



News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club

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SOUTHEAST SIERRA

WE ENERGIES, MICROSOFT & THE PSC

Yogi Berra famously said, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” Wisconsin is staring down a fork in the road decision on how we are going to provide electricity in the future. This critical energy choice is between WE Energies’ plan to build their proposed \$2B new methane gas plants in Paris and Oak Creek that could lock in high energy costs for decades to come, undermine clean energy goals, and leave ratepayers footing the bill for outdated infrastructure, versus moving to renewable energy which protects our environment and enables a cleaner, more cost efficient future.

It’s not a surprise that WE Energies is asking the Public Service Commission for permission to build billions of dollars’ worth of methane gas plants. It says they are needed to power industrial development in southeastern Wisconsin, including the giant Microsoft data center being built in Mt. Pleasant. WE Energies would then charge rate payers for those new plants for decades into the future. But methane gas is not how Microsoft has said they intend to power that data center.



Based on Microsoft’s website, Microsoft aims to be carbon negative and water positive by 2030 and by the end of 2025 they expect to add to the grid new sources of carbon free energy equal to 100% of the electricity used by their data centers. Microsoft has also confirmed those goals for the new data center in Racine and stated, “we are committed to ensuring that electricity needs and costs for our Mount Pleasant datacenter don’t lead to an increase in the price of electricity for our neighbors. For this reason, Microsoft has ensured that we pay our own way for infrastructure improvements.”

Even WE Energies has publicly committed to reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Considering that WE Energies gas plants have a life of 30 years, gas plants (which are not “clean” since they emit the powerful greenhouse gas methane) cannot help us achieve clean energy goals, and also risk stranding ratepayers with obsolete gas power plants that we’ll have to pay for even after they are decommissioned—like the giant, shuttered coal plant in Pleasant Prairie we are still paying for through our rates.

Since Microsoft plans to power the huge electricity needs of their data center with renewable energy, if it can’t get it from WE Energies, it will buy it from some other producer elsewhere on the grid. Though the public hasn’t been provided exact data on how much electricity the new data center will use, it has been estimated that it will be, by far, the largest customer that WE Energies will have, using enough energy to power over 300,000 homes. If WE Energies’ biggest customer wants to use renewable energy and considering that the cost of renewable energy has dropped to the point where it is now less expensive than traditional power plants, there is no reasonable justification for building expensive new gas plants. Instead, WE Energies should be building more wind, solar and battery storage to provide the electricity their customers want.

In Wisconsin, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is tasked to review and approve any new projects that utilities want to build, as well as any rate increases that public utilities want to impose on their customers. Since utilities like WE Energies are publicly owned, their motivation is to pay higher and higher dividends for their stockholders and higher salaries and bonuses for their executives.

Continued on page 4



Site preparation began in 2023 at the site of the new Microsoft data center campus in Mount Pleasant. Originally encompassing 315 acres, Microsoft’s local footprint is expanding to 1,345 acres for an expanded campus, in the area originally purchased by the village for Foxconn. Foxconn’s data center globe is in the background. Phase 1 is scheduled to open in 2026.
Photo by Mark Hertzberg for Racine County Eye

GET INVOLVED ➡ START HERE!



T-Shirt Printing at UW-Parkside

Saturday, April 19 at 10 AM

Meet at The Rita Box Office,
Avenue of the Arts, Kenosha, WI 53144

Join us for a fun day of printmaking with UW-Parkside Artist-in-Residence, Leslie Smith.

Smith will teach us the basics of printmaking and we will print our own t-shirts with images designed to convey our dislike of coal power plants!

You must bring your own t-shirt (solid colors recommended).
Spots are limited!! Reserve your spot today by emailing Laura Schulz at schulz@uwp.edu

♥ MAKE A DONATION ♥

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

Checks can be made out to **Sierra Club SEGG** to be used towards any purpose, or made to **Sierra Club Foundation** to be used strictly for educational programs and activities.

Please mail your donations to:
Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave
Racine, WI 53405

Gardening for Healthy Habitats

Webinar – Monday, April 28th at 6:30 pm



VIRTUAL PROGRAM:

Gardening for Healthy Habitats

Monday, April 28 at 6:30 p.m.

Join the Sierra Club, Wild Ones Root River Chapter, Root-Pike WIN, and the Racine Food Waste Composting Program for a webinar focused on landscaping behaviors that improve habitat and water quality for local wildlife. Topics include landscaping with native plants, food composting benefits and programs, local conservation projects and more.

