

Access and Equity Team Getting Outdoors in 2023

Activities

The team continues to work to find more ways to get outdoors, bring down barriers and overcome challenges. For **National Trails Day - Saturday June 3rd**, we have formed a partnership with Friends of Blue Mound State Park and Access Ability Wisconsin. June 3rd is also a free access day for WI State Parks; park fees will be waived so we hope to see you outdoors!

Please join us as a volunteer and/or a participant. The day will start with a trail run sponsored by the Friends, a yoga class on top of the mound, guided hikes, self-guided nature scavenger hunt, camping demo and more. We will also have 3 all-terrain wheelchairs available for differently-abled hikers.

For more information and to volunteer for this great event, visit the Four Lakes Group website blog page or use this QR code.



We also plan to participate in **Dane County Parks 2nd Environmental Fun Fair on July 9th** at the Lussier Heritage Center. Like last year, we will be offering participants the opportunity to learn about tents, cooking stoves and other camping gear. We hope our partners Access Ability will join us and bring some all-terrain wheelchairs for this event. Stay tuned as we finalize our plans.

Go to <https://www.countyofdane.com/Event/Detail/1468> for more info, or to volunteer, go to <https://tinyurl.com/volfunfair>.

Projects

At the start of the 2023/2024 legislative session, several bills were reintroduced that would expand the National Parks **Every Kid Outdoors program** to Wisconsin State Parks. The Four Lakes Group team along with the Wisconsin Chapter's Land and Wildlife team continues to identify supporters of the proposed program as well as mobilize our members and supporters to advocate for the bills that have been introduced.

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Chair's Column

Ronda Conner, Co-Chair

Happy Spring! Hope you are getting outdoors and enjoying the weather as nature wakes from its slumber. I love hiking this time of year because it brings so much promise of growth and regeneration to see what was so recently dried up bursting with life and vibrant color. I have been enthralled with beautiful spring blooms and birds working overtime to find food and building nests for their new clutches.

The Four Lakes Group has also been investing energy into creating a greener future! We've been organizing tree plantings that will enhance parks for people and animals as well as help sequester carbon from the air. We've also been training outings leaders such as myself who cannot wait to explore the parks with all of you. Please keep an eye on our calendar for more outings if you would like to join us – or contact us if you would like to become a leader.

We are also planning to help at many summer festivals and events which we will post on our calendar so that you don't miss a beat. Those include National Trails Day, June 3, at Blue Mound State Park, and the Dane County Environmental Fun Fair, July 9, at the Lussier Family Heritage Center.

We hope that you are able to find many different ways to learn and grow with us in the upcoming months. That includes taking our bus to the MREA Energy Fair on June 24 – always a fun and educational event. Please let us know if you have ideas for ways to make a difference.

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The **One City Schools project** offering 6 outdoor education programs was delayed until the fall. The programs are geared towards K-5 students and will include classroom backpacks that can be checked out and taken home. We are excited to provide some permanent resources and activities for the students and their families! We'll also be looking for help with the class modules.

Joining us

The Land Access and Equity Team continues to meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 5:30 PM. If you would like to join us, sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/LEATmeet>. The next meeting is June 6th. Please contact Liz Wessel, lizard59sc@yahoo.com or 608-238-9934 if you would like to learn more.

We invite you to join us and bring your ideas, as well as enthusiasm for the outdoors and helping others enjoy it, to the Team!

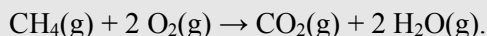
Becoming a Sustainable Good Guy

Heat pumps. You've heard the words bandied about; it seems to be something good from all the rumors and whatnot. But...what the heck are they and why are they a good thing?

First, a little *science*.

