



SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the Southeast Gateway Group of the Sierra Club

APR-JUN 2026
VOLUME 44, No. 2

EARTH DAY 2026 & ECO-PERFECTIONISM *by Gloria Randall-Hewitt*

I recently heard the term eco-perfectionism for the first time. Even though I hadn't heard the term before, I understood the feeling that it describes — the idea that if I can't make a total commitment to perfect sustainability in every part of my life, at all times, then my efforts are pointless. That perfectionist attitude leads to discouragement that can make it harder for us to focus on the systemic problems that we all need to work together to change like our fossil fuel dependency, corporate accountability and environmental policy.

Thankfully, expecting perfectionism is not the way to build a movement with momentum or to create real, lasting change. Real change happens when we each build sustainable habits in whatever way we can, within our own lifestyle, skillset and abilities. We can't do everything "right." Our infrastructure and policies just haven't reached the point to support that yet, so we can't let running the gas furnace at home make us give up our efforts for a healthier, cleaner environment.

To the right are some ideas from the EPA's website of ways to make our planet healthier—on Earth Day and everyday. (Yes, the EPA still exists.) Our small steps can lead to real change.

Let's not be discouraged if we can't be involved in everything that needs to be done. There's too much! Nor should we let the current administration's attempts to roll back rules and protections that have taken decades to put in place make us think the future is hopeless. We can overcome when we each contribute in our own ways. It all adds up to reach change.

This Earth Month, find an event virtually or in person that help you connect explore, enjoy and protect our beautiful world!

SEGG will be participating in the Earth Day Celebration at Gateway Technical College Kenosha with two different events for the public on April 18, 2026 from 10 AM to 1 PM.

Drop in to see the electric car show in the parking lot at Gateway's Kenosha campus and participate in the Drive Electric Earth day event where you can learn about electric vehicles or share your own experience.

MAKE EARTH DAY EVERYDAY!!

Lower Your Carbon Footprint

- Bike or walk
- Carpool or take public transportation
- Choose an energy efficient vehicle
- Make fewer trips by grouping your errands
- Drive smart: go easy on the brakes and gas, use cruise control, and keep your car well-maintained

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

- Reuse or repurpose containers, clothing and cloth grocery bags
- Give clothes a second life by donating or buying used
- Know what items your local recycling programs collects, and what items are recyclable

Be H2O Smart

- Repair leaky faucets and replace old equipment like toilets and dishwashers when possible
- Turn off the water to brush teeth and shave
- Run full loads of laundry and dishes
- Collect rainwater to use in your garden

Feed People, not Landfills

- Check your refrigerator, pantry, and freezer before shopping to avoid buying foods you don't need
- Plan your meals for the week before heading to the store
- Properly store fruits and vegetables so they last longer
- Befriend your freezer and leftovers



Inside Gateway, Sierra Club's SEGG will have information about the work that Sierra Club is doing in our part of the state. Stop by to say hello, pick up some information or learn how you can get in on the next hike, project or campaign with other earth-minded people!

Read about the history of Earth Day and how you can get involved at: www.earthday.org/earth-day-2026

Or check out Sierra Club's website for a variety of Earth Month events, in person and virtual: www.sierraclub.org/earth-day

GET INVOLVED → START HERE!

GROUP OUTINGS

Stony Ridge Segment
Hike on the Ice Age Trail
Saturday, April 11 at 1PM



Join us for another group hike on the Stony Ridge Segment of the Ice Age Trail where we will wind through pine plantation, oak forest, and dry prairie. This segment is 3.1 miles long so most of us will be doing a car transfer at the end. *It is recommended to wear high-visibility orange clothing due to youth turkey hunt weekend.*

Meet at 1:00 in the parking lot of the Visitor Center and Forest Headquarters. This is on Rt 59, midway between Palmyra and Eagle.

After the hike there will be access to various displays on geology, geography, history, culture and plant life, as well as water and restrooms at the visitor center. We could also continue the fun at a restaurant before returning home.

Please RSVP to

Ana Spiteri 708-205-9161 or
Al Sommer 262-716-6955, in case
of event cancellation due to bad
weather.



Come Join Us!!



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY Saturdays: April 25 & July 18 (Oct TBA)

Your SEGG has removed **OVER 2,000** large bags of trash and several hundred bags of recyclables along a section of Hwy 38 in Racine County since adopting the highway in 1990.