TWO attendees will WIN a FREE "Rusty Patch Bumble Bee Kit" of WI native plants from the Wild Ones plant sale! RSVP at tinyurl.com/ghh2025



Big Foot Beach State Park Hike

Join us Sunday, April 27 at 1:00 PM to enjoy a brisk hike

A great way to work off those extra calories from the big Easter dinner or from the candy we snatched from the kids' Easter baskets is by joining the Group for an easy, 3-mile hike around the perimeter of Big Foot Beach State Park in Lake Geneva. The outer path is just 2.82 miles with very little elevation change. The surface is grassy and not paved. I hope to see some spring bloomers and maybe even some prairie vegetation.

Meet in the parking lot at Big Foot Beach State Park, 1550 S Lake Shore Dr, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Please contact Outings Chair Al Sommer to RSVP so that he may contact you in case the event needs to be cancelled: sommerallan4@gmail.com / 262-716-6955



Mark Your Calendar for the 2025 Highway Clean Up Dates:

Saturdays - May 3, July 26 & October 18

We meet at 9AM in the parking lot of Blessed Hope Church, 4949 Hwy 38 (SE corner of Hwy 38 and 4 Mile Rd). Safety vests and bags are provided. To sign up or for more information, please contact our new Highway Clean Up Coordinator, Sandy Christensen at (262) 909-9171 or at sandysunshine240@gmail.com. (More about Sandy on page 4)



From the Wisconsin Chapter of Sierra Club:

Help us make a splash!

We're setting out to break the record for the largest display of origami fish and we want YOU to be part of it!

Water is the lifeblood of our region. The Great Lakes are where it all begins, containing 84% of North America's surface fresh water. We all know how important it is to keep our lakes clean, and that's why we can't let Enbridge's dangerous Line 5 pipeline continue to threaten our waterways. Each paper fish represents our shared commitment to protecting the Great Lakes.

No matter where you live, we all have something in common: we all need clean water. We know there's a better future in store by shutting down Line 5. So, let's have a little fun while we make a big difference. Join us to break the record – 18,304 paper fish. Let's show the world that we're united in protecting our waterways and shutting down Line 5 for once and for all.

Join the movement by hosting an origami-folding event or create your own origami fish as a personal pledge to protect our water. You can also share your story at our website, www.fishforfuture.org.

In order to be counted, please mail your fish by **June 5** to:

Fish for the Future, c/o Sierra Club WI, 754 Williamson St,
Madison, WI 53703



Origami instructions at the above website.

Paddle on the Root River

Sunday, May 18 at 1:00 pm



Join us for a fun afternoon of paddling on the Root River in Racine! Meet at 1pm at Horlick Park (3630 Rapids Court) by the River Run Restaurant, just upstream of the Horlick Dam.

This paddle is very gentle - perfect for canoers or kayakers of all ages and skill sets. There is plenty of parking and you can drive your boat right up to the launch.

Be prepared to sign the Sierra Club Outings Waiver.

The outing will be canceled if the weather is bad or the river current is too strong. SEGG Outings Chair, Al Sommer has a limited number of boats that he is willing to lend out if needed. Please contact him at 262-716-6955 or sommerallan4@gmail.com to RSVP and/or reserve a boat.

14th ANNUAL FAMILY REUNION MUSIC FESTIVAL

Saturday, June 28, 2025 | 12pm-8pm

Johnson Park Pavilion (6200 Northwestern Ave. Racine, WI 53406)

* Free Admission * Entertainment * Raffles * Fun for the whole Family!

We reunite each year to honor life, family and friendship, and to support three incredible community organizations. This year's proceeds will benefit the Racine Urban Garden Network and Family Power Music. Non-perishable food donations will be collected for the Racine County Food Bank.



Admission is free. Funds are generated through sponsorships, donations, raffles and from food, drink, and merchandise sales. Our guests enjoy an eclectic array of locally-sourced food and drinks, art and music-themed activities for the whole family, a bounce house, yard games, a huge drum circle, and the chance to win amazing raffle prizes.

We are proud to be one of the only festivals in

Racine that aims for zero-waste. All drinks are in aluminum cans which we recycle. Our plates, bowls, napkins, cutlery are all compostable. We partner with the Sierra Club's Southeast Gateway Group, Compost Crusaders and Blue Ribbon Organics to compost all food item waste. Last year we turned our festival waste into over 400lbs of compost and ended with only half a small bag of actual trash.



WE Energies, Microsoft & the PSC *Continued from page 1*

Building expensive infrastructure provides additional profit-making opportunities for utilities since they make profits on these projects when they raise our rates to pay for them. Our public utilities are a natural monopoly with no competition (we can't decide to buy our electricity from some other utility) so the PSC was established to balance the need for reliable electricity against the best interests of Wisconsinites.

