



SIERRA CLUB

GREAT WATERS GROUP
NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2023 NO. 3

Milwaukee commits to climate action

Milwaukee had cause for celebration in June when the Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan was adopted by the City of Milwaukee. More than 80 people, including community leaders and task force members, had worked diligently to develop the plan to support a new clean energy economy that provides opportunities for people of color.

When it came time for adoption, the advocacy group Our Future Milwaukee, with partner organizations including the Great Waters Group, Citizen Action of Wisconsin and 350 Milwaukee, put out the call to action. About 65 people attended a rally June 14, and 50 spoke in support of the plan at a hearing.

But no sooner had Mayor Cavalier Johnson signed the Climate and Equity Plan than Our Future Milwaukee needed to tackle an issue that threatened the plan's implementation: the financial stability of the city and county governments. A new Wisconsin shared revenue law increased the amount of shared revenue to be passed through
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Ald. Marina Dimitrijevic addressed a June 14 City Hall rally supporting the Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan.

Fall Programs

Tour Green Schools and Learn About the Health Impacts

Sept. 18, 5-7 p.m.

Meet at Riverwest Elementary School playground, 2765 N.

Fratney St., Milwaukee

Go on a 1.5-mile walking tour of two schools that are using schoolyard redevelopment to bring green spaces back to the children. Hear about related research at the Medical College of Wisconsin and learn about the importance and effects of these spaces.

Presenters include Kirsten Beyer and Courtney Jankowski of the

Medical College, Heather Dietzel of Milwaukee Public Schools facilities, and Justin Hegarty and Lisa Neeb of Reflo.

The 30th Street Corridor: A Transformational Trail Within the Route of the Badger

Oct. 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Havenwoods State Forest, 6141 N. Hopkins St., Milwaukee

Proposed biking/walking trails in Milwaukee's north side communities have promise to dramatically improve access and potentially improve quality of life in these neighborhoods. Presenter Willie Karidis is the project manager for the Route of

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Notes from the Chair

Environmental volunteering can often feel like a long haul where the problems we're trying to address keep getting worse. In June this year we got a ray of hope when the Milwaukee Common Council adopted the Climate and Equity Plan, a bold set of strategies that are designed to achieve two goals:

1. Reduce community greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
2. Improve racial and economic equity by creating green jobs that pay at least \$40,000 annually and are focused on recruiting local people of color.

This plan is the result of three years of work by many community volunteers. It seeks to accomplish the two goals by implementing 10 Big Ideas related to everything from green jobs and home energy upgrades to people-centered transportation, waste reduction and promoting nature in the city. You can read more about the plan here:

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/climate/Climate-Plan>.

Many Great Waters Group members contributed to this milestone by submitting comments. We want to extend special thanks to our Executive Committee member Linda Frank, who, together with Jennifer Evans, transitioned from leading the Education/Outreach group of the City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity to forming the advocacy group Our Future Milwaukee, which has kept residents informed of the plan's progress.

Many thanks to Linda and to all of you who contributed to the adoption of this important set of promises to the residents of the city of Milwaukee.

Residents and the GWG will need to stay engaged to help put this plan into action by taking steps from reducing food waste, composting and planting trees to investing in energy efficiency upgrades or solar panels.

Learn more about tax credits and rebates from the Inflation Reduction Act at www.rewiringamerica.org.

– Jenny Abel, GWG chair

Climate and Equity Plan adopted by Milwaukee

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by the state to local governments, but that was not enough to put the city and county on a sound financial footing.

The proposed solution was a 2% City of Milwaukee sales tax and a 0.4% increase in the Milwaukee County sales tax. While many people had legitimate concerns about the tax effects on lower-income residents, severe cuts to government staff and services would also be painful. Without the additional sales tax revenue, the city would not be able to achieve the goals of the Climate and Equity Plan.

Our Future Milwaukee put out the word on why the sales tax was a must, and GWG sent a letter of support to the mayor and Common Council. On July 11, Common Council members struggled to reflect the needs of their constituents and make the best decision overall. In the end, the measure passed 12-3. Milwaukee County followed by adopting its increased sales tax. Now, climate action and equity work can move forward.

GWG sees its priorities of advancing climate action and equity reflected in the work of Our Future Milwaukee, and it is delighted to support this coalition. To that end, GWG received a \$1,000 Climate Action Award from the national Sierra Club to help cover expenses of Our Future Milwaukee in 2023.

Learn more by subscribing to the Our Future Milwaukee newsletter at www.tinyurl.com/2p87rn29.

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Have a beer with us

It's not too late to join us at one of our popular beer garden gatherings.

A host will put out GWG material on a table from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Buy a beer or soda and drop by.

Please register at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar or check our Facebook page at facebook.com/SierraClubGWG to get any last-minute updates if the weather or the beer garden hours lead to changes.

Thursday, Aug. 24 – South Shore Terrace, 2900 South Shore Drive, Milwaukee

Wednesday, Sept. 13 – Hubbard Park Beer Garden, 3565 N. Morris Blvd., Shorewood

Thursday, Oct. 12 – Estabrook Beer Garden, 4600 Estabrook Drive, Shorewood

Energy affordability efforts ongoing

The Public Service Commission, Wisconsin's utility regulator, received input from customers this summer to help guide an investigation into alternative energy affordability programs to serve We Energies customers.