Heat naturally flows from areas of high temperatures to areas of low temperatures. Open your front door in the dead of a Wisconsin winter to "see" (feel) this in action. A heat pump, on the other hand, is a device that uses energy (work) to reverse the direction of this flow; thus, transferring heat from a cold space to a warm one. A heat pump uses electricity. It doesn't burn anything to create heat. Rather, electricity powers the heat pump which transfers heat from one locale to another. It does not create heat; it simply extracts and moves it.

In your home, your furnace creates heat by burning fossil fuels. Carbon dioxide is pumped into the air during the burning process (that's what all the fuss is about). The actual chemical formula for the combustion of so-called natural gas (methane) is:



Translating that into English:

Methane (g = gas) burns (combustion) in an oxygen environment (air); the combustion produces the heat - used to warm the house, along with carbon dioxide gas and water vapor.

The carbon dioxide is added to the air – it is one of the primary causes of global warming and the greenhouse effect. Just like a greenhouse where the glass in the roof allows sunlight to penetrate but prevents heat from escaping – carbon dioxide does the same thing in our atmosphere.

By converting the way you heat your home, from using a natural gas or propane furnace to using a heat pump, you are electrifying your heating process. Electrifying your heating process is good, because electricity can be generated from non-carbon emitting sources such as solar voltaics, wind turbines, and hydroelectric dams.

Now, **the benefits you get** by using a heat pump for your home:

1. Energy Efficiency: Heat pumps are highly energy-efficient as they transfer heat rather than generate it, thus reducing energy consumption and **saving money on utility bills**.
2. Environmentally friendly: Heat pumps are environmentally friendly as they **do not produce any harmful emissions**, unlike traditional heating systems.
3. Dual functionality: Heat pumps **can be used for both heating and cooling**, providing year-round comfort in your home, and eliminating the need for a separate air conditioner.
4. Low Maintenance: Heat pumps require **minimal maintenance and have a longer lifespan** compared to traditional heating systems.
5. Improved Air Quality: Heat pumps **filter the air inside your home**, removing dust particles and other allergens, improving the air quality and reducing the risk of respiratory problems.
6. Consistent Temperature: Heat pumps provide **consistent temperatures** throughout your home without the temperature swings of gas furnaces, and eliminate hot and cold spots and provide greater comfort.

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Madison's Transportation Future

Madison Bus Route Redesign

As we described in our last newsletter, Madison's bus system has been undergoing a redesign with the inclusion of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). However, the concerns we expressed regarding the equity of the redesign, how the analysis was conducted, and its ability to serve riders most in need of transit service remain. While some transit dependent individuals do go to employment centers and other high transit destinations, there are many who do not, and where the redesign will increase their difficulty in getting to other destinations.

The new route system is due to be implemented on June 11, with regular buses emulating the BRT buses that the City will be acquiring next year. The new station platforms and roadway changes are underway too to serve the new buses when they arrive.

Madison Metro will be taking feedback from riders on how the new system is working, and we urge people to provide their input to them – whether it be to ask for changes and improvements, or to tell them what you think is working better. Please let us know your reactions and thoughts as well. Your input can help inform our positions and asks. We also welcome you to join us in our efforts and advocate for equity and changes.

Beltline Highway

As the Wisconsin DOT proposes to add even more lanes to the Beltline, we'll be pushing back to suggest that more lanes are not the optimal solution. Rather than looking at other measures on a one-by-one basis as the DOT has done, we should look whether a suite of options together may provide better long-term solutions, more equity and better support Madison's bus system and other transit options. With transportation being the biggest contributor to climate change in Wisconsin, reducing individual vehicle use is a critical factor in lowering our climate changing emissions.

Highways are expensive to build and maintain, expansion increases plowing, police and emergency services budgets, and also encourages more driving. Think what those millions of dollars could make if put into improving our bus system, creating more bike lanes, and providing other transportation solutions that are more environmentally friendly.

Stay tuned for updates, or better yet, if you're really concerned about yet more lanes and traffic on our Beltline, please join our team to advocate for transportation equity, safety and sanity – and to protect our planet!

