



WISCONSIN Sierran

NEWS OF THE WISCONSIN CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

VICTORY: NO DISCOUNTS FOR DATA CENTERS!

In April, the Public Service Commission (PSC) voted to protect WPS and We Energies customers from paying for the energy and the new infrastructure, including power plants and transmission lines, that will be built for data centers. **The commission voted to ensure that data center developers must pay the full costs of the energy and infrastructure they require.** This may sound like it should have been obvious, but We Energies proposed that data centers should only pay for a portion of the infrastructure.

Data centers use an enormous amount of energy and water to operate. However, this decision protects against two big impacts of that energy use:

- 1. Energy bill increases:** Building new energy sources, especially all the new gas plants that are proposed by We Energies, could make energy bills skyrocket. Sierra Club's expert found that We Energies was preparing to now spend \$19.3 billion on electric generation over the next five years, an increase of nearly \$10 billion since the 2024-2028 five-year plan, and a plan largely driven by data centers. Had the PSC agreed with We Energies, all We Energies' customers would be paying these costs. The decision today makes the data centers cover this cost.
- 2. The need for this electricity will mean more fossil fuels:** This is still a big issue, but today's decision does help in a couple of different ways. First, we know clean

energy is the cheapest form of electricity, and the data center developers know that too. While We Energies isn't concerned about costs, data center operators will be and will demand more renewable energy. Second, the Commission pushed the utilities to look for solutions like energy efficiency in addition to new generation. Most importantly, many of these data center companies, like Microsoft and Meta, have clean energy commitments, including goals to get to 100% clean energy. This will

directly tie new gas plants to these developers and allow us to hold them accountable for these clean energy commitments.

**“Wisconsin customers should not pay a single cent to subsidize the service of data centers...not now and not decades from now.”
--Commissioner Nieto**

This decision is a direct result of our advocacy.

Our lawyers and experts dug in to understand all of the possible ramifications of data center energy use, then issued reports and made solid arguments about the need to protect ratepayers from these costs. Our Chapter Staff then worked tirelessly to ensure that Sierrans across Wisconsin testified at public hearings and submitted public comments. Just last week we released an analysis showing that the majority of comments favored a decision like the one the PSC made today.

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THE TIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGING

I want to start by acknowledging how tough this last year has been.

Dealing with a corrupt national administration that doesn't respect the rule of law or our constitution, wields authoritarian power, dismantles valuable government services and slashes funding, starts unnecessary wars and alienates allies, terrorizes minorities and citizens, and lies regularly – is a lot to bear.

On the environmental front, there is a refusal to accept climate change, support for fossil fuels while clean energy is rejected, dismissing environmental risks and dismantling environmental regulations, and valuing public lands only as a source of profit. Troubling indeed!

We've also suffered many disappointments in Wisconsin. Gas power plants get approved while utility rates continue to skyrocket. Data centers proliferate without sufficient community input, and a state legislature unable to create guardrails to protect the public and the environment. The legislature also failed to renew the widely popular Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program.

But a Bob Dylan refrain comes to mind – “The times, they are a-changing.” We've seen massive No Kings protests in places we never imagined would rise up, citizens of the Twin Cities mobilize and reject authoritarian power, elections that demonstrate a strong dissatisfaction for the machinations of those currently in office, and courts that are in good part rejecting attempts to discard our laws and legal safeguards.

The Sierra Club's beginnings harken back to the late 19th century and another hard period in our history with robber barons. We knew how to organize and fight then – and have impacts under adverse conditions – just as we do now. They

were a scrappy group of dedicated grassroots activists back then – and while we've evolved and grown, that's still a key part of who we are.

We've shown that with our work. This year, we helped pass PFAS legislation that will provide significant funding to help clean up spills and provide people with safe drinking water. And recently, we helped convince the Wisconsin Public Service Commission to require We Energies enact hyperscale data center rate structures to ensure their energy costs are not foisted off on other customers.

We also helped stop bad bills regarding data centers and prevented a Sandhill Crane hunt. Nationally, we helped protect national lands from being devastated by road building and have been part of many lawsuits to retain clean energy funding and prevent many environmental laws from being decimated.

We're already looking ahead to 2027, where, with your support this year, we'll set the stage and elect many more environmental champions here in Wisconsin – and next year restore the great legacy our state once had to ensure that the Wisconsin we love will be protected for all to explore and enjoy. Please get involved and support us, and we'll be here fighting for you – just as we did back in 1892.

Don Ferber
Chapter Chair

THE WISCONSIN SIERRAN

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Please submit articles by mail or email to:
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Please include the author's first and last names, and day and evening phone numbers at the top. Acceptance of submission contingent upon availability of space and must meet Sierra Club guidelines.

Deadline:

The deadline for submission of articles to the October 2026 issue is midnight on August 10, 2026.

Change of Address:

You can update your contact information online at myaccount.sierraclub.org.

Continued from page 1

Commissioner Nieto even said, “**Wisconsin customers should not pay a single cent to subsidize the service of data centers or very large customers – not now and not decades from now. Those [VLC] customers must bear the full cost of the infrastructure required to serve them – generation, transmission, distribution – and that those costs must be fully and transparently assigned. When we leave here today, we should be able to say clearly and unequivocally, there are no discounts here and no shifting of risks.**” Much of this language echoes the sentiments found in our testimony, our press releases, and comments from our members. This is a **huge victory and marks a turning point for holding data centers accountable** for their impacts. We still have a long way to go. We are continuing to reach out to legislators and candidates to build the political will for comprehensive data center guardrails. We will also engage in the We Energies’ rate case, where they have again asked to raise rates and charge customers to keep their dirty coal plants online. This is one victory in a long line of decisions, but it’s a big one.



