

Data Centers, Power Plants and Voicing Our Opinions

by Gloria Randall-Hewitt



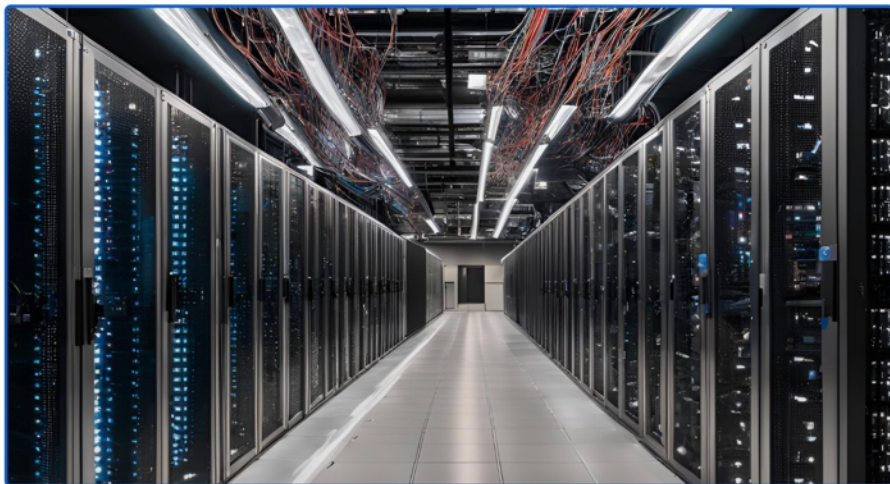
Gloria Randall-Hewitt testifying at a PSC hearing

According to a May 2026 report about a Spring Gallup poll, seven out of ten Americans oppose constructing data centers for artificial intelligence in their local area. When asked WHY they are opposed to data centers, 70% mentioned environmental impact of data centers, including excess water and energy consumption and higher utility costs. (https://news.gallup.com/poll/709772/americans-oppose-data-centers-area.aspx?utm_source)

After receiving an air quality alert from the DNR on June 3 for Racine, Kenosha and Walworth counties, I noticed that the DNR also offered some tips for Wisconsinites about how we can help improve air quality in our area, including advising us to travel “wisely”, make our homes more energy efficient, grow our own food, and get involved in the air permit approval process.

If you are also concerned about the impact to air quality, water use and energy prices of data centers and electricity plants to power them, between weeding your tomatoes and weatherizing your home, you will soon have the opportunity to express your concerns for some new proposed plants in Southeast Wisconsin.

Below is information about how to express your opinions to the Public Service Commission (PSC), which will be reviewing proposals for new gas-fired electricity plants in our part of the state. Keeping in mind that the Oak Creek Plant is now planning to put off retiring their coal fired plant until at least 2027, we now have proposals for **two new gas-powered electricity plants** to be built in Kenosha and in Walworth counties by a privately owned company, Invenergy.



Inside a data center - photo from www.sierraclub.org/issues/climate/data-centers

Per the PSC, non-utility power plant applicants, like Invenergy, are exempt from a “needs” test and from demonstrating how their engineering specifications are better than available alternatives. Described as peaker plants, Invenergy says these two plants would only be turned on during peak demand periods, like heat waves (or when hundreds of data servers turn on?)

WE Energies apparently feels the plants are needed, as it has proposed to purchase these plants from Invenergy. That purchase will also will need PSC approval.

(Ref: psc.wi.gov/Pages/CommissionActions/ConstructionProjectReviewal.aspx)

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GET INVOLVED ➡ START HERE!

SEGG GROUP OUTINGS: White River Trail Bike Ride Sunday July 12 at 1:00 PM



Join fellow SEGG club members for a nice, off-the-road, yet very comfortable bike ride from the center of the beautiful old town of Lyons. We will 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. Note: A \$5 trail pass is required.

Any kind of bike is suitable for this trail. It is an old railroad route connecting a few rural towns, at one time, helping farmers get crops and milk delivered to buyers. The bikes will allow us to outrun any mosquitos!

The trail roughly parallels and crosses the White River in Lyons, WI. We will be seeing old small towns, glacial formations, and we will have good views of the countryside.

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.