Recycling Away from Home

Trash. It just won't go away. In fact, we keep producing more all the time, and while we have recycling, it's often less than effective. Setting guidelines and providing the opportunity to recycle is one thing, but getting people to understand and comply with those parameters at home is a challenge.

Recycling at festivals can be at least as much of a conundrum. Not only does confusion over what materials can be recycling crop up, but the festival atmosphere, people coming from various areas, and the effects of alcohol add to the challenges.

But that's where we come in as part of the solution. Our Recycling Away from Home (RAH) program has for many years helped keep trash and recycling properly sorted at east side Madison festivals, and educated people about waste reduction. We've had success too, with the Marquette Neighborhood Association incorporating that task into their Waterfront and Orton Park Festivals.

But that still leaves us with plenty to do, and more people to educate, and we'll be looking for volunteers to assist us at those events this summer. Whether you want to just help out for a shift, help coordinate volunteers, or work on education and expansion to other events, we welcome your involvement. Here at some of the events we'll be at and where you can sign up.

- Atwoodfest, July 29 - 30; sign up at <https://signup.com/go/tNKxpxv>
- Africafest, August 19, sign up at <https://signup.com/go/mZRGqSM>
- Laborfest, September 4, sign up at <https://signup.com/go/rYziQGZ>
- Willy St Fair, September 16 - 17, sign up at <https://signup.com/go/uMKDphk>

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

Tree plantings

Looking for something fun that also benefits people and the environment – and that in addition is a great family-friendly event? Our tree planting events have been just such an activity – as shown by the smiles of delight on children’s and adult’s faces alike from our recent events.

On April 15, we joined Dane County, the City of Sun Prairie, and local volunteers to plant trees at Sun Prairie’s Dream Park. With the warm weather, we had a great day planting dozens of trees, and some people even were able to take saplings home to plant in their own yard.

We celebrated Arbor Day by planting 4 trees in Southdale Park in Fitchburg along with park neighbors, Sierra Club volunteers, and a local Girl Scout Troop. As they discovered, it’s a great activity for a scout troop!

Under the leadership of Jake Johnson, we partnered with the Village of Oregon and the Bruce Company, and completed three major tree planting projects on two separate days in Oregon! On May 6th we planted 20 trees at High Meadows Park and 13 trees at Thomson Park in Oregon. Lots of park neighbors and families came and helped along with several Sierra Club members.

On May 13th, we planted 40 trees at Gary Disch Park in Oregon, and were again joined by several park neighbors and Sierra Club members. Gary Disch, a long-time public employee and park volunteer in Oregon, joined us with his family to plant trees in the park named after him to honor his service. Our partnership with the Village of Oregon and the Bruce Company will continue, with more tree plantings this fall and next spring.

Sound like fun? Would you like to be informed about future tree planting projects in the area? Email Jake at jake@paradymeproductions.com. Or if you’d like to help plan a community tree planting project in your community, or you know some of some underserved areas or communities that could benefit from some trees or bushes, contact Jake to explore the possibilities.





Four Lakes Group Outreach

Volunteer opportunities!

Ah, the delights of spring and summer outdoors in Wisconsin. Fortunately, many of our opportunities to connect with other people are outdoors – at farmers markets, festivals, and other events. Revel in the fresh air while enjoying events and talking with interested people. Most events are in the Madison area, but we'll also have a booth at the MREA Energy Fair, June 23 - 25 in Custer, WI. (See page 8 about our bus!).

