



News of the  
Southeast Gateway Group  
of the Sierra Club

APR-JUN 2024  
VOLUME 42, No. 2

# SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

## SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION UPDATES

By Gloria Randall-Hewitt



Trevor Jung, Cory Mason & Sen. Baldwin  
Credit: Hanna Van Den Einde  
The Journal Times | Sep 2, 2023

You may have heard about the new electric buses in Racine which were purchased in 2023. In September 2023, Senator Tammy Baldwin visited Racine to draw attention to another exciting development with those electric buses. Baldwin helped secure \$1.2M from the US Department of Energy for the city of Racine to build a solar array to power the electric bus fleet. The array will be on the transit garage. Mayor Mason reported that by percentage, Racine has the most electrified bus fleet in the state.

From [ryderacine.com](http://ryderacine.com), advantages include:

- ~The solar array will allow the transit department to run five city buses without having to purchase either diesel or electricity for a generation.
- ~Replacing five diesel buses with electric ones reduces the amount of fuel the city buys by 24,000 gallons/year.
- ~Reduce the amount of carbon produced by 249 metric tonnes per year.

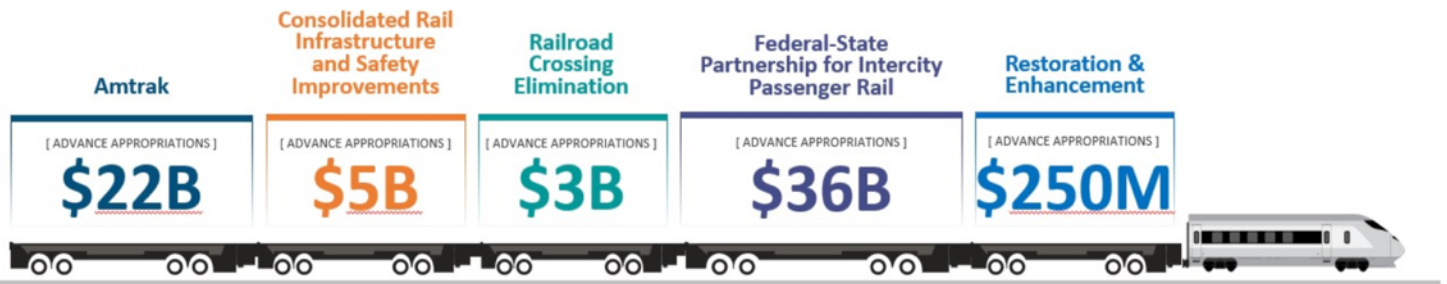


Rendering of the solar array. Photo from [ryderacine.com](http://ryderacine.com) Credit: City of Racine

***“We live in great times in that the federal government is now committed to local government and making sure that we have built infrastructure that meets our needs,”***

***-Trevor Jung, City of Racine  
Transit & Mobility Director  
from [ryderacine.com](http://ryderacine.com)***

In addition, Tammy Baldwin has been instrumental in securing funding to develop five new rail routes in Wisconsin that are priorities for passenger rail expansion. Each of these five areas will receive up to \$500,000 in planning and development grants from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including routes from Milwaukee to Chicago, Milwaukee to Green Bay, Milwaukee to Minneapolis passing through Madison and Eau Claire, and Chicago to Seattle passing through Milwaukee, LaCross and Eau Claire. The chart below from [railroads.dot.gov/BIL](http://railroads.dot.gov/BIL) breaks down how \$66 Billion in funding from FY22-26 would be spent. ❁



# GET INVOLVED START HERE!

## Capturing the Night Sky: From Nightscapes to Nebulae

UW-Parkside Science Night, Wed., April 10 at 6:00 p.m.