Canoe/Kayak Outing on the Fox River Sunday, August 23 at 1:00 PM

Bring your canoe or kayak to the County Hwy W access point on the Fox River, Kenosha County's largest river. Join fellow SEGG members for a relaxing 5.5 mile downriver float to the Fox River Park access point. There is no fee for this outing.

Meet at 1:00 pm at the Fox River County Hwy W access point (6400 328th Ave., Burlington, WI 53105) to drop off boats and decide who will park at the Fox River Park access point (29875 Silver Lake Road Burlington).

View the trail map at:
kenoshacountywi.gov/1737/Fox-River-Water-Trail

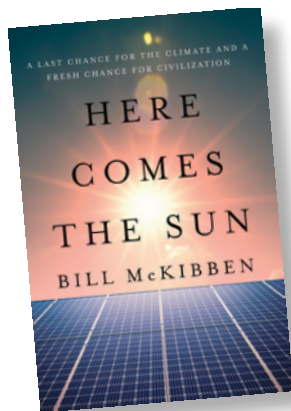


To sign up for either outing, please call or email Al Sommer at sommerallan4@gmail.com / 262-716-6955 so he can let you know if there is a cancellation due to dangerous conditions or bad weather

Join the Sierra Club Wisconsin Book Club!

Our Book Club meets virtually every other month to discuss a book related to climate change, nature, environmental justice, or equity in the outdoors.

Our next discussion is on Tuesday, August 4th from 6:30-7:30pm



We will be discussing *Here Comes the Sun*, by Bill McKibben. It tells the story of the sudden spike in power from the sun and wind and the desperate fight of the fossil fuel industry and their politicians to hold this new power at bay. From the everyday citizens who installed solar panels equal to a third of Pakistan's electric grid in a year to the world's sixth-largest economy - California - nearly halving its use of natural gas in the last two years, Bill McKibben traces the arrival of plentiful, inexpensive solar energy and he shows how solar power is more than just a path out of the climate crisis: it is a chance to reorder the world on saner and more humane grounds. You can't hoard solar energy or hold it in reserves—it's available to all.

Find our event page by searching "Sierra Club Wisconsin Book Club" on Facebook, or on the Sierra Club Wisconsin website. RSVP to receive the virtual meeting invite. Please join us for as many book club reads as you would like, and feel free to drop in even if you haven't finished the book or are only able to attend one discussion during the year. This year's books have been chosen by the Sierra Club Wisconsin Teams.

Questions? Contact Cassie at cassie.steiner@sierraclub.org and "see" you at our next discussion!

Sierra Club Wisconsin: Our Blog & Newsletter

Check us out at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/news and together we can restore Wisconsin's conservation tradition.

On **Our Blog**, you get the latest updates on current projects advancing environmental priorities. Recent blogposts include updates on the Line 5 Oil Pipeline, Data Centers, public land sales and more.

The quarterly **Sierran** newsletter is Wisconsin's voice for the Sierra Club, which is the nation's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. Our priorities are moving Wisconsin from coal to clean energy; moving from oil to clean transportation; blocking destructive mining; protecting water; and protecting native forests and wildlife.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY Join In & Be a Superhero!!

Looking for something fun and productive to do on a Saturday morning? Please come join us for our Adopt-A-Highway cleanup along Hwy 38 in Racine.

At our last cleanup in April, we collected 16 large bags of trash — a group record!

Our next cleanup dates are July 18 and October 17.

Meet at 9AM at 4949 Hwy 38 (SE corner of Hwy 38 and 4 Mile Rd) in the parking lot of what used to be a church and is now a private residence.

We are responsible for picking up trash along six sections of Highway 38 between the Hwy K roundabout and Six Mile Road. Ideally, we work in pairs with two people per section, so our goal is to have at least 12 volunteers. The project usually takes about an hour and a half and requires about a mile of walking per participant.

Inquiries to Sandy Christensen: sandysunshine240@gmail.com / 262-909-9171



Tour of Hawthorn Hollow Nature Sanctuary & Arboretum

Wednesday, August 19 at 6:00 pm
880 Green Bay Rd, Kenosha, WI 53144

Hawthorn Hollow is home to a diverse range of ecosystems across its 90-acre nature sanctuary, including wetlands, prairies, woodlands, and the Pike River floodplain. As stewards of this land, our goal is not only to create and maintain healthy natural communities, but also to address the challenges that threaten them.