Support Your Passion for a Just and Sustainable World

Create a legacy that protects and restores the natural world for future generations by naming Sierra Club’s Wisconsin Chapter in your will or trust. Or, name Sierra Club Foundation as the beneficiary of your retirement plan for the benefit of your local chapter and leave less highly taxed assets to your loved ones.



To learn more about the advantages of making a planned gift and to become a member of the Rachel Carson Society, please contact us.



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IN PERSON VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Sierra Club benefits from regular in-office volunteers in Madison, both for a regular weekly or biweekly shift during the weekdays. If you are **willing to help with data entry, thank you note writing, and other office tasks**, we would love your help. Please contact Heather at heather.wittrock@sierraclub.org to express your interest.



INVASIVE REED CANARY GRASS REMOVAL

WHAT IS INVASIVE REED CANARY GRASS?

Reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*, or “RCG”) is an aggressive, invasive plant that outcompetes and smothers native plants, thus creating monocultures that reduce biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Its dense root system also impacts floodplain services by limiting ground water recharge and reducing filtration of sediments, allowing pollutants to flow into waterways. Southeast Gateway Group (SEGG) is working with Racine Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS) and Weed Out! Racine to reduce the RCG population in Colonial Park, a 75-acre gem on the Root River.

RCG is persistent and very difficult to control. It requires mowing and herbicide treatment closely tied to its life cycle, followed by reseeding of appropriate native forbs and grasses. This work requires more than volunteer groups are able to do, but thanks to a Mann Grant from the Wisconsin Chapter, we were able to start on a multi-year, adaptive management strategy.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

Colonial Park is the gem of the City’s Parks system. Situated along the Root River in the western edge of the City, it spans 75 acres of woodlands and wetlands, and is home to many native critters, including endangered bats and bird species of special concern. It’s a birding hotspot for migrating spring warblers, and offers some of the best trout and salmon fishing around.

After many years of logging and farming, the canopy in Lower Colonial Park (“LCP”) once consisted of native green ash and box elder, along with invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle. High school students began removing those invasives in 1999, and tackled others as they became established. In 2004, the Southeast Gateway Group organized a community project

planting natives along the newly installed Root River Pathway. Over time, many community groups removed invasives and planted more natives. But then the emerald ash borer arrived, and we lost all the green ash, making up about 40% of the canopy in the Lower Colonial. The ecosystem dynamics changed, allowing more sunlight, which made invasives grow exponentially. Even several hundred volunteer hours were not enough to keep ahead of the problem. Reed canary grass was particularly difficult to control: we needed professional help.

WHAT’S NEXT?

With the advice of our consultant, we embarked on an adaptive management approach, where each year’s plan depends on previous results. Starting in one section of the park, we mowed RCG in mid-summer, and treated regrowth in the fall, with the intent of reducing the RCG population by 95%. RCG is persistent, and retreatment may be necessary. We plan to seed this area with native forbs, grasses and a cover crop once the RCG is sufficiently reduced. Each year we begin a new area of mowing and spraying and seeding...until we reach all of LCP!

Meanwhile, we are creating shrub thickets in areas where the RCG population is smaller, and mechanical mowing would damage nearby natives. We cut the RCG to ground level, and hand-spray the regrowth about a month later. We then layer cardboard over the patch, and insert live shrub cuttings through the cardboard. When the live stakes take root, we expand our native shrub layer and provide competition for RCG resprouts.

What we are doing is as much an experiment as a recipe. If all goes well and we continue to have funding, we hope to have controlled RCG and reseeded throughout LCP by 2030!



Support the Wisconsin Chapter

Your contributions, above and beyond membership dues, are an important part of the Chapter's budget. Please support our work to protect wilderness and wildlife, to improve the quality of life in our cities and to promote the enjoyment of nature.



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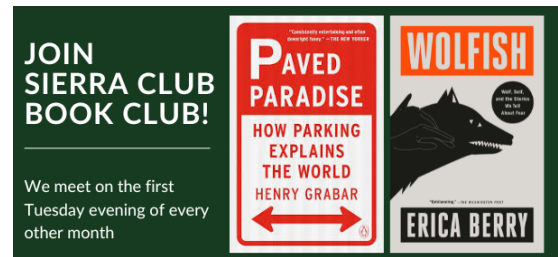
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Madison, WI 53703

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

READ WITH US! JOIN OUR BOOK CLUB

The Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter's book club is back again for 2026 with plenty of great reads. **The Book Club meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every other month, from 6:30 to 7:30 online.** You will receive the link to join the discussion after registering. Visit sierraclub.org/wisconsin/calendar for more information.



Tuesday, June 2 - (Hosted by the Transportation Team) - Book: **PAVED PARADISE: HOW PARKING EXPLAINS THE WORLD** by Henry Grabar. Graber argues that the obsession with providing parking has fundamentally deformed American cities, exacerbating problems like housing affordability, climate change, and traffic congestion. The book uses history, politics, and reportage to show how parking minimums and the demand for car storage have dictated urban design, leading to wasted valuable real estate, increased car dependency, and a less functional environment for everyone, not just drivers.