The investigation is born from advocacy by the Sierra Club and the other members of Milwaukee's energy burden working group involving the dramatic energy rate increase that the PSC approved for We Energies last year.

Energy burden is defined as the percentage of gross household income spent on energy costs. Federal agencies typically consider a burden over 6% as "high," and high energy burden contributes to psychosocial stress and mental health issues, poor sleep, cardiovascular and respiratory issues and heat stress, among others.

Tens of thousands of Milwaukee residents experience high energy burden, with low-income and African American households disproportionately affected.

We Energies' existing "affordability" program, LIFT, is difficult to

access, and it levies financial penalties for those who fail to comply with its requirements. The current PSC docket investigates the feasibility of a Percentage of Income Payment Program, or PIPP, which would cap utility bills at a certain percentage of household income for qualified customers. PIPPs exist in other states and bring the energy burden of low-income customers more in line with that of other ratepayers.

The vast majority of written comments, including many from Sierra Club members, submitted to the PSC in June were in favor of implementing a PIPP, citing the benefits it would have for seniors on fixed incomes, single mothers and others.

Comments also asked for automatic program enrollment for qualified customers and increased investment in renewables to decrease energy production costs.

If you are interested in getting involved, email Victoria Gillet (torrig@gmail.com) or Cassie Steiner (cassie.steiner@sierraclub.org) for information.

ExCom slots available

Do you care about nature and environmental justice and wish you could do more? We have an opportunity for you!

The Executive Committee of the Great Waters Group is an elected board of Sierra Club volunteers who meet about nine times a year to determine Group priorities and policy. Our ExCom members actively participate in a subcommittee as part of their volunteer commitment. We expect to have openings, which are for two-year terms.

A nominee must be a member in good standing of the Sierra Club and the Great Waters Group and must give consent to be nominated.

If you are interested in becoming a member of our ExCom or in nominating someone, please contact Linda Frank at Linda@frankenvironmental.com by Sept. 24.

Want to wade in more slowly? We welcome volunteers for these teams: Volunteer Coordination, Conservation, Political, Communications or Outings. Email us at greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com.

Fall 2023 Outings

Tree Seed Collecting: Step One for Wisconsin's Future Forests

Aug. 26, 10 a.m. – noon

McGovern Park, 4500 W. Custer Ave., Milwaukee

Join us as we walk around McGovern Park and learn how to find, collect, store, ship or grow seeds to help the DNR create future forests.

Lincoln Creek cleanup

Sept. 30, 10 a.m. – noon

4410 N. Hopkins St., Milwaukee

Join us for our quarterly cleanup at "Hopkins Hollow" with Nearby Nature.

Milwaukee River hike: TBD

More information will be in the e-letter, Facebook and website. Register at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar.

Fall Programs

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the Badger trail network at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

Protecting Public Access to Waterways and Waterfronts

November 16, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Location TBD

Learn about Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine, which legally protects public access to all "navigable" waterways, as well

as land that was formerly submerged. It has been crucial to the development of Milwaukee's public lakefront and the RiverWalk. Presenter Virginia Small is a journalist who writes about conservation, parks and more.

For updates and registration for these programs, go to sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar or call (262) 236-5623.



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Bird watching and rally set for Kohler-Andrae

Wisconsin Sierrans are well informed about the potentially devastating effects of Kohler Co.'s proposed golf course near Kohler-Andrae State Park, which includes plans to build a four-lane rotary and a 22,000-square-foot maintenance facility inside the park.

But too many Wisconsinites are not.

To help spread the word, the Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter's Lands Team will hold a migratory bird-watching event and educational rally at the park on Sunday, Sept. 10. Expert birder Nancy Tikalsky will be our guide to the many bird species that would be affected by this development proposal.

More than 10,000 migrating birds use Kohler-Andrae Lakeshore as a stopover site annually. And many bird species, some rare or endangered, make the park their permanent home.

Please join the Lands Team for bird watching at Kohler-Andrae at 8 a.m. The rally will begin at 10 a.m. To get details and to sign up, check the Chapter web page or

<https://fb.me/e/1n7LlVlLK>.

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Save the party date

Save the date for the Great Waters Group's annual holiday party on Sunday, Dec. 3, at Wil-O-Way Underwood in Wauwatosa. We look forward to getting together with all of you for festive entertainment, our silent auction, and the presentation of the 2023 Environmental Hero Award.

Look for details in the next newsletter and e-letters.

Interested in helping out with the party or auction items? Contact Kerstin Larson at larson.ker@gmail.com.

Tosa Green Summit set

Join the Great Waters Group at the annual Tosa Green Summit on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Wauwatosa City Hall, 7225 W North Ave. The event includes a recycling drop-off, two speakers and exhibits, including a booth staffed by GWG volunteers from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event continues from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 16, with recycling of household hazardous waste. Learn more at facebook.com/TosaGreenSummit.

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