Many of our long-time volunteers have retired from this work, so we could really use a new batch of friends to help keep the program going. It's a great way to spend an hour and a half, outdoors on a Saturday morning, leisurely walking only about one mile. Ideally, 12 volunteers per date to fill 12 garbage bags gets the job done best.

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, please bring your own work gloves. To sign up to help or for more information, contact Sandy Christensen at (262) 909-9171 or sandysunshine240@gmail.com for details.



Hike at Colonial Park, Racine
Sunday, June 14 at 1PM

Enjoy a stroll on the portion of the Root River pathway in Colonial Park, designated a Natural Area by the Southeast WI Regional Planning Commission. Learn how your conservation dollars are restoring lower Colonial after the devastation wrought by the emerald ash borer.

Our partner group, **Weed Out! Racine** is managing water flow, removing invasives and planting natives in order to recreate a functional ecosystem for critters and an enjoyable experience for humans.

Meet at Colonial Park parking lot (navigate to 2300 West High St) by 1PM. Dress for the weather with sturdy footwear. There is a porta potty available. Bring your own drinking water.

More info about the restoration work is on page 5

**Weed Out!
Racine**



**SEGG Night at the Biergarten
Thursday June 18 at 6PM**

Petrifying Springs Park Biergarten
5555 7th St, Kenosha, WI 53144

Meet fellow SEGG members for drinks and merriment!

Share stories of environmental adventures, achievements and aspirations.

Look for the Sierra Club Banner.

RSVP to Laura at schulztwin2@gmail.com



SEGG GROUP OUTING: White River Trail Bike Ride

Sunday July 12 at 1:00 PM

Join the club for a nice off-the-road, yet very comfortable bike ride from the beautiful old town of Lyons. Meet at the parking lot in the center of town by Ye Olde Hotel, Bar and Restaurant. The trail is very well used and well maintained. A \$5 trail pass is required.

Any kind of bike is suitable for this trail. It is an old railroad route that at one time helped farmers get crops and milk delivered to buyers. The trail roughly parallels and crosses the White River. We will be seeing some old small towns and some glacial formations and have some good views of the countryside. The bikes will allow us to outpace any mosquitos!

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. It will be a good ride for all levels of fitness.

Please call or email Al Sommer to let him know you will be there: sommerallan4@gmail.com / 262-716-6955



White River State Trail, Photo by TrailLink user lkgatu



Moonlight Paddle on the Root River

Fridays: June 26 & July 31

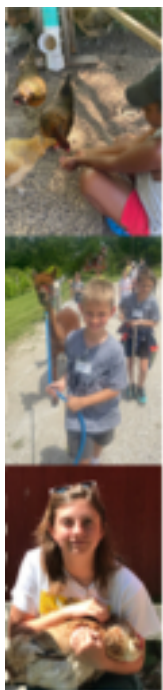
Launch 7:00 pm – 7:30 pm / Music & Buffet 8:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Experience nature at sunset as you float on a peaceful, no-destination paddle surrounded by night birds, wildlife emerging on the darkening riverbank and songs of summer insects. Upon returning, follow a magical path to live acoustic music around the campfire with an amazing s'mores & savory treat buffet. Guests are welcome to skip the paddle and just enjoy the music and buffet. Feel free to bring your own beverages. Reservations required for either event. Event proceeds support the nature center's educational programs.

Cost per person: \$50 members/\$55 non-members. Music/Buffer Only: \$20

RSVP at (262) 639-1515 or email info@RiverBendRacine.org More Info at www.RiverBendRacine.org

Did you know? Canoes and kayaks are available to rent daily Monday-Friday 8-4, Saturday-Sunday 9-5.



Animal Care Camps at Eco-J

At Racine's Eco-Justice Center, summer camps are rooted in hands-on, outdoor learning. Campers actively help with animal chores, learn about feed and habitat needs, observe animal behavior, and discover how responsible stewardship supports both farm animals and the broader environment.

Beyond animal care, each week-long camp includes nature hikes, games, art projects and plenty of time for kids to build friendships and confidence in an outdoor setting.

Our camps offer a unique opportunity for kids to develop responsibility, compassion, and a deeper understanding of where food and fiber come from.

Camps run in June and July for ages 6-11.