But the PSC's current mandate doesn't go far enough toward envisioning our clean energy future. Wisconsin needs a comprehensive plan to protect our residents, our environment and our health. Some ideas for moving forward, including suggestions from a recent commentary by John Imes in the Wisconsin Examiner, include:

- Wisconsin should reinstate the PSC's mandate for an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) which was removed in 1994. Other states have models we could follow.
- Wisconsin policymakers should work with business leaders to create a regulatory environment that supports clean energy innovation rather than hindering it.
- Wisconsin should require utilities to develop rate structures for very large load (and extremely profitable) customers, such as Microsoft, to pay for the infrastructure they need so that ordinary customers aren't stuck with the bill and to ensure consistency among these big customers.
- Battery storage should be more widely utilized to cover peak demand periods or when renewable energy sources aren't producing so gas "peaker" plants will not be needed.
- We should provide incentives for local businesses and homeowners to install renewable energy, such as solar panels, to reduce our dependence on power companies.
- We should require utilities to provide a detailed analysis of their anticipated power needs for at least two years into the future prior to any request to build new power plants, including comparison to installing renewable energy.

We can envision taking the path to a healthier, less expensive energy future; one that protects nature, clean air and water and enhances our enjoyment of the beautiful outdoors we enjoy in Wisconsin. We should start with legislation that requires long-term planning for our energy future including the ideas above.

Keep up on the latest issues on WE Energies and similar topics at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/no-new-fossil-fuels

Read more articles by John Imes at wisconsinexaminer.com/author/john-imes/

Learn more about the Public Service Commission at psc.wi.gov

Microsoft's commitment to sustainability: microsoft.com/en-us/corporate-responsibility/sustainability-journey

Wisconsin's Integrated Resource Plan: renewwisconsin.org/strategic-energy-planning/

FOX RIVER GROUP PADDLE

On Sunday, June 8, let's enjoy a paddle down the Fox River from the canoe launch at Rt 50 to the canoe takeout in the town of Silver Lake.

We'll meet at 1:00 and after we transfer a car or two to the end we will head downstream for a leisurely paddle through all the bends of this magnificently meandering river.

You don't even need your own a canoe or kayak!



Al Sommer has a canoe which holds 3 people, plus several kayaks that can be borrowed for the occasion. Please take advantage of this opportunity to see the world through the eyes of a muskrat!

Please contact Al to let him know if you will be there or to sign up for a spot in a borrowed boat. He will contact participants should the outing be cancelled or postponed due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Al Sommer:
262-716-6955 or sommerallan4@gmail.com

MEET OUR NEW HWY CLEAN-UP COORDINATOR: SANDY CHRISTENSEN!



The Provo River Pathway, Utah

My name is Sandy Christensen and I am excited to take on the role of Adopt-a-Highway cleanup coordinator for the Sierra Club Southeast Gateway Group.

Our group is responsible for picking up trash three Saturdays a year on a three-mile stretch of Hwy 38 in Racine County, from the roundabout at Hwy K through 5 Mile Rd. It's a great way to get outdoors, make a difference in the community and be around like-minded individuals -- and it takes just little over an hour.

Last July I retired as a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service where I worked for 30 years. The

outdoors has always been a big part of my life and where I spend a large amount of my time. A clean environment is important to me as it is to most of you, so please consider joining me to Keep America Beautiful!

2025 Dates: May 3, July 26, and Oct 18. See page 2 for details. Please contact me to sign up or for more information: 262-909-9171 sandysunshine240@gmail.com

FIND YOUR PARK



Someone once said that the National Parks are America's best idea—that the best lands should be set aside for the enjoyment of the people, not for kings or the wealthy alone. At a time when the National Park Service is under attack, we need to defend these lands and the people who protect them. Members of the SEGG ExCom have written up a short descriptions of their favorite national park. We hope this inspires you to seek out nature and Find Your Park!



From Tom Rutkowski: Find your way to Southeast Utah and go to the Needles District of **Canyonlands National Park**. Leave your car near the campground and find the nearby trailhead to the Peek-a-Boo. After a couple of miles of desert scrub, you'll come to a wall of red rock. Climb that wall and enter another world. Over the next five miles you'll be entering canyons and walking across ridges of slick rock and sandstone of many colors, rocks exposed through millions of years of wind and water. You could be on another planet, most likely Mars, and those formations could be an infinite variety of alien life. I'm not alone in thinking this is the best hike in the world.

