



News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club

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SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

WE ENERGIES PROPOSAL APPROVED

Thank you to everyone who expressed their concerns to the Public Service Commission (PSC) about WE Energies plans to build massive new gas plants in Oak Creek and Paris. Despite testimonies from hundreds of community members, physicians, and environmental groups expressing deep concerns about the pollution, health ramifications and increased costs associated with WE Energies new plant proposals, the Wisconsin PSC approved the utility's \$2 billion construction plans on May 22.

Despite the lower cost and faster availability of renewable energy sources, and the changing expectations for data center growth that WE Energies cites as driving expanded needs for electricity, the PSC agreed to let WE Energies lock southeast Wisconsin into decades more of new fossil fuel infrastructure to produce our electricity. Commenting on the decision, WE Energies' officers praised the PSC's approval, saying it will help them make the grid cleaner and greener while ensuring the lights stay on. The DNR reviewed the air pollution control permit application and on June 17, issued the permit for the projects.

Then on June 26, WE Energies announced they will keep running two of the circa 1960's coal-fired units that are presently in service in Oak Creek for another year longer than previously announced. Again, WE Energies says that this decision is in response to tightened energy supplies. They also say that their timeline to stop using coal has shifted to 2032 instead of 2035 and that the coal plants in Oak Creek will be fired up only to meet strains on the grid. But without some kind of mechanism to force the utility to actually move toward a clean energy future, those plans could easily change again.

On July 4, President Trump signed the big budget bill which, among other things, rapidly phases out tax credits for clean energy programs, such as solar and wind power. These types of power projects made up 90% of new electricity added to the grid in the last year per Canary Media, a clean energy news organization. Canary Media also projects the phasing out of clean energy credits will lead to higher electricity bills nationwide, estimating impact in Wisconsin to be an increase of 8.2% by 2029.



We Energies' coal-fired Oak Creek power plant.
Photo by Chuck Quirnbach/wpr.org

Read more at www.canarymedia.com/articles/clean-energy/big-beautiful-bill-state-costs



Are you having a hard time keeping up with all the news on environmental politics, nature, and sustainable living? Sierra magazine is here to help! As the award-winning storytelling arm of the Sierra Club, Sierra brings you in-depth reporting on everything from threats to public lands and wildlife to climate policy debates unfolding in Washington, DC. Each edition is designed to inform, inspire, and equip you with the knowledge you need to navigate our world. Join and get free digital access today at: www.sierraclub.org/sierra

Sierra magazine's free *Sierra News & Views* newsletter delivers the latest environmental news, commentary, tips on sustainable living, and inspiration for outdoor adventure, straight to your inbox. Sign up today! www.sierraclub.org/sierra/green-life-newsletter

GET INVOLVED ➡ START HERE!

WANTED

More
SEGG
Outings
Leaders

Do you have a favorite hiking, biking, or boating spot?
Share your knowledge and enthusiasm for nature by
becoming an SEGG Group Outings Leader!

Group outings are a great way to share the wonder, benefits, history and sensitivities of our many ecosystems. The ability to provide opportunities to get out and commune in nature with new and potential group members is essential to the viability of The Sierra Club as it celebrates nature and its preservation.

The Wisconsin Chapter of Sierra Club has a comprehensive education program for potential local outings leaders. Please consider sharing your excitement and love of the outdoors by leading a group outing. Email Al Sommer (sommerallan4@gmail.com) for more info.

FRIENDLY REMINDER!
Upcoming SEGG highway clean up dates are scheduled for
Saturday, July 26 & Oct. 18
Contact Sandy Christensen at
(262) 909-9171 or
sandy sunshine240@gmail.com
for details.



Hike the Blue Spring Lake Segment of the Ice Age Trail

On **Sunday August 10**, let's meet at the Bald Bluff Trail parking lot at 1:00 p.m. for an out and back hike on the beginning half of the Blue Spring Lake Segment of the Ice Age Trail (IAT). The trail is about 3 miles so the entire hike will be about six miles of relatively strenuous ups and downs, hiking over and around eskers and kettles, rocks and roots.