Tuesday, August 4 - (Hosted by the Beyond Coal Team) - Book: **HERE COMES THE SUN** by Bill McKibben. This book argues the rapid growth of solar and wind power offers a hopeful path to combat climate change, despite political and industry opposition. McKibben frames the renewable energy revolution as a chance to build a more humane and just world, moving beyond fossil fuels, while acknowledging the significant obstacles posed by the fossil fuel industry and political resistance, particularly in the US.

Tuesday, October 20 - (Wolf Awareness Week) - Book: **WOLFISH** by Erica Berry: A debut book that blends memoir, natural history, and cultural criticism to explore the cultural myths surrounding wolves and their connection to human fears, particularly those of women. The narrative braids Berry's personal coming-of-age story with the real-life journey of a GPS-collared wolf named OR-7, examining how stories of predators and prey shape our understanding of danger, gender, and the self.

Tuesday, December 1 - (Hosted by the Lands Team) - Book: **FINDING THE MOTHER TREE** by Suzanne Simard: A memoir and scientific exploration revealing how forests are complex, interconnected communities where trees communicate and cooperate through underground fungal networks, with "Mother Trees" acting as central hubs that nurture younger trees. The book blends Simard's personal journey, growing up in a logging family in British Columbia, with her groundbreaking research that uncovered these hidden systems, challenging the view of forests as mere collections of individual trees.

NOW IS THE TIME TO RAISE THE ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT

With the wrap-up of the legislative session, legislators and those running for office are interested in learning what matters to Wisconsinites and what they should prioritize in future legislative sessions. **Now is the time to attend events and ask them about the issues you care about.** This could mean attending a debate, going to a ‘meet-and-greet,’ calling into a radio program, responding to a post on Facebook, talking to an elected official that you run into at the county fair or grocery store, or writing a letter-to-the-editor.

This is important because we need to show the people who will be making decisions that we care about these issues.

Candidates and (once-elected) legislators hear from people all the time about a lot of different issues. Consistently showing up and asking about the issues we care about will tell them that this is an important issue for their district. **These questions and statements also help educate the audience and the media that attend the forums about the issue.** If the media hears the question frequently, they are also more likely to report on it because they will know it matters to their audience.

Attend a town hall meeting, a candidate forum, write to your legislators, submit a letter-to-the-editor, or otherwise make it clear what you would like to see them do. On page 7 to the right, we have included sample statements/questions related to our priorities that you can use as you attend these events or raise questions.

Continued on page 7

LEGISLATIVE RECAP

This legislative session kicked off with Governor Evers’s 2025-2027 State Budget Proposal in early 2025. It was the strongest budget we’ve ever seen for our climate, land, and water. It included funding for many critical programs, like safe drinking water and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, as well as support for clean transportation, clean energy and farmers. The budget that was ultimately passed was a much more mixed bag. Fortunately \$732 million in new funding was approved to address water contamination in the state, but dozens of other priorities were stripped out. Perhaps the biggest disappointment in this state budget was the removal of the extremely popular Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, which is the state’s land conservation program. This set the scene for our legislative priorities throughout the rest of the session:

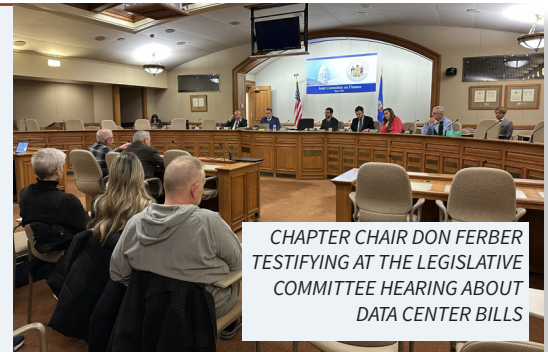
REAUTHORIZE THE KNOWLES NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The public support for a fully funded and effective Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program was clear and loud throughout the session, but unfortunately no bill passed. Several bills were on the table and unfortunately the ones that moved forward missed critical pieces, which would have gutted the intent of the program. With public pressure we hope to see a strong bill passed next session.

GUARDRAILS FOR DATA CENTERS

The outcry of concern about the impacts of data centers – from transparency, to electric rates, to water use and more – has been undeniable. While there were efforts to pass a bill regulating data centers from both sides of the aisle, the bill that moved forward furthest had a poison pill that would have forced data centers to be powered primarily by fossil

fuels – a major red flag and poison pill. Luckily this did not pass and we can restart our efforts next session.



CHAPTER CHAIR DON FERBER TESTIFYING AT THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE HEARING ABOUT DATA CENTER BILLS

STOP A SANDHILL CRANE HUNT

A bill that initially intended to authorize a sandhill crane hunt in addition to providing compensation to farmers for crop loss was updated to strip out the farmer resourcing, focusing exclusively on a hunt despite a non-toxic, harmless seed treatment that deters crop damage being available. Near the end of the session, this bill was oddly combined with a subpar wakeboat regulation bill, ultimately stopping both.

RELEASE FUNDS FOR PFAS MONITORING AND CLEAN UP

To end on a high note, what started off as a bad bill that we opposed turned into a win for Wisconsin! After years of work by countless individuals, organizations, legislators and the Governor, a bill was passed that releases funds for testing and new programs to support communities dealing with PFAS contamination. More work is needed to prevent new contamination and clean up communities, but this is a big first step!