UW-Parkside Greenquist Hall, 900 Wood Road, Kenosha, Room 103

Want to get into photographing the stars, galaxies, and distant nebulae? Adam Saari shares his experience with getting started in astrophotography, using beginner and intermediate setups. We enjoyed seeing Adam's pictures at our Vacation Night last winter and are so excited for this presentation! In addition to enjoying photos taken of a range of objects, the talk will explore:

- Key equipment and considerations when photographing nightscapes and deep sky objects
- How tracking the stars and stacking your photos can dramatically improve your final image
- Going all-in and capturing increasingly challenging targets.



Andromeda Galaxy (M31)  
in the Andromeda  
Constellation



## White River Trail Bike Outing in Celebration of Earth Day!

**Sunday, April 14, 2024, at 1:00PM**

Spring is a great time to get your bicycles out. Please join us for our first bike ride of the year on the White River Trail. This is a crushed limestone trail that was once a railroad connecting small towns enabling farmers to ship their crops to Racine and farther. Since it is an old railroad there are no hills, and since it is a trail there is little traffic to deal with.

This trail was built and is maintained in part by Rails-to-Trails and there is a usage fee of \$5 for a day pass and \$25 for annual. The trail roughly parallels and crosses the White River in Lyons, WI. We will be seeing some old small towns and some glacial formations and have some good views of the countryside. The trail is 12 miles to the end by Elkhorn and we will do an out and back (not a circuit) so you can turn around whenever you hit your halfway point.

Meet at 1:00 in the town of Lyons at the parking lot in the center of town. Please contact Al Sommer at 262-716-6955 or [sommerallan4@gmail.com](mailto:sommerallan4@gmail.com) if you plan on joining us in case we need to cancel for bad weather. Hope to see you there!



Photo from [traillink.com](http://traillink.com)

## Join the Sierra Club Wisconsin Book Club!

Our Book Club meets virtually every other month to discuss a book related to climate change, nature, environmental justice, or equity in the outdoors.

**Our next discussion will be held on Tuesday, May 7 from 7-8 PM**

We will be discussing *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety*:

*How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet* by Sarah Jaquette Ray

A youth movement is reenergizing global environmental activism. The “climate generation,” late millennials and iGen, or Generation Z, is demanding that policy makers and government leaders take immediate action to address the dire outcomes predicted by climate science. Those inheriting our planet’s environmental problems expect to encounter challenges, but they may not have the skills to grapple with the feelings of powerlessness and despair that may arise when they confront this seemingly intractable situation. Drawing on a decade of experience leading and teaching in college environmental studies programs, Sarah Jaquette Ray has created an “existential tool kit” for the climate generation. Combining insights from psychology, sociology, social movements, mindfulness, and the environmental humanities, Ray explains why and how we need to let go of eco-guilt, resist burnout, and cultivate resilience while advocating for climate justice.

Find our event page by searching “Sierra Club Wisconsin Book Club” on Facebook, or on the Sierra Club Wisconsin website. Sign up to receive the Google Meet Invite or phone number to call in. Hope to see you at our next discussion!



## Racine Wastewater Treatment Plant Tour Saturday, May 18 ~ 1 PM

Have you ever wondered how all the water that flushes down your toilet, and drains from your sink, washing machine or dishwasher is cleaned to make it safe to dump back into Lake Michigan? Or if the toy car your kid flushed down the toilet ended up at the treatment plant?

The staff at Racine's Wastewater Treatment plant has generously agreed to give us a tour of the facility to give us all insight into the steps to make our "used" water clean and safe to return to the lake.

If you'd like to join the group for this informative tour, please let Laura Schulz know by emailing her at [schulztwin2@gmail.com](mailto:schulztwin2@gmail.com). Since part of the tour will be outside, it's important you RSVP Laura so if there is bad weather and we need to cancel we can contact you before you show up at the door.



## PLEASE JOIN US!!! White River Canoe / Kayak Outing Sunday, May 19 meet at 1:00 PM at White River County Park, southwest of Lyons, WI

While some of us are unloading watercraft from our cars others will be transferring cars to downtown Lyons so there will be rides back to the parking lot.