The view from the top of Bald Bluff is grand and on a clear day you can see Whitewater. Native Indians are said to have used this bluff as a ceremonial spot and as a lookout while being pursued during the Blackhawk War. About halfway along the trail is a massive glacial erratic called the Stone Elephant. There's a lot of prairie along the trail as well. We will hike to Tamarack Road and back (or Make arrangements for a car transfer).

Take County Road H north from LaGrange, WI, and meet at the Bald Bluff parking lot on County H, a few hundred feet north of Young Road. A Wisconsin State Park sticker is required to park here. Please call or email Al Sommer (sommerallan4@gmail.com / 262-716-6955) so I can answer questions or inform you of cancellation.



Salt Paddle on the Root River: Thursday, July 31, 5:30-7:30 pm (Rain date: August 7)

Join experts from Root Pike WIN and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for a discussion on the effects of chloride in freshwater and learn how you can reduce your impact on local water resources. Then, head out on their kayaks and canoes for a paddle on the Root River! Attendees can also collect water to test the chloride levels sampled. Registration Required at www.tinyurl.com/saltpaddle2025. Ages 10+ and accompanied by an adult. \$10 per person due upon arrival. Cash, check, & card accepted. *Hope to see you there!*



RISE UP FOR A SUN-POWERED PLANET

Join us **Sunday, September 21** during the Solar Equinox for **SunDay**, a national day of action to celebrate the power of clean energy and stand up to the fossil fuel billionaires trying to stop it. A coalition of grassroots organizations, including the Sierra Club, clean energy experts, solar industry and worker organizations, affordable housing, farmers and creative partners are working together to promote awareness of solar power as the cheapest form of energy generation in the world, as well as being clean and reliable.

Find events in Wisconsin at: sunday.earth or thirdact.org/events

♥ 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

Bat Paddle at Night! Wed., August 20, 6:30 PM

The Root River Environmental Education Community Center (REC) at 1301 W 6th Street, Racine, is hosting an evening paddle on Wednesday, August 20 to search for bats. This event will start at 6:30 with a presentation on bats in Wisconsin by UW-Parkside Biology Professor Dr. Jessica Orloff, followed by a paddle on the Root River. Participants will learn how to use bat monitoring equipment. Previous experience canoeing and kayaking is strongly recommended. Experience with bat monitoring is not required. Spots are limited. Registration required: Cost is \$10 per person. To reserve your spot email rec@uwp.edu or call **262-595-2912**.

The REC is a partnership between the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and the City of Racine, with a mission to provide community members with opportunities to explore the Great Lakes and connected ecosystems through recreation, education, demonstration, and research. The REC is open Saturdays and Sundays from 10 to 4 through September 25th. For more information visit our website www.uwp.edu/rec



Pacas & Pints: Thursday, August 7, 5:00–8:00 PM

Kick back by the alpaca pasture for a fun and unique night out.

Register at ecojusticecenter.org/pacas-pints

- ~Enjoy a cold brew in a souvenir alpaca pint glass
- ~Listen to music from Zakk Daniel
- ~Take a 20-minute tour to meet our friendly alpacas
- ~Grab dinner from Rockitacos



Farm to Table Dinner: Friday, August 22, 5:30–8:30 PM

Join us for an unforgettable dinner as we celebrate 20 years of community, sustainability, and good food surrounded by the people, produce, and purpose that make Eco-J so special.

- ~Live music by Georgia Rae
 - ~A locally-sourced meal prepared by chefs from Olde Madrid
- Tickets are on sale now at ecojusticecenter.org/farm-table



Yoga with Alpacas: Saturday, August 16, 8:30 & 9:40 AM

Join us in the alpaca pasture for a 55-minute gentle yoga session led by instructor Chloe Wright—perfect for beginners and experienced participants.