With this session behind us, we’re preparing for the upcoming session and will continue to elevate these and other key priorities.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK LEGISLATORS:

1. There have been a number of proposals for new data centers in Wisconsin. These use so much energy and water that if they are built, it could make it difficult or impossible to meet our climate goals. If the utilities continue to power the data centers with new fossil fuels and charge their customers to build, all Wisconsinites could see their energy bills go up. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ENSURE THAT DATA CENTERS ARE POWERED BY CLEAN ENERGY AND ALL OF THE COSTS, INCLUDING THE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE, IS FULLY PAID FOR BY BIG TECH?**
2. The science is very clear that we need to move away from fossil fuels and switch to a carbon-free energy system. However, Wisconsin is not on path to do this and is falling behind our neighboring states. While Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois have carbon-free electricity requirements, numerous gas plants have been permitted in the past few years. While Governor Whitmer has ordered the Line 5 pipeline to be shutdown, the Department of Natural Resources permitted the extension of Line 5, despite the Bad River and other Ojibwe Tribes opposing it. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ENSURE WE MOVE AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS AND TRANSITION TO 100% CLEAN ENERGY?**
3. Most of the utilities in Wisconsin have been extending the life of their coal plants, and investing in new fossil fuel plants, like gas plants, while consistently increasing electricity rates, despite it being clear that energy efficiency and clean energy is the least expensive forms of energy. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO REQUIRE MORE OVERSIGHT ON THE UTILITIES AND REQUIRE THEY GO TO 100% CLEAN ENERGY AND MAKE ELECTRICITY RATES AFFORDABLE?**
4. Wolves are a keystone species; they play a key role in having a healthy environment. Apex predators like wolves are vital for maintaining balanced and robust ecosystems. Wolves improve forest health and wildlife health, especially because of the role they play in helping to control the deer population. Currently, 2011 Wisconsin Act 169 requires that the Department of Natural Resources hold a wolf hunt if they are not on the Endangered Species List, regardless of the science, capacity of the DNR, public input, and the requirement that wolves are co-managed by Wisconsin's Tribes. The current law takes the science and tribal input out of the decision and leaves it up to the federal government to list or delist wolves. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO AMEND THE LAW TO PUT THE DECISION ABOUT HUNTING WOLVES WITHIN THE DNR WHERE THEY CAN MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON SCIENCE, PUBLIC INPUT, AND TRIBAL CO-MANAGEMENT?**
5. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is one of the most popular and successful programs in Wisconsin! This program has conserved more than 650,000 acres. Approximately 99% of Wisconsinites live within five miles of a property that has received Knowles-Nelson Stewardship investments. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ENSURE THAT THE KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM IS REFUNDED WITHOUT CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM?**
6. For the nearly 1/3 of Wisconsin residents who do not drive, investments in public transit connect them to jobs, healthcare, and opportunities. Right now, transit systems are not able to raise money to fund their systems and rely on state funding (which has been depleting) or local funding that has to compete with other local needs. Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) would allow for transit systems to raise dedicated funding. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO PASS LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ENABLE LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO CREATE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITIES (RTAS)?**
7. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), sometimes known as factory farms, can cause damaging pollution in the communities they're located in. For example, manure from these farms is often excessively spread on fields, resulting in runoff and water contamination. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO PROTECT WISCONSINITES FROM THE IMPACTS OF CAFOS, LIKE NITRATE POLLUTION?**
8. Under the Walker Administration, the laws that protected Wisconsin from mining pollution were weakened. Now, a mining company is proposing a gold mine in the middle of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, under these weakened laws. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ENSURE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES ARE PROTECTED FROM MINING POLLUTION, INCLUDING ACID AND TOXIC METALS AND CONTAMINANTS THAT POLLUTE RIVERS AND GROUNDWATER FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS? WILL YOU SUPPORT REINSTATING THE MINING MORATORIUM?**



ISSUES AT A GLANCE



ROADLESS RULE

In August 2025, Secretary Brooke Rollins (US Dept of Agriculture) announced **the administration was beginning the process to repeal Roadless Rule protections nationwide for public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service.** This would remove protections for 58.5 million acres of public lands, enabling industrial-scale logging, mining, roadbuilding, oil and gas development, and other harmful activities in fragile ecosystems.

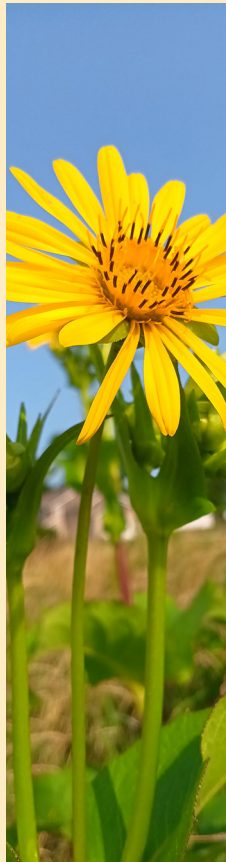
During the original process that led to the enactment of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, there were more than 400 public hearings across the country. We do not expect the Forest Service in 2026 to hold any public hearings on the repeal of the rule, so the Sierra Club is hosting our own town halls across the country. **The Wisconsin town hall will be on June 4 in Rhinelander.**

LUNCH AND LEARNS

In the past year the Water Team launched a **series of Lunch and Learn events, where people have the opportunity to hear from groups and individuals doing incredible water-related work across Wisconsin.** And they've been a huge success! Last year we covered the following topics: nitrates, grazing, greening schoolyards, and the co-benefits of solar. This year we plan to offer additional opportunities to learn more! Look out for invites to these Lunch and Learns as they get planned. You can watch recordings of past events at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/lunch-and-learn.