Our opportunities include:

- **The Saturday morning Dane County Farmers Market**, which entices thousands of people with all the plants, veggies, cheeses, meat and wonderful smells (and tastes!) of baked goods. <https://signup.com/go/JgpncqP>.
- **MREA Energy Fair**, Custer, WI – see the link on our web page calendar.
- **Atwoodfest**, July 29 & 30 – we'll be assisting with the recycling too. Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/tNKxpxv>
- **Africafest**, August 19 – Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/mZRGqSM>
- **Laborfest**, September 4 – a great place to meet politicians, and also where we help with recycling. Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/rYziQGZ>
- **Willy St Fair**, September 16 & 17 – with the famous Sunday Willy St parade – and recycling. Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/pGrsgui>

We're looking for people who care about the environment and the Sierra Club, and like connecting with people. Tabling is a great way to meet new people, have fun conversations, and learn new things. We provide any orientation you need, and provide support or perhaps someone to partner with if you like.

Have questions, or perhaps ideas about other events we could be at? Contact Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.



Join the Four Lakes Group Executive Committee

As a Sierra club member, you have supported the work of the National Sierra Club as well as the Wisconsin Chapter and your local Four Lakes Group. We want to invite you to take the next step and help determine the direction and priorities of the Four Lakes Group and what environmental activities and issues we take on by joining our board. Without paid staff, we rely upon volunteers to guide our local Group and our finances.

In addition to being involved in issues you care about, you can have more of an outward facing presence as a leader in the Four Lakes Group. Some of the key issues we work on include clean energy, public transit, equity and access to parks and public lands, waste reduction, and other important issues in our nine county south central Wisconsin area.

Our board meets once a month with a time commitment of generally an hour or two a week – but can be more depending on your interests and level of involvement. We don't expect prior board knowledge or experience since we provide guidance and support as needed to help you feel comfortable and find your niche, and much of the learning is by doing. You can apply by going to <https://tinyurl.com/4LGexcom>.

Members of the Four Lakes Group Executive Committee are elected by the Group's membership. Candidate statements are due during August and the election is held in the fall online and in the fall newsletter. For more information, contact Liz Wessel at lizard59sc@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your support and please consider joining our leadership team!

Liz Wessel, Four Lakes Group Executive Committee

Four Lakes Group Volunteer Opportunities

Having fun, making a difference

- Join our board (see above)
- Land Equity and Access team (page 1)
- Recycling Away from Home (page 3)
- Tabling and outreach (page 5)
- Program coordinator – do fun and informative programs
- Newsletter editor/layout
- Outings leader – lead local Sierra Club outings
- Join a Chapter campaign team

Contact Don Ferber (at right) for more info

7. Quiet Operation: Heat pumps operate quietly, making them ideal for use in residential areas.

Heat pumps can be used to heat and cool your home. But there are also heat pump water heaters and cloth dryers. They are usually more expensive to buy, but the energy you save on your electric bill can more than make up for the added cost of the purchase.

Starting this year is actually a great time to think about heat pumps. For one thing, the technology has improved considerably in the last decade. Did you know that the newest heat pumps alone can keep your home warm to at least a -13 F outside air temperature (and maybe colder!)? They have backup resistance heating (think space heater) if need be, but this is unlikely to be needed, at least in southern Wisconsin, with a reasonably well-insulated house.

The Inflation Reduction Act provides additional funding for homeowners to adopt clean energy technologies such as heat pumps. While they are still fairly costly, that will help make them more affordable, and with the added cost savings (and comfort!), you may actually come out ahead!

Four Lakes Group Sierra Club Contacts

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

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

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(All are on the Four Lakes Executive Comm.)

Energy Challenges

Clean Tech, not NTEC

You'd think by now, people and the utilities would understand how dire climate change is, and that the cheapest forms of energy generation are wind and solar. But Dairyland Power and Minnesota Power are still proposing to build a new fossil ('natural') gas plant (the Nemadji Trail Energy Center or NTEC) in Superior, and are asking the Rural Utility Service for our tax dollars to finance it with!

This despite the Biden administration recently announcing \$11 billion for rural coop renewable energy generation, which would bring the costs down even further. In addition, Dairyland Power has announced that they are looking at pumped hydro storage to provide electric power in times of need. Pumped hydro stores water in old mines that would be pumped upwards in times of excess power generation, and then be released to generate power when added power is needed. This type of storage complements renewable energy extremely well since it stores excess energy when the sun is shining or the wind blowing, and then could provide much more prolonged power backup than current battery storage.