Limited spots at ecojusticecenter.org/adult-programs

- ~Stretch and center yourself as our friendly alpacas wander nearby
- ~Snap a quick selfie with your new fuzzy yoga buddies



Agroforestry Event:

Wednesday, September 24 at 6:00 PM



Join Alex Weyenberg, the land stewardship manager of the Eco-Justice Center, for an interactive farm tour and discussion about agroforestry and ecologically sound land management practices. Guests will have a chance to explore the pastures, tour the market garden, walk the trails through woodland areas and native perennial gardens, and say hello to the animals. Whether you aspire to manage your own small farm or simply love alpacas, chickens and goats, this farm tour has something for everyone.

www.ecojusticecenter.org

Horlick Dam Removal Update

- Courtesy of Root-Pike WIN and
Eddee Daniels' blog, *A Wealth of Nature*

The Horlick Dam removal was unanimously approved by the Racine County Board of Supervisors last spring. The project is now progressing with the Army Corps of Engineers finalizing the project contract. Once signed, they will begin designing the demolition plan, with the goal of completing it by this winter and submitting it to the DNR for grant funding.

For the last 100 years, the dam has only served to impede the river's health and access. Phosphorus and nutrient-laden sediment stacks up in the impoundments, which feeds invasive algae growth and warms water to levels intolerable



Photo by Eddee Daniels

**Removal of the dam
will reconnect 160
miles of Root River
tributaries and 6,000
acres of wetlands.**

for wildlife. Full migration

for Lake Michigan fish will be reborn—allowing trout, salmon, pike, and other species to finally pass upstream to their instinctual spawning grounds. From Union Grove to New Berlin, over 160 miles of tributaries and connected wetlands

will expand sport fishing for more people and improve habitats for more species.

Construction is tentatively scheduled for summer 2026, with a phased drawdown of the impoundment followed by physical demolition and site restoration. However, delays are likely, as the Army Corps often exceeds their projected timelines due to internal review processes. The contract also includes a three-year monitoring period for vegetation restoration though adjacent property owners may choose to manage restoration on their own.



More information at rootpikewin.org and awealthofnature.org



Participants across the world mailed in 86,262 origami fish to promote protecting our water and shutting down the Line 5 pipeline.

The Sierra Club broke the record for the largest display of origami fish in protest of Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline through tribal lands of Wisconsin and Michigan.

With folded paper fish from all 50 states, Canada and Mexico, the Sierra Club created a display of 86,262 origami fish! The previous origami fish record was 18,303. Congratulations to everyone who participated.

According to groundworkcenter.org, Line 5 has failed at least 35 times, spilling more than 1.1 million gallons of oil on land and into water. In June 2023, a federal trial court in Wisconsin found Line 5 to be a public nuisance and in trespass of the Bad River Band reservation and ordered the pipeline shut down within three years if not removed and rerouted before that time; Enbridge has appealed.

More photos at: www.fishforfuture.org/

More about the future of Line 5 at:

groundworkcenter.org/line-5-activism/
[sierraclub.org/sierra/
battle-future-great-lakes-enbridge-line-5-resisters](http://sierraclub.org/sierra/battle-future-great-lakes-enbridge-line-5-resisters)

The Good News and Bad News on Electric Vehicles

Good news first: You may have heard about the NEVI program - an initiative under the Biden administration included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that was intended to build a network of EV fast charging stations across the network of America's highways. Not only would this provide more charging stations for rural communities and for electric vehicles traveling cross country, it would also provide good paying jobs to build the supporting infrastructure.

The Trump administration tried to freeze the distribution of funds for the \$5 billion project even though the money had been authorized by Congress. A group of nonprofits, including the Sierra Club, and several states, including Wisconsin, sued to unfreeze the funds and as of June 25th, the judge in the case ordered the Trump Administration's freeze of roughly one billion dollars allocated to the suing states to be **unfrozen**. Though the group will continue to work for unfreezing all the funds, this is great news for Wisconsin! Thanks to SEGG's political chair, Joe Dubaniewicz, for his role in supporting Sierra Club in this lawsuit. For more info visit: www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2025/07/judge-orders-lifting-trump-administration-s-unlawful-freeze-roughly-billion



The bad news: the recently passed federal budget bill cancelled the federal tax credits on electric vehicles. Before this budget bill passed, certain new EV's came with a \$7500 federal tax credit and used EV's could qualify for a tax credit up to \$4000. Those incentives have been terminated as of September 30, 2025. So if you were hoping to take advantage of those tax credits, that's an important deadline.