SUMMER "FUN" DRAISER



Each year the chapter and members of our volunteer Issue Teams host a fun-filled fundraiser. Full details for this year's event will be unveiled soon, but we'll kick off the fun in late June and wrap up in August, with a special online event featuring some of Wisconsin's special places. Each of our Teams sets a goal that they work together to meet, offering members an opportunity to promote the issues they dedicate so much of their time and energy to. **Plans for some fun outings and incentives to donate are also in the works,** so stay tuned to our blog and enews for more details. Whether your passion is water, land, wildlife, tar sands, transportation or clean energy, you can say thanks and show these teams you support their work with a donation. Want to help plant the seeds for success? Be a "seed" donor by making an early donation to jumpstart their efforts: <https://donorbox.org/wisconsin-summer-2026>

PHOTO CREDIT KATHERINE BELLOW

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: STATE TREASURER

Use your accounting, communication and organizational skills to support the chapter and group treasurers in Wisconsin. Each of our six regional groups and the chapter have volunteer treasurers that manage day to day operations for their entity. The State Treasurer position is responsible for helping ensure that chapter and group records align with our organizations best practices. Tasks would include reviewing, approving and tracking reimbursement requests to the Sierra Club Foundation; compiling financial reports for Finance committee review; understanding and reviewing the coding and journal entries input by others; completing fiscal year end forms for all Wisconsin entities as required by the national office; answering treasurer questions regarding internal best practices; and seeking guidance from chapter and national staff to relay to local treasurers. While an understanding of accounting is important, success in this role will revolve around organizational skills and communicating well with others. Estimated time commitment is 4-5 hours monthly with additional workload in late July/August during the fiscal year end process.



ELECTION SEASON APPROACHES

It's another big election year, with **the Governor, the seventeen odd-numbered seats in the Wisconsin Senate and all 99 seats in the Wisconsin State Assembly on the ballot**. Sierra Club - Wisconsin will endorse environmental champions and will encourage our members to civically engage! If you are interested in getting involved in our electoral work, please contact Cassie at cassie.steiner@sierraclub.org.



**YOUR VOTE
MATTERS**

LINE 5 IN MICHIGAN

Line 5 – the 70+ year old oil pipeline that endangers the Great Lakes – is well known to many because we've been working to stop Enbridge, the pipeline owner, from constructing the Line 5 reroute for years. That work continues, and you can see the most recent updates at our action page: www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/tarsandsaction. What you might not be tracking as closely is what's happening **in Michigan, where Line 5 runs through the Straits of Mackinac**, threatening a spill. In 2019, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel filed a lawsuit to void the easement allowing Line 5 to cross the Straits of Mackinac. Since then, a legal battle has continued and this spring we saw a 9-0 win from the U.S. Supreme Court affirming the case belongs in state court. As this case continues, our Michigan friends are also hard at work fighting an Enbridge proposal to put Line 5 in a tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac. We're grateful for their work and the collaboration across the region to shut down Line 5 once and for all!



PHOTO CREDIT KATHERINE BELLOW

A TRANSPORTATION GAMECHANGER FOR WISCONSIN: REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITIES

Wisconsin's public transportation systems are struggling. From votes to cut routes in Milwaukee County to discussions about eliminating entire systems like the Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) system, each fixed route bus system in the state is severely underfunded and has been for more than a decade.

Lack of investment in public transit has resulted in decreases in numbers of routes, distances covered by transit systems, and frequency of routes. Not only that, but Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) have been barred from creation in the state, making collaboration across municipal and county lines cumbersome at best and nonexistent at worst.

The result? The 1/3 of Wisconsinites who do not drive have seriously limited options for accessing jobs, healthcare, recreation, grocery stores and more.

With systems facing fiscal cliffs and discussions of some closing altogether, something substantial has to change to better meet the needs of Wisconsinites. While there is not a one size fits all solution that will fix all transit system needs in the state, legislation that permits the formation of RTAs would go a long way.

RTAs bring two key benefits to transportation in a region.

First, RTAs support regional planning, collaboration and coordination on transportation. This is critical because people's needs do not stop at municipal boundaries, so transportation connections shouldn't either! This creates a mechanism for local governments to collaborate more easily to best serve entire regions of the state.

Second, RTAs would fill key gaps in funding, especially for transit systems. RTAs allow for regions to leverage a local sales tax that would generate funding specifically for local transportation like transit systems. This funding can be used not only for capital projects, but also for ongoing operations, which means that critical gaps could be filled.

As we move through election season and into the 2027 legislative session, it will become more important to advocate for transportation solutions like Regional Transit Authorities.

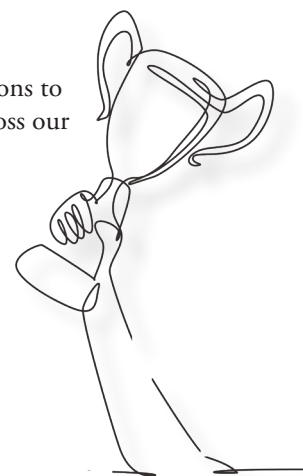


CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS: SUBMIT NOMINATIONS FOR CHAPTER AWARDS!

Each year, the Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter recognizes outstanding volunteers for their contributions to our organization, our communities, and our planet. We know there is amazing work being done across our state, and today we are asking you to help us identify these incredible people.

We want to hear your stories about the work you've witnessed in the past year by Sierra Club volunteers as well as community leaders and other organizations. Fill out the easy online form to nominate them today at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/awards, and help us celebrate the amazing work being done across the state!