More info at ecojusticecenter.org/summer-camps

Happenings at Pringle Nature Center

Pringle Nature Center is located in Bristol Woods County Park on County Road MB.

April-May: StoryWalk Trail with the Kenosha Public Library

April 7-9: Spring Nature Club

April 11: Pokémon @ Pringle

May 16: Wildflower Run

Mondays, June 15-July 20:

Tots in the Park

June 16-19: Summer Camp

June 27: Mud Day

June 30-July 2:

Summer Camp

More info at pringlenc.org



Invasive Species Chapter 3: BUCKTHORN

By Al Sommer

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and glossy/false buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*, formerly *Rhamnus frangula*). Both of these species are invasive. They form dense thickets which shade out native plants, alter forest regeneration and soil/leaf-litter chemistry, and provide poor wildlife habitat. The female trees produce abundant berries that are very attractive to birds which spread the seeds through the berry's cathartic action. They are widespread across Wisconsin (as well as most of central US) in woodlands, edges, prairies, fencerows, and disturbed sites—especially in southern and central counties but expanding north. The infestation seems to start at the edges and spreads deeper into woodlands.

Identification:

Small tree/shrub 10–20 ft (sometimes taller).

Leaves: simple, toothed, usually clustered near twig tips; glossy buckthorn leaves often more rounded.

Leaves typically remain late into fall.

Twigs: stout with small thorn sometimes present (common buckthorn sometimes has a thorny tip).

Fruit: clusters of black/dark purple berries in late summer–fall (3–5 seeds per berry).

Bark: older stems have dark, deeply furrowed bark; inner bark/wood can show yellowish pith (common buckthorn has chambered pith).

On younger twigs the lenticels are strongly horizontal.

Control and management:

Mechanical: Pull seedlings and small plants by hand (soil moist) or cut and dig out roots. Cut large shrubs and remove or treat stumps.

The roots remain close to the soil surface so young trees ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch or less) pull easily.

No herbicide is necessary when successfully pulled.

Chemical: Cut-stump herbicide application (e.g., glyphosate or triclopyr) on freshly cut stems is effective. Basal bark treatments can work on smaller stems. Follow label directions and local regulations.

Timing: Best to pull seedlings in spring/summer; cut and treat stumps in late summer–fall or during active growth for herbicide effectiveness. Re-sprouts require follow-up.



Plug-in Balcony Solar: Coming Soon to a

Balcony Near You?



Imagine going to the store to buy a solar panel, bringing it home and plugging in like a toaster and having it start producing electricity. Germany has had

this type of panels available for years and some people in the US are starting to take action to make the same kind of systems available here.

First Utah and now Virginia have passed laws that allow “balcony solar” without needing to go through your electric utility. Since the power generated goes back into your household wiring, it reduces the amount of electricity you would need to pull from the grid, partially offsetting residential electrical consumption. With rising energy rates, plug-in solar could provide an opportunity to help save money.

If you haven't heard about it yet, check out this article in the Sierra Club magazine:

www.sierraclub.org/sierra/plug-solar-power-could-be-coming-balcony-near-you



SEGG encourages you to WRITE to your legislators on the issues you care about.

Find your representative at

legis.wisconsin.gov



PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION

Checks made out to *Sierra Club SEGG* can be used towards any purpose, Checks to *Sierra Club Foundation* are strictly for educational programs and activities. Only donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. Please mail your donations to:
Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave, Racine, WI 53405

Colonial Park Conservation Update *by Melissa Warner*

Your 2025 conservation dollars were put to good use in lower Colonial Park. Working closely with City of Racine Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS), we added native plants near the bridge to Lincoln Park, and along the middle pathway near the pine grove and the wetland overlook. These natives were a gift from Wild Ones, and SEGG dollars purchased the supplies needed to build the hoop cages (with a generous discount from Ace Hardware!).

Mulching around elderberry and red-osier and grey dogwood cuttings planted through the cardboard



Weed Out! Racine volunteers use cardboard to smother reed canary grass

We are rebuilding the flora because the emerald ash borer killed the ash trees – 40% of the canopy in lower Colonial. Planting native trees, shrubs and forbs, while at the same time removing invasive ones, is essential for recreating a functional ecosystem. Volunteers control garlic mustard, dame's rocket, catchweed bedstraw, thistles, burdock, motherwort and others by pulling, digging, and target spraying them. Reed canary grass (RCG) is another story; it has a dense root system that defies pulling and digging. We need professional knowledge and equipment. A grant from Sierra's Wisconsin Chapter helped pay for some removal work this past summer. We have a grant from the DNR that will allow to control RCG in much of lower Colonial this summer.