Even though the tax credit will be gone, electric vehicles are less expensive in terms of fuel and maintenance costs than gas powered vehicles – in addition to not burning fossil fuels. If you're interested in a comparison, there are numerous on-line calculators that compare an electric or hybrid car to conventional gas-powered vehicle costs over 5 years or more of ownership including purchase price, fueling, maintenance and insurance. According to the interactive comparison site: ev.pge.com, an electric Chevrolet Equinox vs the gas powered version will save you \$18,359 over 5 years. Monthly, the EV version is \$112 cheaper than the gas version. Of course, vehicle prices shown are after incentives and actual results will vary by gas and electricity prices.

What is the status of IRA home energy rebates for Wisconsin?

Some of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) programs are still intact despite Congress passing the budget bill that rolls back many of the IRA programs that were intended to make energy more efficient and less expensive for Americans, as well as reducing our usage of fossil fuels like natural gas.

Two programs that escaped many of the cuts are for cleaner appliances and for home efficiency upgrades. The HEAR (Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate) program offers rebates to income-qualified households in Wisconsin to help them install energy-efficient electric appliances and make home energy upgrades. With the launch of the Home Efficiency (HOMES) rebate program, Wisconsin is the first state in the country to begin utilizing IRA funds to help homeowners increase the energy efficiency of their homes.

In these programs, federal dollars are administered by states so states that got on board early are in a much better position to continue the program for their residents. Fortunately for us, Wisconsin's Focus on Energy has been fully launched and as of mid-July 2025 is still accepting applications for home electrification and appliance rebates. There's still opportunity to check Focus on Energy to see if you qualify for the program and what steps need to be taken. focusonenergy.com/ira-hear



Summer Environmental Reading List

Laura Schulz (SEGG Co-Chair) chose two books by Milwaukee Native, Dan Egan, a New York Times bestseller and two-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. She says they were interesting, informative and very well written.

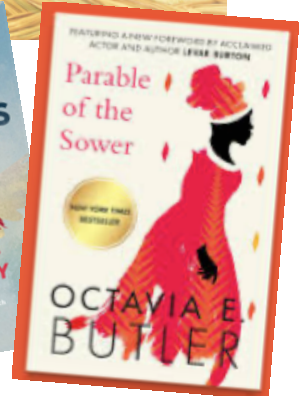
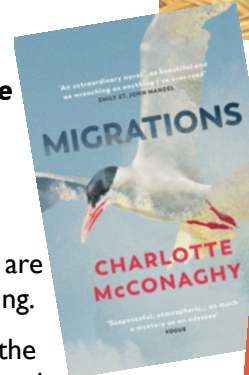
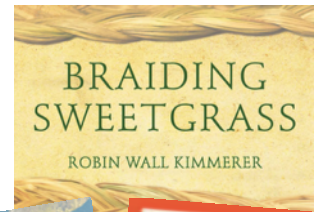
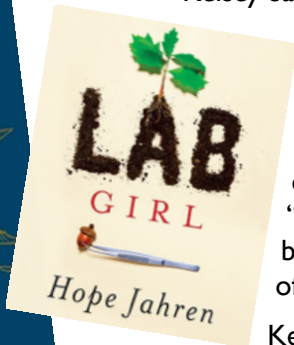
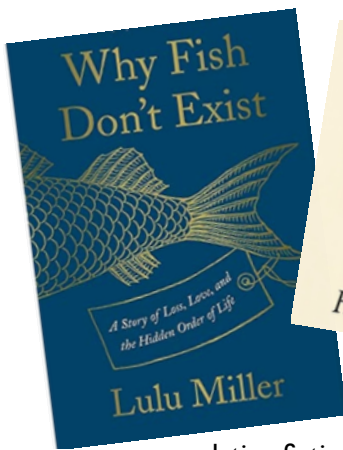


She also recommends **Why Fish Don't Exist**, a book by Lulu Miller that explores the life and work of fish expert David Starr Jordan, alongside the author's own personal journey of self-discovery. It is part biography, part memoir, part scientific adventure. Laura's last recommendation, **LAB Girl**, is funny and entertaining, while also showing the struggles of research.