The White River leaves Lake Geneva and flows ultimately into the Fox River by Burlington, WI. Under normal conditions, it is a shallow clear river with a rocky bottom, meandering its way through countryside before meeting with Ore Creek in the town of Lyons and then ultimately joining with the Fox River.

While most of the river is knee-deep - if there is an upset you merely stand up - you need flotation devices for other parts of the river. Once the crafts are loaded back onto cars, there is an option to drive a short distance down Sheridan Springs Road to see an eagle's nest from the road.

**Please call or email Al Sommer to let him know you will be there:**

[sommerallan4@gmail.com](mailto:sommerallan4@gmail.com) or 262-716-6955. If it snows or rains, Al will call you to let you know of a cancellation.



## Monarch Butterfly Program Thursday, June 27 at 5 PM

Seno Woodland Center, 3606 Dyer Lake Rd, Burlington

Soar on over to Seno Woodland Center to learn about North America's most recognized and loved insect, the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).

Participants will learn about the Monarch Butterfly's life cycle, habitat, migration, and tagging. We will take you on a walk around Seno Woodland Center's prairie to identify and learn about milkweed, a plant vital to the Monarch's survival. During our walk we will gather eggs and all stages of a monarch caterpillar and learn how to raise these caterpillars into butterflies.

Each participant/family/group will also build a Monarch rearing box to take home!



# Weed Out! Racine

## Restoration in Colonial Park: 2023 Report Highlights

We accomplished two major objectives for 2023. First, we maintained progress that we and AmeriCorps made last year in and around the wetland, and second, we began management action on the reed canary grass in other parts of the floodplain.

The wetland is a haven for waterfowl, painted and snapping turtles, as well as frogs and toads.

Along with herons and the occasional egret, we saw red-headed woodpeckers, a species of special concern here in our state. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's E-bird community tracker reports that 167 species were recorded in Colonial Park in 2023, so we have a special interest in maintaining and enhancing their habitat.

The Root River Chapter of Wild Ones donated 50 wet-loving plants which we planted in early June. With a grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), we started a two-year project to reduce, if not eliminate, the reed canary grass.

On **Make A-Difference Day**, several community volunteers came to release young trees from their burden of overgrown raspberries and grape vines. These whips had been planted to jump start canopy growth in areas where the emerald ash borer killed the ash trees. Restoration and enhancement of Lower Colonial is a multiyear project. We'll continue controlling invasives and introducing natives in order to increase species diversity and habitats.

**We invite you to join us!** Most of the work in Colonial is done by folks just like you! Weed Out! Racine volunteers worked over 300 hours last year. We (usually) work on the fourth Saturday of every month, April through October, from 9AM to noon. Our first date this year will be April 27.

**Contact Melissa Warner** at 262-639-0918 or [melissa.warner3@a2q.com](mailto:melissa.warner3@a2q.com) for a complete copy of the 2023 Report or to join in making a difference. Restoration of native ecosystems is an effective way to reduce the effect of climate change...and it's great exercise!



## 2024 Highway Cleanup Dates: May 11, July 27 & Oct. 5

The Adopt-a-Highway program in the US began in 1985 and Wisconsin got onboard in 1990. It is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation with coordination assistance from Racine County. SEGG joined the program in the first year as Group #32. There are now about 2300 volunteer organizations state-wide participating. Since neither the State nor County has the personnel to clean up along local highways, these volunteer groups have been vital in "Keeping America Beautiful."



Since we began picking up trash and recycling along a section of Hwy 38 in Racine County, we have removed about 1,080 bags of trash, several hundred bags of recyclables, and have put in about 1,700 hours of volunteer labor.

We have received letters from County workers that mow along the highway expressing their appreciation for not having to grind up the trash with their machine. If we don't pick it up, it likely eventually finds its way into our waterways. Volunteer groups have also been helpful in identifying nesting sites or locations of endangered plant species that produce "no mow" areas.

As many of our long-time volunteers have retired from this work, we really can use a new batch of members and friends to help keep the program going. It's a great way to spend an hour and a half, outdoors on a Saturday morning!