The Wisconsin Chapter and the Beyond Coal Campaign are currently urging the Rural Utility Service not to give Dairyland Power the money to build the gas power plant in Superior, and instead offer them funding to put in renewable energy, along with perhaps pumped hydro storage. Just say "no" to more fossil gas – and yes to clean energy!

Energy Burden: Energy Injustice

For almost all of us, energy is necessary. But for too many, energy's cost is an unnecessary burden. That's especially true for many people of color in Milwaukee – and even more so with We Energies 11% residential rate hike, and the high gas prices of last winter. This predominantly has been impacting people in historically redlined areas, adding to the injustice many have and are currently experiencing, and creating added hardships.

We have been supporting our partners in Milwaukee to advocate for the Public Service Commission and We Energies to rectify the harms of high energy bills on low- and fixed-income residents. In response, the PSC opened two dockets, the LIFT (Low Income Forgiveness Tool), and PIPP (Percentage of Income Payment Pilot). The LIFT program is aimed at helping people avoid unaffordable payments and fees that are often levied when someone falls well behind on payments, creating an extreme added burden. The PIPP proposal is looking at having a cap on utility payments based on a percentage of income. One proposal is 6%, lower than some people are currently experiencing, but still a high burden. We'll keep fighting to end the energy injustice of unaffordable energy bills.

Enbridge: Shut down Line 5!

Spring's flooding and rains have exposed areas of Line 5 near the Bad River, and added floods and debris could cause a rupture in the pipeline, threatening the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa's lands and way of life, as well as potentially Lake Superior. The Bad River Band has petitioned the courts to mandate Enbridge shut down Line 5 due to the unacceptable risk of a rupture. This is their sacred homeland where they also have treaty rights. They should not have to endure such risks, especially in the name of corporate profits, that threatens their lives and heritage.

We're also continuing to advocate for the Evers' and Biden' administrations to not give Enbridge permits to reroute Line 5 and continue the risks and the flow of toxic, climate altering fossil fuels. Michigan is also fighting in the courts to stop a rerouted tunnel from being built under the Straits of Mackinac and have Line 5 be shut down. This is part of the challenge of fighting a multi-billion dollar fossil fuel company – but we have justice and people on our side.

Join us!

Ready to take on some challenges and fight for justice and the planet? Please consider joining our Beyond Coal or Tar Sands Pipeline campaigns. Contact Jadine Sonoda at jadine.sonoda@sierraclub.org.



Four Lakes Group Sierra Club
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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 informing you 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'll also send you our Enews to keep you even better informed!

MREA Energy Fair Bus

Saturday, June 24

Convenience, style, low carbon footprint, stress free travel, and loads of friendly like-minded environmentalists. And that's all *before* you get to the 32nd annual Midwest Renewable Energy Association's Energy Fair.

The Four Lakes Group is again a sponsor of the Energy Fair and is providing you an easy for people to get there, especially this year when the Inflation Reduction Act is providing significant additional funding for homeowners, businesses, non-profits, and local governments to take additional clean energy measures, and help us move more quickly off climate damaging fossil fuels. Educational, money saving, AND fun!

In addition, while transitioning to electric vehicles is a step in the right direction, we're also educating people that mass transit is still a key transportation necessity to lower carbon emissions even further. For the mere fee of \$5, you can ride the bus to the Fair and back on Saturday, 6/24. It leaves Middleton at 7 am, makes several stops through Madison, and returns before 10 pm.

Ready to roll? Then click the link at <https://tinyurl.com/MadMREAbus2023>

And if you're going to the Energy Fair anyhow (regardless of day), why not volunteer at our Sierra Club booth? Volunteering gets you in for free to the Energy Fair. Simply look for the link in our calendar on our home page.