During this guided tour, you'll learn about the history of our land, as well as the processes and ongoing challenges behind several of our restoration efforts. We'll discuss how changes in climate and land use practices have impacted the property, and explore the solutions being implemented to improve ecosystem health and resilience. Featured projects include our restored prairie, wetland restoration and flood mitigation efforts, ravine stabilization project, and our upcoming river restoration along a mile stretch of the Pike River.



Eco-Justice Center Agroforestry Event

Wednesday, September 16 at 6:00 pm
7133 Michna Rd, Racine, WI 53402

Join Alex, 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 alpacas. Whether you aspire to manage your own small farm or simply love chickens and goats, this farm tour has something for everyone.

Contact Laura Schulz to register for either tour at schulztwin2@gmail.com

Please note, these tours feature uneven terrain and are not fully handicap accessible.

Tours are free but a trail maintenance donation is appreciated.

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.

Only donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. Send checks to:

Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave, Racine, WI 53405 — THANK YOU!!!

Beware The LoneStar Tick! *by Karol Soto*

Every summer, people look forward to enjoying the outdoors and Mother Nature's scenic landscapes. However, the warm weather also has a negative side: tick season. In Wisconsin, tick season runs from April to September. We are familiar with the common black-legged tick (deer tick), which is considered worse than the American dog tick (the wood tick) because it carries Lyme disease. Often, tick species known to transmit Lyme disease are under-appreciated, and they are less of a public health concern. However, the Lone Star tick cannot be ignored, even though it does not carry Lyme disease. They carry various pathogens and other health risks, including Southern tick-associated rash illness, which is similar to Lyme disease.

Lone Star ticks date back to the 1750s, when they first reached the United States on the Eastern side, but they didn't persist because their main host, White-Tailed deer, declined in population. Fast forward to today, when the White-Tailed deer population is currently increasing, allowing the lone star tick population to repopulate and establish. The increase in host abundance, change in land use patterns, and change in climatic factors (shorter and milder winters) have recently allowed for the expansion of Lone Star ticks to move north from their common location in the eastern side of the United States.

Lone Star ticks get their name from the single white dot on the back of the female tick. It is harder to recognize a male lone star tick due to the lack of the white dot, but it is crucial to remember that they carry the same amount of diseases as the females. So, what is the concern over the lone star tick if they don't carry Lyme disease? As stated earlier, they carry other harmful diseases such as Heartland, Bourbon, Ehrlichiosis, and the one that is commonly discussed, Alpha-gal syndrome, commonly referred to as AGS. AGS is a condition characterized by immune reactions to the ingestion of mammalian meat, also known as "red meat allergy". Between 2010 and 2022, a total of 110,000 suspected cases of AGS were reported in the United States.

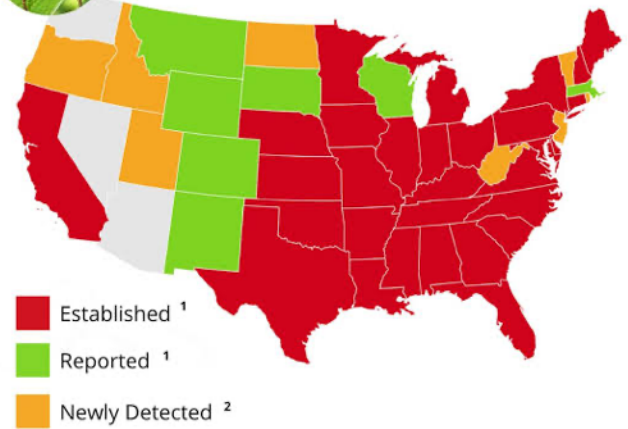
So what sets this tick species apart from the rest? Unlike other ticks, such as the Deer tick, lone star ticks do not wait for their host to move by; they actively seek hosts. This means that even with staying on trails when hiking or outdoors, there is still a high risk of finding a lone star tick on you. Carbon Dioxide and vibrations from host movement commonly attract them. Additionally, unlike deer ticks, all stages of the lone star tick can feed on humans; it is still worse when an adult tick bites one. One way to distinguish between adults and larvae is by counting their legs: adults have eight legs, and larvae have six. At last, it is worth noting the shape of the tick, as the lone star tick is known to be more oval and flatter.