We meet at Blessed Hope Church 4949 Hwy 38 (corner of Hwy 38 and 4 Mile Rd) at 9:00 AM on three Saturdays each year. Safety vests and bags are provided. To sign up to help or for more information, please contact Jeff Sytsma at [Jeff12759@aol.com](mailto:Jeff12759@aol.com) or 262 637-6845 or 262 497-4761.





Family Reunion Music Festival photo by Rene Amado

## SEGG Grant Makes a Near-Zero-Waste Public Event Possible!

In 2023, SEGG provided a grant for composting at the 12th Annual Family Reunion Music Festival. Each year this event honors life, family and friendship while supporting community organizations. Last year's benefit supported Racine Urban Garden Network, Family Power Music and the Racine County Food Bank.



The grant ensured that all food-

serving items were compostable and **Compost Crusader** provided the service to accept those items along with any food scraps.

In total, 127 pounds of compostable materials were collected at the event.

SEGG also provided volunteer recycling service to this event using our portable receptacles. The festival used solely aluminum containers for beverages. We collected several large bags of cans to cash in.



In the end, thanks to the composting and recycling efforts, we only had one bag of trash, about the size of a regular plastic shopping bag, to go into the landfill. Not bad for a crowd of about 350 people!



Left to Right:  
Don Deal,  
Al Sommer,  
Paul Ambro,  
David Hewitt,  
Gloria Randall-Hewitt

### **Clover Valley Wildlife Area Hike**

On January 7, SEGG held its first outing of the new year—a short hike in the Clover Valley Wildlife segment of the Ice Age Trail. We walked about 2.5 miles, out and back, on the trail guided by dependable yellow blazes (as well as by footprints in the snow left by hikers who came before us). The outing was capped off with a side trip to the Clover Valley artesian well.

## **NOW ACCEPTING GRANT APPLICATIONS!**

*The purposes of the Sierra Club are to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.*

In keeping with these goals, the SEGG Excom will evaluate potential donations to other local organizations and efforts to ensure consistency with the overall Sierra Club's purpose. SEGG will review any requests for gifts or donations against current priorities within that purpose and monitor recent gifts in an effort to reach all areas of our community and promote the Sierra Club's mission to as wide an audience as possible. To achieve such goals, SEGG will start accepting grant applications in January. Local organizations and environmental efforts may request up to \$500. Applications are on our website and are accepted on a rolling basis.

# Lead Dangers in Drinking Water and Paint



<https://theleadcoalition.org/protect-the-child/>

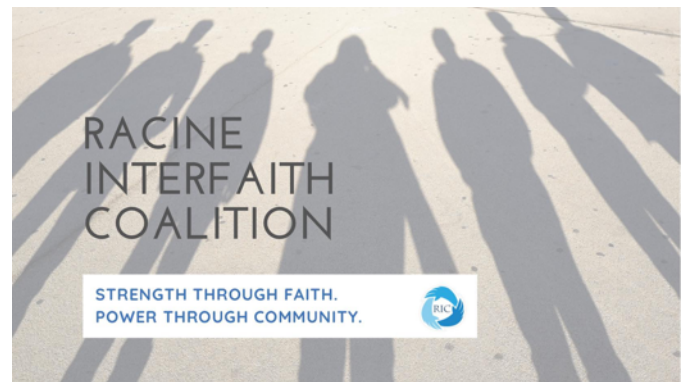
The Racine Interfaith Coalition's (RIC) Environmental Justice Team has been working on informing our community of the dangers of potential lead poisoning from water pipes and house paints. The team is focusing on steps we can take to ensure our safety from these contaminants, especially for our children.

You've probably heard about the dangers of lead poisoning by drinking water from lead pipes or from lead in dust from paint, especially in older homes, that used to be made with lead. You may also be aware of the Biden-Harris Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan (n1) that seeks to ensure that

all Americans have safe drinking water and a safe environment in which to live, free of lead contaminants.