A new (to us!) technique for controlling the reed canary grass where it is not yet fully established is building thickets. We weed whip the RCG, and cover it with layers of cardboard. Next, we cut long branches of dormant shrubs such as elderberry, dogwood and nine bark, insert them through slits in the cardboard. Finally, we cover it all with a thick layer of mulch. In two years we will have a shrub thicket that competes well with the invasive grass.



Lynda plants orange milkweed in a hoop cage for protection from deer and cottontails



Controlling reed canary grass requires professional know-how and equipment

Volunteers are at the ❤️ of what we do.

We put in more than 500 volunteer hours in 2025, and we'd love to have you join us!

We'll be pulling garlic mustard and catchweed bedstraw May 2, 9, 16 and 23, and planting more forbs on May 23.

Join us for a walking tour of the park and see the restoration efforts for yourself: June 14 at 1PM. See pg. 2 for details.

Please email melissa.warner3@a2q.com for more information.

Wondering about new data centers?

There's a new tool available that provides lots of details about data centers that are being planned or currently being built. Information includes who is building the center, financial contributions to the elected representative in that district, and lots of other information all available by zip code.

A recent search using the Racine zip code of 53403 returned information about Congressional District WI-1, including links to articles about each data center, comments elected officials have made and contributors to the representative. (See example left)

Search either by zip code or congressional district number at poweredbywho.com

You can also sign up to get new information when it's available. Check it out!

WI-1 — Republican	
Bryan Steil R-WI-1	
Tech & DC Industry PAC \$	
2023-2026	
\$103,500	
Microsoft	\$35,000
AT&T	\$30,000
Duke Energy	\$25,000
Meta	\$8,000
Southern Company	\$3,000
Iron Mountain	\$2,500

7 projects in this district

- Expedient Franklin Data Center (1.6 MW) [see](#)
- Foxconn Mount Pleasant Data Center (5 MW) [see](#)
- Foxconn Mount Pleasant Data Center (75 MW) [see](#)

2026 ExCom Board Elections

All members are running unopposed - Any concerns may be addressed to Laura Schulz at schulztwin2@gmail.com



Keith Kohlmann

I would like to continue as a member of the Executive Committee because I am concerned about negative effects that data centers and related developments may have on SE Wisconsin. I would like to continue working with other board members to improve environmental quality in our region. I have a background in industrial technology and transportation.



Gloria Randall-Hewitt

I have been serving on the SEGG executive committee as co-Chair with Laura Schulz and for the last year as our representative to the SC state executive committee and finance team. My background is in business and it wasn't until the last couple of years that I really started to pay attention to all the great things that Sierra Club is doing to help protect our environment while encouraging people to get out and enjoy nature. I want to encourage people that anyone with a heart for nature and willingness to devote some time to the work can make a difference, especially with the expert guidance and tools that Sierra Club provides. Pictured is my husband David and me at Bryce Canyon.

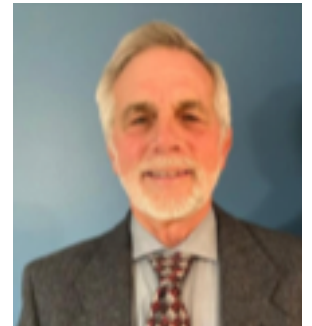
Tom Rutkowski

Progress made in climate action and environmental protections are under attack. At this urgent and perilous time, the work of the Sierra Club is even more important. As a member of the Southeast Gateway Sierra Club executive committee for over 15 years, I plan to continue to advocate for clean energy and clean air and water for our community in Southeast Wisconsin and to protect the natural areas that I love to explore. Here I am on a favorite hike at Canyonlands National Park in Utah.



Al Sommer

I've retired from the pharmaceutical/medical device industry doing mostly Quality Assurance and Regulatory Compliance. As a youngster, my family often vacationed at state and national parks and I loved attending ranger-led lectures at these parks. I wanted to be one of those rangers who gave the talks and even got a degree in botany still in the hope of giving forest ranger talks. But after being drafted into the military I was nudged in a different career direction. As SEGG Outings Chair, I get the chance to give trail and park lectures of a sort.



