmental organizations, as well as the government. Even though people are struggling and having serious challenges, by working together, we do have opportunities to make a difference in helping people and limiting climate change in Nigeria.



Massive flooding in Nigeria

Moving Beyond Fossil Fuels

This last year has been a mixed bag, but the dedication and expertise of our staff and volunteers, and the pressure they brought to bear, has made a notable difference. But to continue to elevate our work and add to that progress in 2023, we're looking for more people to join our Beyond Coal and Tar Sands Oil teams. Here's where we're at and what we're looking forward to.

Beyond Coal

Our efforts have helped get coal plants shut down earlier than planned. However, due to energy reliability concerns, in part due to solar supply chain issues, two coal plants will stay open for an added year or two. That's unfortunate, not only for the added pollution they will generate, but the added cost burden that will be passed along to customers from burning costly coal.

That coal is costly was particularly evidenced in We Energies rate case this year, where they were asking for an atrocious 13.4% residential electric rate increase. Due to pressure we and others applied to the Public Service Commission, they took a nearly unprecedented step to lower the increase to (a still too high) 11%. Business customers on the other hand saw a much lower rate of increase – despite the outcry as to how unfair this was.

Madison Gas and Electric on the other hand, is beginning to reform their rates, and is reducing their fixed electric fees from \$19 to \$17 next year, and \$15 the following. While use rates will go up slightly, this creates a more equitable rate structure for low energy users and will incentivize energy efficiency measures and solar adoption. Previously, their fixed rate hikes that began under the Walker era and Public Service Commission did just the opposite.

Beyond Gas

The fight continues to stop utilities thinking that transitioning from coal to gas is progress and a step forward for climate change. (It's not.) The fate of the proposed Nemadji Trail Energy Center gas plant in Superior is still up in the air, with one legal decision supporting going forward, but the status of federal funding needed to proceed (and that we have opposed) is not decided. We did have a victory regarding some proposed gas storage facilities that were approved by PSC staff, but not by the commissioners as the decision-makers, and will be sent back to them to rule on. We'll keep pressing on to stop new expensive gas infrastructure and increase renewable energy and energy efficiency. Adding your voice means the more we're heard.

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2023 Outings Leader Training (OLT) - Self-paced

February & March, 2023

Sign up at

<https://tinyurl.com/outingstraining>

If you love to hike and explore places around Wisconsin and want to share those passions and experiences with others, consider becoming a Sierra Club Outings leader. Remember, the more people who love the special outdoor places you do, the more likely they are to want to protect them.

For 2023, the Wisconsin Sierra Club is offering an online training. Leaders that need to renew their certification and new prospective leaders will complete the training modules online at your own pace. To complete the training (and become certified) you will need to attend an online discussion/review of the modules.

That means attending one for each block of Modules or (2) discussion sessions. Dates for OLT Discussions and Review. Each of these sessions will be 2 hours.

- 2/16 Th Block A (Modules 1 - 5)
- 2/23 Th Block B (Modules 6 - 8)
- 3/16 Th Block A (Modules 1 - 5)
- 3/23 Th Block B ((Modules 6 - 8)

First Aid/CPR training: All outings leaders need to have at least basic First Aid/CPR training. We will be offering a central location training in March. If you sign up for the Outings Leader training, you will automatically get the date for the First Aid/CPR training.

For more information or questions,

contact Liz Wessel,

lizard59sc@yahoo.com.

To sign up for the training:

<https://tinyurl.com/outingstraining>

Beyond Tar Sands

The Tar Sands Line 5 reroute battle continues. A judge ruled that Enbridge must work with the Bad River Band regarding the line going through their property to agree on measures that should be taken regarding spill prevention and protection. The DNR has not yet provided an updated or final Environmental Impact Statement regarding the fate of the proposed reroute, but our efforts turned out over 32,000 comments opposing the reroute! The federal Army Corps of Engineers could also weigh in on the issue. At the same time, the fate of Line 5 under the Straights of Mackinaw continues to play out in Michigan courts as to whether pipeline replacement will be allowed – or it will be shut down.

Beyond Fossil Fuel Solutions

Some good news arrived this year via federal legislation. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will allot significant funding to clean energy solutions throughout the economy including all levels of government, to businesses, and in the private sector that will incentivize and stimulate clean energy advancements and adoption. If you're thinking about energy efficiency improvements to your home, installing solar or electric heating (heat pumps), or perhaps purchasing an electric vehicle, there are many new rebates and tax credits that will be widely available, with incentives especially targeted at low and moderate-income households. One guide to homeowner's benefits is at <https://tinyurl.com/IRA-info>.

Beyond Apathy!

If you've read this far, you understand the hazards of fossil fuel to climate change, our environment and our lives – and is why our work is far from done. And as bad as we have it here and now, this is just a precursor to what may come, especially if we don't do more to rapidly move off fossil fuels.

Did something you read about resonate with you and your concerns? The wonderful thing about volunteering with the Sierra Club is that to get started, it's not what you know, it's what you care about. Time and caring are the two most valuable assets volunteers contribute.

We have Beyond Coal Team and Tar Sands teams that you can learn about more on January 11 at our team kickoff event, Volunteer Nights the second Wednesday of the month that are open to anyone interested, or you can contact our staff to find out more. Info is on our chapter web site and Facebook page.

Volunteers – Our Lifeblood!

Are you aware of the range of opportunities we have and ways you can contribute? Many are flexible as to when and where it suits you. If you've read this (or previous) newsletters, you know we have many opportunities – such as our team kick-offs are on January 11, and two major events we'll be tabling at this winter.

On our chapter home page, the activities calendar lists various activities and events. For more info on a range of opportunities, go to <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/volunteer>.

Here are a few other ideas of ways to contribute:

- Writer/editor – write/edit our Four Lakes newsletter, blog, or Facebook posts
- Outings leader – lead outings of your choice and location
- Recycling – volunteer or help coordinate our efforts at outdoor summer festivals
- Four Lakes board – join our local board to help determine policies and actions we take

For more info or to discuss other options, contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>
<https://www.facebook.com/4lakesSierraClub/>

Ronda Conner, 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

Patrick Stoffel, stpa0001@hotmail.com

Liz Wessel, Co-treasurer, Land Equity Access team, (608) 238-9934, lizard59sc@yahoo.com

(All are on the Four Lakes Executive Comm.)



Four Lakes Group Sierra Club
754 Williamson St
Madison, WI 53703
<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes>



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.

Garden Expo – *Volunteer opportunity*

February 10 – 12

Alliant Energy Center, Madison

The Sierra Club is about the outdoors, exploring, enjoying and protecting it, and there is no better place to connect with other outdoor lovers than at WHA TV's Garden Expo, a delight for the eyes, ears, nose, and that provides nourishment for the soul with lots of greenery and plenty of learning opportunities.

Winter's white snow is beautiful, but by mid-February many people are thinking about green and spring – which is our opportunity to engage with them on our issues. That's where you come in. We need your enthusiasm and interests, and with a very receptive audience, this is a wonderful place to share your passions, have great conversations, make new friends, and build support for the Sierra Club.

Volunteering is easy. Simply **sign up at** <https://signup.com/go/hPWYFtE> for the shift of your choice, and we'll send you a FREE pass good all weekend at the Garden Expo. We'll provide orientation, and you'll be in the company of other Sierra Club volunteers. (There is an \$8 parking fee at the Alliant Energy Center.)

The WHA Garden Expo has many wonderful exhibits, seminars and workshops to enjoy throughout the weekend. More info can be found at <https://wlgardenexpo.com>.

Questions? Contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net. This event is a real favorite, so please join us.