



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

MAY 2026

*"You can cut all the flowers, but you can't stop spring."  
- Pablo Neruda*

**Sierra Club Mission:** *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.*

## May 15 at 5:30 p.m. CRSC Action Gathering

401 West Avenue South, La Crosse

Join CRSC friends and members as we learn about an important environmental issue and then take meaningful action together. All are welcome - you don't need to be a Sierra Club member to participate. RSVP (optional) by calling 608-315-2693 or at <https://forms.gle/34yPvEL5putiuUtR7> to help us know how much pizza to have on hand. Please enter at the back door. BYO non-alcoholic beverage.

## CHAPTER ACTION HOUR: RTAS



**Tuesday, May 26 at 6 p.m. Online**

Wisconsin transit advocates want to pass Regional Transit Authority (RTA) legislation in the upcoming legislative cycle so Wis-

consin cities can have transit systems that work for residents. Come hear from Dave Steele with MobilISE Wisconsin about how and why you should be a champion for RTAs. This issue is important for Coulee Region Group members who have been frustrated by the struggle to retain our Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit. RTAs provide funding and administrative solutions for regional transit systems. Learn more and RSVP here: <https://tinyurl.com/wisc-rtas-may26>

## REGULATING DATA CENTERS

On Friday, April 17, the Action gathering group met at the UU Fellowship for our monthly Action Gathering. The group continued to learn about data centers, but this time focused on regulation, local and statewide.

Our guest speaker, via phone, was the La Crosse County Board Chair, Tina Tryggstad. She answered prepared questions then those from participants. She said La Crosse County has not taken a position or any action on data centers. A plan for a study committee is expected to come before the Board soon. She know of no planned data center in La Crosse County. However, the county doesn't have jurisdiction over land use within municipalities and wouldn't know if data centers were proposed there.

Our region may be attractive to data centers because we have a lot of underground water, and most data centers require water to cool their equipment. Local governments can't "zone" groundwater nor regulate it.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) is a regulatory authority that was primarily established by the 1907 Public Utilities Law, making Wisconsin one of

the first states to regulate public utilities. The PSC has three members chosen by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. They serve staggered six-year terms. The Wisconsin commissioners are Chairperson Summer Strand, Commissioner Kristy Nieto and Commissioner Marcus Hawkins.

Wisconsin utilities have recruited data centers and proposed building new fossil gas plants for the centers' enormous energy demands while proposing special, low rates which will affect everyone's electricity rates.

After hearing from Tina, we visited the PSC website: <https://psc.wi.gov> where we learned how to file a comment online by clicking on Public Comment, then clicking on File A Comment Online. More about the state chapter's work on data centers, including ongoing actions we all can take, can be found at <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/datacenteraction>

It is only through educating concerned citizens that the Wisconsin PSC might begin to hear more feedback from an average consumer than the big energy utilities. [Info from Colleen Gnabasik and Kathy Allen.]

## **APRIL REPORT**

A Climate Collage Craft Night was held at UW-La Crosse on April 21 where information about Line 5 was shared and discussed.

Eleven CRSC members met on Saturday, April 25 to do our first highway clean-up of the year along the club's section of River Valley Drive. The next club clean-up will be in July.

CRSC tabled at the La Crosse Earth Fair on April 26 in La Crosse. Our display highlighted our recent work—action hours, environmental education grants and the high school stewardship award, and advocacy for renewable energy, clean transportation, stopping Line 5, and connecting with allies and like-minded groups in the area. In addition, some CRSC members participated in the Drive Electric Earth Month (DEEM) “Ask Me About My EV” event at the Earth Fair, handing out

literature and talking with visitors about their EV experience. The Sierra Club is a national DEEM sponsor as part of its Clean Transportation for All campaign.

CRSC donated money toward children's activities at the May 2 Coon Creek Community Watershed Council's Coon Creek Confluence event in Chaseburg.