The final deadline for nominations is August 15th and winners will be acknowledged at our annual Chapter Awards Celebration in the fall.



SEEKING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES

Would you like to join other passionate volunteers in working toward the general and operational health of the Wisconsin Chapter? We are **seeking dedicated Sierra Club members with an interest in maintaining a strong and vibrant state chapter to run for the Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee helps guide the chapter through governance, strategic planning, budget oversight and fundraising. If you have experience and a willingness to learn skills, and if your values, purpose and passion align with Sierra Club's mission, then we'd like to hear from you! The chapter and the executive committee are committed to fostering belonging, representation, and access. Three at-large seats, each serving three-year terms, will be elected this fall. **Members from across the state are encouraged to apply for these positions. Meetings are scheduled for weekends and evenings to accommodate work/school schedules.** The deadline for completed applications is August 1, 2026. The positions run from January 2027 through December 2030. Please contact Linda Frank at Linda@frankenenvironmental.com to learn more about the opportunity to serve.



GREEN REVIEW

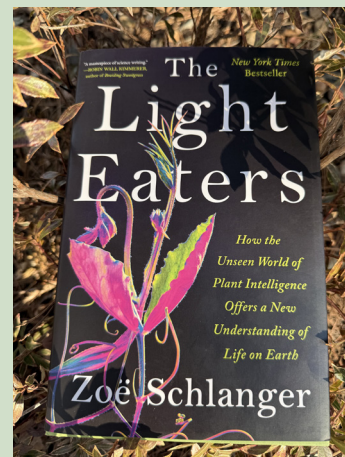
The Light Eaters:

How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth

by Zoe Schlanger, 2024, Harper, 256 pages, plus notes and index.

What if the most profound intelligence shaping life on Earth has been rooted beneath our feet all along? *The Light Eaters* invites readers into that question with wonder, humility, and delight. The experience reshapes how you see the world around you.

In *The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth*, Zoë Schlanger offers a luminous synthesis of scientific rigor and personal inquiry. Schlanger does not simply report on emerging research. She thinks alongside it. The book invites us to trace the exciting depth of her thoughts as they unfold, questioning assumptions, acknowledging missteps, and naming the very human tendencies—ego, bias, fear of ridicule—that have shaped scientific trends. Her voice is confident, curious, and generous. Reading her feels like moving with a beautiful mind in motion.



What makes this work especially compelling is its multi-genre richness. Schlanger draws freely from literature and philosophy, weaving in resonant references to writers like Neil Gaiman and Ursula K. Le Guin, voices that stretch our sense of what intelligence and agency might look like beyond the human frame. She places herself within a continuum of writers such as Stephen Jay Gould, Loren Eiseley, and Peter Matthiessen, thinkers who taught and entertained while opening readers to deeper ecological awareness. This lineage fits. Like them, Schlanger makes complex ideas feel intimate, playful, and alive.

At the heart of the book is sustained engagement with plants themselves, as well as with the scientists, growers, and thinkers who devote their lives to understanding them. Schlanger spends time with specific plants and plant people, approaching them with affection, respect, and genuine love. It shows. These encounters ground the science in lived experience. Plants emerge not as passive background life, but as responsive, communicative participants in Earth's systems, organisms that quite literally eat the light and make life possible for everything else.

Reading this book is energizing. It sparks curiosity and delivers surprise. You may find yourself putting it down from time to time, not from fatigue, but because an idea wants space to land. This is a book you want to talk about. Lucky you if your book club takes this one on. As Schlanger expands how we perceive plants, she also expands how we imagine our place among them. Changing perception changes the relationship. And changed relationships shape behavior. In a moment when the future of ecosystems depends on how seriously we take the living systems around us, these kinds of perceptual shifts carry weight and hope.

Immersive, fun, and beautifully written, *The Light Eaters* rewards curiosity with delight. It entertains even as it transforms. You finish it feeling not only smarter, but more connected—to plants, to science, and to the living world.

Amy Lou Jenkins, BSN, MS, MFA, is an author and educator. If you want to write on behalf of the planet or offer a book for possible review, contact her at JackWalkerPress.com.

VOLUNTEER CORNER: LOCAL GROUPS

The Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter is proud to work with dedicated local groups across the state, each offering opportunities to get involved in environmental advocacy. **Whether you are interested in conservation, education, or grassroots organizing, there are many ways to volunteer your time and energy.** See the list below for the current top volunteer priorities from each of our local groups.

GREAT WATERS GROUP

The Great Waters Group is currently **seeking a volunteer to help coordinate and plan programs.** This position helps organize the group's public education programs, which take place six times per year. The volunteer would be responsible for gathering ideas for topics and speakers, outreach, and reserving a space for the events. On the day of each program, they would help check in attendees and introduce the speaker. No formal training is required, but organizational and communication skills are helpful. The time commitment averages around 5 hours/month, with more time needed when events are held. If you are interested, please email greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com

COULEE REGION GROUP

The Coulee Region Group is looking for a **volunteer to assist with the creation of a monthly newsletter.** This role includes helping to plan content, gathering information about upcoming events, learning about topics of interest, and listing calendar items from across the region. The volunteer would help format and assemble the final newsletter using Affinity or other desktop publishing software. Ideal volunteers will have writing/editing experience, attention to detail, and the ability to meet deadlines. Training and support will be given by the long time volunteer who currently designs and runs the newsletter. The time commitment is 2-4 hours per month. You can check out their newsletter at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/newsletters and, if you're interested, they would love to hear from you! Please email crsierraclub@gmail.com