From Gloria Randall-Hewitt: When I heard that there was a temperate rainforest in the United States, I had to see it! When we visited **Olympic National Park** we found that, at over 900,000 acres, the park has three distinct areas within the park; mountainous peaks like Hurricane Ridge (pic), wild Pacific coastal beaches, and the magnificent old-growth temperate Hoh rain forest with its mossy trails. What a treasure we have in the US and especially our national parks to be able to see and experience such a wide variety of eco-systems.



From Laura Schulz: I was fortunate to visit **Zion National Park** in spring 2019 with my students from UW-Parkside. A group of brave students convinced me to climb the steep and strenuous Angel's Landing Trail which is well over 5,000 feet. I was terrified! But it was worth it to see the view from the top. We even saw a California Condor! I feel so lucky to have completed this hike.

From Kelsey Saari: **Yellowstone** became America's First National Park in 1872. My husband and I were lucky enough to visit in 2021. After a year of being safer at home, it was a surreal feeling to be surrounded by so much natural wonder. We are so fortunate to have access to these sacred spaces. *It is our utmost responsibility to protect and preserve our National Parks.*



Electric Vehicle Report - by Joe Dubaniewicz (SEGG, WI Electric Vehicle Association)

1) *The Future of Electric Vehicles* according to David Blanchette of The Illinois Times:

Electrons are gradually replacing hydrocarbons as the propulsive power of choice for many Americans as electric-powered vehicles continue to make inroads with the motoring public.

According to Kelly Blue Book, electric vehicle (EV) car and pickup truck sales reached 1.3 million in 2024, which is a 7.3% increase from 2023. EVs made up 8.7% of all vehicle sales last year, and during 2025 one in four vehicles sold are expected to be EVs or hybrids (which use a combination of electricity and gasoline for power).

Top 10 Bestselling EVs of 2024

According to Car and Driver.com
(*estimated units sold vs. actual units sold)

10. Tesla Cybertruck: 24,300*
9. Cadillac Lyriq: 28,402
8. Chevrolet Equinox EV: 28,874
7. Tesla Model X: 31,400*
6. Honda Prologue: 33,017
5. Ford F-150 Lightning: 33,510
4. Hyundai Ioniq 5: 44,400
3. Ford Mustang Mach-E: 51,745
2. Tesla Model 3: 145,100*
1. Tesla Model Y: 405,900*

Still, more than 90% of vehicles sold last year were powered by internal combustion engines and consumers seem wary of embracing cars that plug in rather than fill up.

2) *Electric vehicles: The key to a sustainable future or a failed promise?*

According to Georgie Gould, Media Officer at the University of Surrey:

Despite soaring production rates, the uptake of electric vehicles remains dismally low, raising urgent questions about what truly drives consumer behavior and how to ignite change. According to a new study from the University of Surrey, the electric vehicle revolution risks being overshadowed by consumer hesitance and misinformation.

One of the notable findings is that women, highly educated individuals, and those from urban areas demonstrate a higher likelihood of purchasing electric vehicles, primarily influenced by their prior experiences.

To address this lag in consumer adoption, the researchers advocate for increased investment in public test-driving events and educational campaigns that enhance consumer knowledge about electric vehicles. By creating more chances for consumers to experience EVs firsthand, the research posits that potential buyers will feel more confident and informed in their purchasing decisions, which could address a major concern, namely *range anxiety*. "It's not just about the technology; it's about changing perceptions and making EVs a relatable choice for everyone."

3) *Wisconsin Car Dealers Eye Potential End to EV Tax Credits*, by Ryan Burk:

Wisconsinites who purchase electric vehicles have been eligible for a \$7,500 federal tax credit (and some hybrids at a lower level depending on their battery capacity).

However, that could be coming to an end.

What You Need To Know: Currently, EV buyers can get a \$7,500 federal tax credit for a NEW car; \$4,000 for a USED car (only if it had NOT received the tax credit when it was new.) A series of proposed bills could eliminate the tax credit.

Auto Dealers Association of Metro Milwaukee (ADAMM) President, Jim Tolkan feels the tax credit drives people to consider EVs. Several Republicans in the U.S. Senate have proposed bills which would end the EV tax credit. President Donald Trump has also signed an executive order aimed at ending so-called "electric vehicle mandates." While it is unclear if, or when, these credits could go away, it is something Milwaukee area car dealers and organizations that represent them are watching closely.