Although it might seem like all is lost, there are ways to avoid encountering lone star ticks and ticks in general. It is still important to stay on clear paths while in wooded areas and to wear clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible, along with always checking for ticks after being outside. Although bug sprays such as DEET may help keep ticks away, there are also natural, more environmentally friendly alternatives. A 2024 study found that natural essential oils such as clove, geranium, oregano, and cedarwood are highly effective for contact repellency.

Meat allergy info at alphagalinformation.org / Tick species and diseases at mayoclinic.org use search word: Ticks
Visit the website cdc.gov/ticks for more info.



Lone Star Tick



¹ "Established" is defined as a county with either two life stages present or at least six individual ticks of any life stage. "Reported" is defined as at least one occurrence in a county of any recorded tick stage over the study period. (Springer et al 2014)
² Newly detected, and upgraded counties with *A. americanum* occurrence reported to TickSpotters photograph-based tick surveillance system between 2014 and 2019 as compared to previous published county status (Kopscio et al 2021)



HELP! I HAVE A TICK ON ME

The best way to remove a tick is with **fine-tipped tweezers**. Grip right where the mouthparts enter the skin, not the body, the head. Pull straight up, steady, no twisting, no jerking. It'll feel like it's resisting because it is, the mouthparts are barbed. Just keep the pressure on and it will let go in a few seconds. If a piece breaks off in the skin, leave it alone. Your body pushes splinters out. Digging around with a needle does more damage than the fragment ever would. Clean it with alcohol or soap. Wash your hands.

Now here's the part most people skip: **don't flush the tick**. Tape it to an index card. Clear packing tape right over the body, write the date and where on your body it was, and stick the card in a drawer. If you come down with anything weird in the next 30 days, rash, fever, joint pain, that flu-that-isn't-flu feeling, that tick goes with you to the doctor. Some labs will test the tick itself, which is faster and often more reliable than waiting for antibodies to show up in your own blood. A dated tick taped to a card is one of the most useful things you can hand a doctor who's trying to figure out what's wrong with you. Don't wait for a rash. Fewer than three out of four Lyme cases even produce the classic bullseye.



Data Centers, Power Plants and Voicing Our Opinions *Continued from page 1*

The two proposed plants are Foundry Ridge in Walworth County and Red Oak Ridge in Kenosha County. Both are being built by Invenergy. PSC info on these projects can be found at: psc.wi.gov

Click on Highlighted Cases to find an interactive map of all proposed projects throughout Wisconsin.

The Foundry Ridge Energy Center would be located near the intersection of I43 and Hwy 14 in the town of Darien. It will consist of three natural gas-fired single-cycle combustion turbines capable of generating up to 324 megawatts (MW). The PSC has scheduled in-person public hearings on **Thursday, July 16** at the Darien Public Library at 2 PM and 6 PM, or by zoom. Written comments will be accepted now until July 23 at: apps.psc.wi.gov

Docket #9835-CE-100 ask for approval to construct and operate the plant. Docket #6630-BS-103 asks for approval to purchase Foundry Ridge Energy Center by WE Energies.

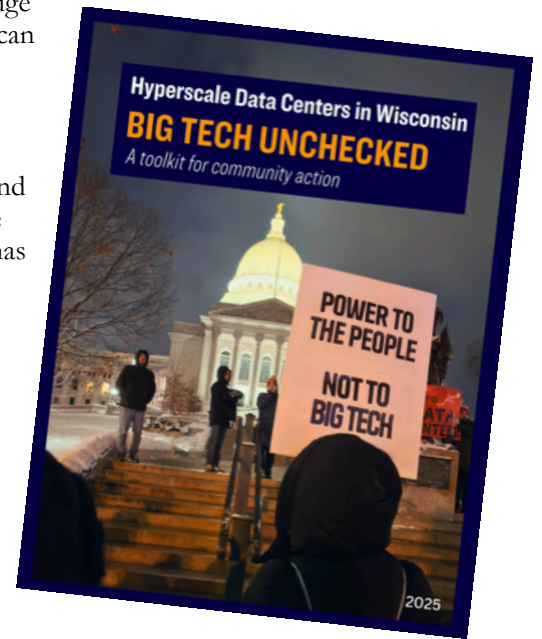
The Red Oak Ridge energy center would be in the Town of Paris in Kenosha County. This is NOT the same facility as the WE Energies Paris plant that was approved by the PSC last year. The proposed site for the Red Oak Ridge facility will be located adjacent to the West Frontage Rd on 120th Avenue between Burlington Rd (Hwy 142) and 12th Street (Cty Hwy E). Also a “peaker plant”, it would be capable of generating up to 1,210 MW.