SOUTHEAST GATEWAY GROUP

The Southeast Gateway Group is searching for **additional volunteers to support its long-standing Adopt-A-**

Highway clean up program

in Racine. Volunteers help collect trash along a mostly flat, one mile stretch of roadway, three times a year. Each session is about an hour and a half, and allows volunteers the chance to spend time outdoors, meet like-minded people, and contribute to a cleaner roadway. No special skills are required, and necessary supplies such as safety vests, bags, and tools will be provided. The next session is July 18th. If you're interested, please email Sandy at sandysunshine240@gmail.com or visit their website at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway/get-involved

CHIPPEWA VALLEY GROUP

The Chippewa Valley Group is currently looking for volunteers to energize their efforts! Start by getting involved in any one of their local conservation efforts. Some of the issues of focus include power plant siting, light pollution, ethanol plants, habitat protection and restoration, and wetland preservation. Volunteers interested in growing their involvement are encouraged to consider **servicing on the Chippewa Valley Executive Committee.** This role involves helping guide the group's operations and includes attending meetings, responding to emails, and assisting with outreach. The expected time commitment is approximately 2-3 hours (or more) per month. No specific skills are required except a willingness to collaborate and dedication to group efforts. If you are interested, please contact chippewa.valley.groupsc@gmail.com

FOX VALLEY GROUP

The Fox Valley Group is recruiting for **volunteers to support any of their conservation areas.** They work on protecting local water sources from Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), PCBs, and other threats such as the Skunk Hollow Mine. In addition,

climate change, expanding renewable energy, and supporting clean transportation in the Fox Valley are among their top priority issues. If you are interested in joining their efforts or learning more, please visit their website at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley or email fusierragroup@gmail.com

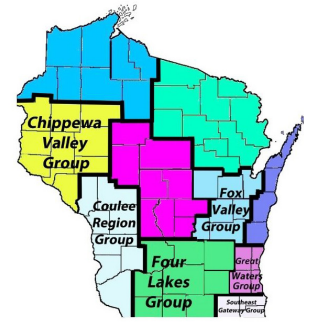
FOUR LAKES GROUP

The Four Lakes Group is currently in need of a **volunteer to help with planning and promoting programs and social events.** Leaders from the group would provide ongoing support and guidance to help an incoming volunteer understand what the Sierra Club issues are and what the goals are for each event. Those interested in event coordination are encouraged to reach out. The FLG is also looking for volunteers to help with writing/editing their newsletter and/or joining any of their conservation teams. If you are interested in learning more, please visit sierraclub.org/wisconsin/four-lakes/get-involved or email Don Ferber at d_ferber@sbcglobal.net

If you are interested in getting involved in any of these groups, the Sierra Club encourages you to reach out and take the first step towards making a difference. Every contribution matters, and dedicated volunteers are essential in protecting Wisconsin's environment.

Additionally, if none of these roles align with your interests, the Sierra Club is **always looking for outings leaders statewide.** Email Heather Wittrock at heather.wittrock@sierraclub.org for more information.

Sasha Livingwell
Chapter Volunteer



MINING THREATS TO OUR NATIONAL FOREST

GreenLight Metals (GLM) continues to drill exploration boreholes in the Bend copper deposit in Taylor County on the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest. A recent site visit revealed poor runoff management and deep rutting from vehicles driving off of temporary timber mats meant to protect the forest and intermittent wetlands. Several boreholes are to be drilled in wetlands but GLM has not yet applied for required wetland permits. Ideally, drilling in wetlands should only take place under frozen conditions but DNR did not require it. This drilling has been taking place on a 40-acre parcel where the surface is public land but the minerals are owned by the Soo Line Railroad.



GLM has submitted a new application for additional drilling of up to 25 holes at 28 sites including more drilling in wetlands. It states that its intent to only drill in winter in wetlands but allows that wetlands work could take place in other seasons. The Chapter filed joint comments with the Environmental Law and Policy Center, River Alliance of WI, and Wisconsin's Green Fire expressing our concerns poor management of the current drilling and for rare species at the site such as the wood turtles and northern goshawks. The comments were filed with both the DNR and the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Due to the expanded scope of the drilling and the amount of destruction including new roads, we pressed the federal agencies to expand their review and study of the drilling impacts. Previously the agencies had simply rubber stamped DNR's approvals. We believe the law requires the Forest Service to draft an environmental analysis prior to approvals. Both state and federal law give us almost no options to challenge decisions on exploration drilling but the agencies have incorporated a number of our comments into approvals so far. We and our partners will continue to watchdog and monitor the drilling and reclamation.

PHOTO CREDIT CATHERINE MCKENZIE



**“TRAFFIC JAM” AT THE PENSTEMON
NATIVE BEES SHARE FLOWER RESOURCES**

UPCOMING OUTINGS AND OUTDOOR EVENTS

As summer rolls in, it is the perfect time to plan an escape into the outdoors! Sierra Club outings leaders and local volunteers host events across the state that help connect people to nature and to other nature-lovers. See you outside!

JUNE

6/3, 9:30 - 11:30 AM – OBSERVATIONS IN NATURE

Join the **FOUR LAKES GROUP** as we take a little time to immerse ourselves in nature and enjoy an easy morning walk at the UW Arboretum.