With so much uncertainty regarding the future of EV tax credits, it is possible that it could drive more people to dealerships in the short-term. "I think the headlines could drive a little bit more motivation if anyone was maybe on the fence about an EV that might motivate them to buy one sooner rather than later," said Eric Brandt, a senior editor at Auto Trader. Regardless of what happens, Tolkan said dealerships across ADAMM will be watching the issue closely. "I think it (the ending of EV tax credits) would be a concern not only to the dealers but to the manufacturers in the United States where these credits exist."

Experience EVs Firsthand! Celebrate Earth Day on Saturday, April 12 from 10-1 at the Kenosha Campus of Gateway Technical College, 3520 30th Avenue. Find answers to all of your EV questions at this free community event. The **Wisconsin Electric Vehicle Association** (in cooperation with **PlugIn America** and the **Sierra Club**) will host an outdoor display of Battery-Electric (BEV) and Plug-in Hybrid (PHEV) vehicles, while **Drive \$MART Wisconsin** will present an indoor tabling display promoting Diversified Electrified Vehicle driving by utilizing the Drive \$MART Wisconsin technology for Battery-Electric (BEV), Plug-in Hybrid (PHEV), and Hybrid Electric (HEV) vehicles.
Contact the Event Organizer for more info at: driveelectricearthmonth.org/4722

SEGG encourages you to WRITE to your legislators on the issues you care about.
Find your representative at legis.wisconsin.gov



Weed Out! Racine/SEGG restoration project in Lower Colonial Park has opened the 2025 work season. Goals include managing invasive reed canary grass and other common invaders, while increasing biodiversity by adding native species to this portion of the Root River flood plain.

The first project was completed on a cold and windy day in March. Volunteers laid large cardboard pieces over the ground where reed canary grass had been identified in order to smother it. Live cuttings of native shrubs—elderberry, red-osier dogwood, and grey dogwood—were planted right through the cardboard and the entire patch was mulched. The hope is that the cuttings will take root and create a small thicket that will compete with the invasive grass. Larger populations of reed canary grass will be sprayed later in the summer.

Work Days in Colonial Park start at **9AM** and are supported by your SEGG group as well as the Wisconsin Chapter of the Sierra Club.

We'd love for you to join our restoration efforts!

April 26: Planting 50 small red oak trees and bench installation

May 17: Planting of native forbs—non-woody flowering plants

Invasive Pulling Parties! Every Saturday in May

We'll be pulling garlic mustard and dame's rocket.

Questions? Contact Melissa at melissa.warner3@a2q.com



Weed Out! Racine volunteers place cardboard on the ground to smother the growth of invasive reed canary grass.

Now Accepting Grant Applications

The Southeast Gateway Group has been organized to promote the national Sierra Club's goals at our local level.



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 Sierra Club's overall purpose. In addition, 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 while promoting the Sierra Club's mission to as wide an audience as possible.

Applications are on our website. Local organizations and environmental efforts may request up to \$500. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.

Save a Tree & See in Color!

Email schulztwin2@gmail.com to request a full-color, digital newsletter emailed instead of a paper copy.

2025 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership

Executive Committee

Laura Schulz (Co-Chair/Programs).....schulztwin2@gmail.com
Gloria Randall-Hewitt (Co-Chair).....evegardener@gmail.com
Kelsey Saari (Secretary).....saari.kelsey@gmail.com
Alex Weyenberg (Conservation Chair) alex.weyenberg@gmail.com
Allan Sommer (Outings Chair).....sommerallan4@gmail.com

Keith Kohlmann.....rowdyjunction@gmail.com
Tom Rutkowskinatom@wi.rr.com

Other Group Leaders

Jeff Sytsma (Treasurer).....jeff12759@aol.com
Mary Schroeder (Hospitality)..ilovedogsandcats2@yahoo.com
Jessica True (Outings).....jessicattrue@yahoo.com

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

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sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway

Celebrate Earth Day at Gateway!

Saturday, April 12 from 10-1pm
Kenosha & Elkhorn Campuses



Mark Your Calendars!

April 19 Print Your Own T-Shirt
April 26 Tree Planting, Colonial Park
April 27 Big Foot Beach Hike
April 28 Gardening for Healthy Habitats
May 3 Hwy Clean Up
May 17 More Planting in Colonial
May 18 Paddle the Root River
June 8 Fox River Paddle
June 28 Family Reunion Music Fest



Find Your Park! (pg. 5) SEGG ExCom Members describe their favorite National Parks. Pictured is the Hoh National Forest in Washington State, completely coated in mosses and featuring every shade of green imaginable.

Photo by Patrick Motschenbacher, wta.org