Kelsey Saari (SEGG Excom Member) recommends, **Braiding Sweetgrass**, the quintessential book on Indigenous Ecology and the "notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers."

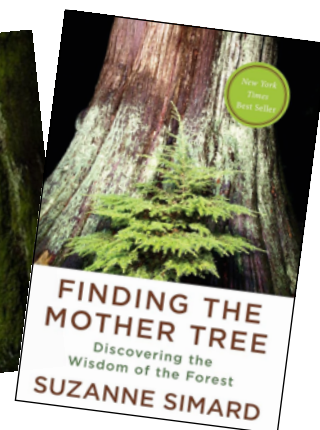
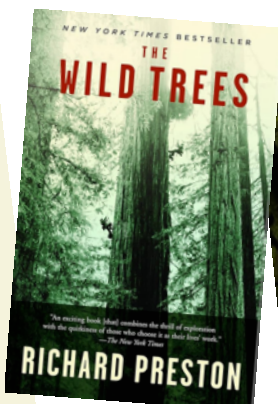
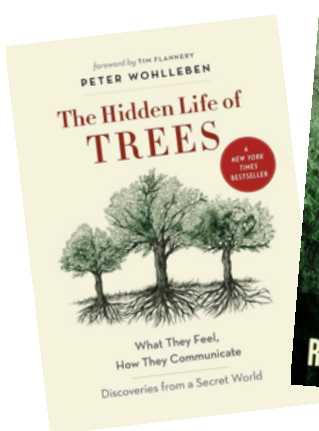
She also recommends Charlotte McConaghy's novels, like **Migrations**, to everyone she knows. Goodreads called it, "an ode to a disappearing world and a breathtaking page-turner about the possibility of hope against all odds."

Kelsey's third recommendation is the post-apocalyptic novel, **Parable of the Sower**, by Octavia E. Butler. It is classic speculative fiction that is all too relevant in our current climate.



Gloria Randall-Hewitt (SEGG Co-Chair) recommends three books about trees. First is, **The Hidden Life of Trees**, by Peter Wohlleben. She notes his books are translated from the original German, but that didn't stop it from being eye-opening.

The Wild Trees, by Richard Preston, about the search for the largest trees in the world led Gloria to being somewhat obsessed with trees, especially redwoods. Lastly, she found Suzanne Simard's book, **Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest**, to be more scientific, but still enlightening and human. The author weaves her life story into the work she's doing to understand the interconnectedness of trees and plants. Gloria found it fascinating!



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



Join the Mosquito Bucket Challenge!

Now that warm weather is here and we're enjoying more time in our yards, the mosquitoes are back too! Are you wishing for a way to keep these pests out of your yard without harming pollinators, pets or people? Our friends at Homegrown National Park have proposed a non-toxic way of discouraging the growth of mosquitoes that is safer than fogging.

Brew some Mosquito Tea today! Place a bucket in your yard with some mosquito enticing funky water, a handful of dead leaves or grass clippings AND a natural soil bacterium called Bti (for the scientists in the crowd, that's *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*.) The Bti will kill mosquito larvae before they grow up and bite.

It's safe, it's affordable, it's better for biodiversity and it actually works! Visit your local hardware store for Bti insecticide (a.k.a. mosquito dunks) and get further instructions at:

homegrownnationalpark.org/mosquito-bucket-challenge

While you're there, check out all the great information about native plants that can help you get on the Homegrown National Park Biodiversity Map and join the movement!



The SEGG Executive Committee had the pleasure of meeting Bossy, Al Sommer's beautiful Highland Cow.



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
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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

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and more ways to
Get Involved!



Paddle on the Root River

Outings leader, Al Sommer led an SEGG group paddle in May on the Root River in Racine. Attendees had a great time despite the slightly chilly weather.

***We hope to see you and your nature-loving friends
at all the upcoming Sierra Club outings!***

See pages 2 & 3 for details.