6/6, 10:00 AM – POINT BEACH ICE AGE TRAIL

Join the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** for an 8-10 mile hike; contact Monny at mbjerstedt17@gmail.com or signup at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley

6/17, 10:00 - 11:00 AM – WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT FIELD TRIP

Join the **CHIPPEWA VALLEY GROUP** for a tour of Eau Claire's Wastewater plant. Registration is required.

JULY

7/7, 5:45 PM – BIKE WIOUWASH TRAIL

Join the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** for a ride along WIOUWASH Trail. Open to all ages and must have your own bike; for more information contact marjiefendt@gmail.com

7/8, 9:30 - 11:30 AM – OBSERVATIONS IN NATURE

Join the **FOUR LAKES GROUP** as we take a little time to immerse ourselves in nature and enjoy an easy morning walk at the UW Arboretum.

7/14 - 5:00 - 8:00PM – DE PERE BEER GARDEN SOCIAL EVENT

Hang out with the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** at Voyageur Park, 100 William St, De Pere, WI 54115. Registration not required.

7/18 - 3PM – EXPLORE LASLEY POINT ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE

Join the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** for a 2-3 mile hike at the Lasely Point Archaeological Site in Winneconne, WI. Contact Peter Jobe at pjobe1@gmail.com (use Subject: Sierra Club Lasley Outing) to sign up.

PHOTO CREDIT KATHERINE BELLOW

SIERRA CLUB WISCONSIN

AUGUST

8/1, 10:00 AM – WEQUOK FALLS HIKE-BROWN COUNTY

Join the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** for a nice hike by the falls at Wequioc-Falls Co Park and explore the nearby NEW Land Trust parcel. Optional lunch to follow. Contact Penny at pennybernardschaber@athenet.com to sign up.

8/5, 9:30 - 11:30 AM – OBSERVATIONS IN NATURE

Join the **FOUR LAKES GROUP** as we take a little time to immerse ourselves in nature and enjoy an easy morning walk at the UW Arboretum.

8/18 - 5:00 - 8:00 PM – DE PERE BEER GARDEN SOCIAL EVENT

Hang out with the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** at Voyageur Park, 100 William St, De Pere, WI 54115. Registration not required.

8/29, 9:00 PM – BIKE EISENBahn STATE TRAIL

Join the **FOX VALLEY GROUP** for a 17 mile scenic ride along an old railroad track from Eden to Kewaskum, WI. Contact Peter Jobe to sign up, pjobe1@gmail.com (use Subject: Sierra Club Eisenbahn Bike Ride)

SEPTEMBER

9/3, 5:30 PM – FALL KICKOFF POTLUCK PICNIC

Join the **CHIPPEWA VALLEY GROUP** at Braun's Bay Pavilion, Carson Park, 100 Carson Park Dr, Eau Claire, WI 54703, dub.sh/gPfcQi8

9/9, 9:30 - 11:30 AM – OBSERVATIONS IN NATURE

Join the **FOUR LAKES GROUP** as we take a little time to immerse ourselves in nature and enjoy an easy morning walk at the UW Arboretum.

TO REGISTER FOR AN EVENT, OR FOR THE MOST UP TO DATE INFORMATION and a current list of events, please visit the calendar on our website at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/calendar. If you have any questions or have trouble finding the link or registering online, please contact Heather Wittrock at the Chapter office (608) 256-0565.



SIERRA CLUB

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

754 Williamson Street

Madison, WI 53703

Our newsletter is printed on recycled paper

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CALENDAR

JUNE 1

National Sierra Club Award Nominations Due

sierraclub.org/awards

JUNE 4

Roadless Rule Town Hall

6:30-8:00 PM

Nicolet College, 5364 College Dr, Rhinelander, WI

JUNE 6-7

Free Fun Weekend

All WI state park admission fees, fishing licenses and trail passes waived
dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/parks/events

JUNE 7

National Trails Day

americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/

JUNE 19

Juneteenth

Office Closed

JUNE 25

Madison Volunteer Night

4:30 PM - 7:30 PM

754 Williamson St., Madison, WI

JULY 3

Office Closed

AUGUST 1

Chapter Executive Committee Nominations/ Applications Due

See page 11 for more information

AUGUST 15

Chapter Award Nominations Due

sierraclub.org/wisconsin/awards

AUGUST 18

Fall Primary

7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Find where to vote and what's on your ballot,
myvote.wi.gov

AUGUST 27

Madison Volunteer Night

4:30 PM - 7:30 PM

754 Williamson St., Madison, WI

SEPTEMBER 7

Labor Day

Office Closed

SEPTEMBER 26

National Public Lands Day

HERE ARE OTHER MILESTONES YOU SHOULD EXPECT TO SEE COMING UP:

- Team Sierra Fundraising Starts
- Volunteer Appreciation
- Chapter Awards
- Chapter Excom Elections

For the most up-to-date event information, visit our website at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/calendar. Any events that do not have a website listed can be found on our website calendar. For a list of Sierra club outings and events happening across Wisconsin see our Upcoming Events List on page 14-15.

OUR MEMBERS IN ACTION

FOX VALLEY GROUP ENVIRONMENTAL TOWN HALL

This spring the Fox Valley Group hosted an Environmental Town Hall to highlight the community's key environmental issues. Senator Kristin Dassler-Alfheim and Representative Lee Snodgrass listened to a number of participants and shared their reflections on the current legislative session and what they hope to see in the future. The issues brought up by the audience included reinstating Prove it First mining protections, regulating data centers, expanding public transit and pedestrian friendly infrastructure, protecting our waters, and ensuring a strong Knowles Nelson Stewardship program is funded.