This action plan will work with federal, state, and local partners to supply funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure law and the Build Back Better Act to replace lead pipes, remove lead paint, and support the testing of children for lead poisoning. However, it will take time for all the lead pipes and lead paint to be replaced in our communities.

***In the meantime, RIC's Environmental Justice Team has prepared a very informative presentation to help people in our community to be more aware of the dangers of lead poisoning, its sources, and how to ensure their family's safety from lead.***



If you are part of a group that would like to host such a presentation, please contact the Racine Interfaith Coalition at [ricracine1993@gmail.com](mailto:ricracine1993@gmail.com) or email Gloria Randall-Hewitt at [evewardener@gmail.com](mailto:evewardener@gmail.com) and she'll arrange for someone to get in touch with you.

(n1) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/12/16/fact-sheet-the-biden-harris-lead-pipe-and-paint-action-plan/>



At our annual planning meeting on January 20th at Pringle Nature Center, SEGG members planned several fun activities for 2024. Several of the activities are featured in this newsletter!

***We are looking for interested members to join the SEGG board. You can help us plan fun and exciting new events and initiatives.***

Interested individuals should contact:

Gloria ([evewardener@gmail.com](mailto:evewardener@gmail.com))

or

Laura ([schulztwin2@gmail.com](mailto:schulztwin2@gmail.com))

## Don't miss out! Get on our e-news list!

SEGG e-news are emails with notices about club events and outings in between receiving the regular newsletter.

Sign up on the SEGG website or email Laura Schulz at [schulztwin2@gmail.com](mailto:schulztwin2@gmail.com).

**Save a Tree & See in Color!**

Email [schulztwin2@gmail.com](mailto:schulztwin2@gmail.com) to request a full-color, digital newsletter emailed instead of a paper copy.



**Your tax-deductible donation helps us continue to "Explore, Enjoy and Protect" SE Wisconsin.**

Checks can be made out to *Sierra Club SEGG* to be used towards any purpose, or to *Sierra Club Foundation* to be used strictly for educational programs and activities. Mail donations to: Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave, Racine, WI 53405



SEGG encourages you to WRITE to your legislators on the issues you care about. Find your representative at [legis.wisconsin.gov](http://legis.wisconsin.gov)

Senator Stephen L. Nass  
*Senate District 11 (R - Whitewater)*  
State Capitol Room 10 South  
P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882  
(608) 266-2635  
[Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Senator Van H. Wanggaard  
*Majority Caucus Chair*  
*Senate District 21 (R - Racine)*  
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Senator Robert W. Wirch  
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Representative Ellen Schutt  
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Representative Amanda M. Nedweski  
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**2024 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership**

**Executive Committee**

Laura Schulz (*Co-Chair/Programs*).....[schulztwin2@gmail.com](mailto:schulztwin2@gmail.com)  
Gloria Randall-Hewitt (*Co-Chair*).....[evegardener@gmail.com](mailto:evegardener@gmail.com)  
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The newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group is published quarterly by Group members. Please send articles, event submissions, photographs, corrections and/or comments to: Laura Schulz - [schulztwin2@gmail.com](mailto:schulztwin2@gmail.com)

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Milky Way from the Great Sand Dunes National Park, Colorado



North American Nebula (NGC7000) & Pelican Nebula (IC5070) in the Cygnus Constellation

Left: Photos by Adam Saari from our Vacation Night slide show.

Join us April 10 for UW-Parkside's Science Night and hear Saari talk about his experiences capturing these amazing images.

Details on page 2.

### Mark Your Calendars!

- April 10 Capturing the Night Sky Lecture
- April 14 White River Trail Bike Outing
- May 7 Book Club Discussion on Climate Anxiety
- May 11 First Highway Cleanup of the Year
- May 18 Racine Wastewater Treatment Plant Tour
- May 19 White River Canoe/Kayak Outing
- June 17 Monarch Program at Seno Woodland Center