Karol Soto

Hi, I recently joined the Sierra Club Southeast Gateway Group (SEGG) as social media coordinator. I am an Environmental Studies student at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, with a passion for learning and exploring nature. Through Parkside I have been lucky to participate in multiple projects such as The Post-Diversion Root River collection Plan for the City of Waukesha, and Biomonitoring for the Pike River Watershed Restoration Plan. Climate Change is all around us and it's important for all of us to work together to help protect our planet. My goal while being part of this wonderful committee is to help others stay informed with current issues and to bring us together as a community! Here I am at the beautiful Lake of the Clouds in the Porcupine Mountains of Michigan.



River Bend Offers Wisconsin Master Naturalist Training Course

River Bend Nature Center will host a 2026 Wisconsin Master Naturalist Training course this summer.

Supported through the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension, the Master Naturalist program promotes awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the natural environment by developing a network of well-informed volunteers dedicated to conservation service within their communities.

To become a Master Naturalist, individuals complete 40 hours of expert-led training. Equipped with new knowledge, experiences, and connections, Master Naturalists then go on to serve stewardship, citizen science, and education efforts in Wisconsin and to continue their learning through advanced trainings.

To be a certified Master Naturalist, you will be required to attend regularly. Only four hours of training may be missed.

Applicants must be 18 years old or older and must coordinate their own travel to reach different learning sites throughout the training, unless transportation is provided by the host. A small training project is also required.

Master Naturalist Trainings are primarily outdoor learning experiences which may include extended periods of standing, hiking on both flat paths and off-trails with inclines, and a variety of weather conditions. Accommodation requests can be made during the registration process; please allow 30 days, when possible. If you have questions about the activity level of the training, please contact the program office info@wimasternaturalist.org prior to registering.

Registration is now open at wimasternaturalist.org/training/volunteer-training/riverbend2026/
For more information, call Christa at River Bend Nature Center 262-639-1515.

River Bend Nature Center exists to provide environmental education and outdoor recreation for adults, children and families of Racine County and southeastern Wisconsin.



Now Accepting 2026 Grant Applications!



Your Southeast Gateway Group (SEGG) has been organized to promote the national Sierra Club's goals, as described below, 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 the goals of the National Sierra Club, the SEGG ExCom will evaluate potential donations to other local organizations and efforts to ensure consistency with the overall Sierra Club's 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 and promote the Sierra Club's mission to as wide an audience as possible.

To achieve such goals, SEGG is now accepting grant applications for 2026. Local organizations and environmental efforts may request up to \$500. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and can be found on our website:

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway

2026 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
Joe Dubaniewicz (Political Chair)..... joeduban@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

Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club
3508 Washington Ave
Racine, WI 53405-2934



Follow Us!

facebook.com/sierraclubsoutheastgatewaygroup

Scan Code to
View Every
Sierran
in Full-Color on
our website.



sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway

Sunshine, Stories & Muddy Boots

By Anamaria Spiteri

Fourteen Sierra Club members laced up their boots on a glorious 55-degree day in February for a guided walk through Kishwauketoe Nature Preserve and the experience turned out to be far richer than a simple stroll.

Leading the group was Jim Killian of the Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy, who brought the land to life with layered stories of history and science that most visitors never get to hear about. Chief among the revelations: the preserve is currently the site of an active NASA DNR research collaboration where cutting-edge conservation science is happening right here in Walworth County! It's a reminder that local land stewardship can connect to something much bigger than any of us might expect. Jim also took the group back in time, sharing the property's surprising past as an Arabian horse farm. Standing on the same ground where those horses once ran gave the walk a sense of depth and history.

Of course, a little mud underfoot was all part of the charm — proof that Wisconsin's winter thaw was well underway. Between the warm sun, the wildlife and the conversation, our participants made for a lively and curious group. New friendships were struck, old ones were rekindled, and plenty of laughs were shared along the trail.

This was the first outing of what promises to be a full and adventurous year. See pages 2-3 for more fun outings that are free and open to all members and friends. If you missed this one, make sure you're on the list for the next event. We'd love to see you!



Save a Tree & See in Color!

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