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## **Coulee Region Youth: Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program**

by Aditi Muduganti, Grade 12, Onalaska High School

Since its creation in 1989, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program has protected more than 650,000 acres of public land in Wisconsin. It has helped preserve forests, rivers, wildlife habitats, and trail systems while also expanding access to outdoor recreation across the state. The program has received strong bipartisan support over the years, and recent polling shows that 93% of Wisconsin voters support it.

Even with that level of public backing, the program's future remains uncertain because it lacks permanent, stable funding. Without continued support, there is concern that future land protection projects and access improvements could be delayed or halted. This would especially affect landlocked public areas that communities rely on for recreation and connection to nature.

At the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearing on April 13 at Irvin Pertsch Elementary School in Onalaska, Aditi Muduganti submitted a proposal sup-

porting continued and permanent funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. The proposal emphasized the importance of protecting and keeping Wisconsin's public lands accessible, especially for future generations in the Coulee Region and across the state.

It also highlighted how the program supports more than just land conservation. It improves access to public spaces, protects natural resources, and maintains habitats important to wildlife and water quality. These are things that directly affect local communities, especially in areas where outdoor access is a big part of daily life.

The proposal called for long-term funding so that conservation efforts do not depend on short-term decisions year by year. For residents of the Coulee Region, the program represents something simple but important: keeping Wisconsin's land open, protected, and available for everyone, not just now, but in the future, too.

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## **More May events**

5/ 5: National Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Relatives 5K Run, 11 to 2 at Burns Park, La Crosse <https://www.fspa.org/event/mmiw-r-5k>

5/ 8, 12, 20: Garlic Mustard removal, 9 am. Various locations. <https://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events>

5/ 9: River Clean Up. 8 a.m. Various landings in the La Crosse area. <https://rivercleanuplacrosse.com/register/>

5/ 9: Hike at Eureka Maple Woods State Natural Area. 9 am. Email [friendsoftheblufflands@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftheblufflands@gmail.com) for details.

5/ 9: Migratory Bird Hike at Sugar Creek Bluff. 7 am. Register ahead: <https://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/2026-birding>

5/11: Bobcats Return to the Driftless. 10 am. La Crosse Public Library. <https://tinyurl.com/driftlessbobcats>

5/13: Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. 6:30 pm. Lunda Center, BRF <https://tinyurl.com/brf-mtkili>

5/14: Indigenous Film Series. 5 pm at the Rivoli, La Crosse. <https://tinyurl.com/rivoliindigimovies>

5/16: Clean up at Trempealeau Lakes. 9 am. <https://tinyurl.com/tremplake516>

5/20: The Wonders of the Pantanal Wetland of Brazil. 7 pm The Nature Place. <https://tinyurl.com/couleebirds526>

5/21: An Evening with Joy Harjo - Inhabiting Home on Earth. 7 pm. Madison & Online. <https://www.wisconsinacademy.org/evenings/finding-home-evening-joy-harjo>

5/21: Land Protection Options for Landowners. 5 pm. Phoenix Ctr, Richland Center. <https://tinyurl.com/richland-safeland>

5/27: Green Thumbs - Tree Planters. 4 pm. Hanson Park, Viroqua. <https://tinyurl.com/viroquatrees>

5/27: Citizens Climate Lobby meeting at 6:30 p.m. 401 West Ave. S., La Crosse & online. Email [info@lacrossecccl.org](mailto:info@lacrossecccl.org).

# GROW PLANT SALE & MORE

WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE HORTICULTURE CENTER  
624 VINE STREET, LA CROSSE

**THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026**

**3 PM TO 6 PM**

Garden Themed Appetizers

Plants for Sale

Build Your Own Hanging Basket or Fairy Garden

**FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2026**

**8 AM TO 6 PM**

Plants for Sale

Mother's Day Gift Make and Take

Build Your Own Hanging Basket or Fairy Garden

**SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2026**

**9 AM TO 1 PM**

Plants for Sale - Buy One Get One Free from 12 - 1 pm

Compost Workshop 10am to 11am

Mother's Day Gift Make and Take

*All activities and plants are while supplies last*

Thank you to the Cultivator Level event sponsors:



All proceeds go directly  
towards connecting youth to  
healthy food and nature.