Docket #9837-CE-100 is an application for construction and operation of this plant. Docket #3360-BS-104 is for the request by WE Energies to purchase Red Oak Ridge.

Public hearing will be held at the Paris Town Hall in Union Grove on July 23 at 2 PM and 6 PM and is also available by zoom. For comparison purposes on the impact of these two facilities on our air quality, there is an expert witness testimony report filed on the Foundry Ridge docket that states that the combined emissions from the Foundry Ridge and Red Oak Ridge energy centers would equal or exceed “all the fuel combustion from commercial and institutional sources in Kenosha County and Walworth County” and could lead to premature deaths and additional health problems.

It also states that “Red Oak Ridge would be the fifth largest by annual net generation and the second largest by nameplate capacity at 1,186 MW “ in Wisconsin. (Ref: apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFview/viewdoc.aspx?docid=593202)

To address our continued concern about rising electricity rates, the increase in gas powered electricity plants, with the health consequences plus the growth of data centers, Sierra Club has published a tool kit to help us learn about the issues and get involved in the permitting process. The toolkit can be found at: www.sierraclub.org/issues/climate/data-centers Scroll down to Resources at the bottom of the page and click on **Big Tech Unchecked: A Toolkit for Community Action**



Forest Bathing

is based on the Japanese practice, shinrin-yoku, which can be translated as “taking in the medicine or atmosphere of the forest.”

Surrounding yourself in an immersive experience amongst the trees can offer various health benefits such as reduced stress, improved mood, better sleep and spikes in creativity.

Forest bathing is a healthy antidote to our tech-saturated world. Thankfully we live in a state surrounded by forests. Hope you get a few “baths” in this summer.



Al Sommer (top left) and friends, both two and four-legged, did a little forest bathing while hiking on the Ice Age Trail in April.

Looking Ahead: October is Cranberry Time!

It may seem early to think about it now, but when you receive your next SEGG newsletter it will be time to place orders for our finest, plump, Wisconsin grown cranberries.

We expect the price to remain at \$4.25 per pound with delivery available.

Cranberries are packed with Vitamin C, manganese, and antioxidants that support immune and urinary tract health.

They're also perfect for the freezer!

Don't miss out!

Good News! Successful Reduction of Purple Loosestrife by Al Sommer

Years ago, purple loosestrife was a very invasive plant in marshy and wet areas competing very successfully against our own native marsh plants, like cattails and pondweed. Early in the 1900s, Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) was introduced to the US and Wisconsin, both accidentally and intentionally (it was thought the honey produced by bees pollinating the plants was very tasty). The plant was native to Eurasia where it had natural pests that kept it under some degree of control. When it was brought over to the US, none of the insects or diseases that kept it under control were brought along in sufficient numbers to limit its growth. Before 1995, in the US and in Wisconsin, it was common to see wetlands that were blanketed with purple loosestrife, exclusive of our native plants.



Now we have the **Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Program**, a practice of aquatic plant management (APM) for the wetland invasive plant purple loosestrife, that helps us manage the plant in a wide variety of locations without utilizing chemical herbicides. Biocontrol is the use of one species to manage another and is based on predator-prey relationships. The program relies on two small, leaf-eating beetles, *Galerucella californiensis* and *Galerucella pusilla*.

In Eurasia where the plant and beetles are native, the beetles' entire life cycle depends on purple loosestrife for feeding, egg laying and growing new generations. The beetles' activities stress the plant, keeping it smaller and producing less seed than it would without the beetles' presence. The plants in Eurasia are part of the native habitat and do not cause problems. However, when the plants arrived in North America, the beetles, weevils and other species that used them for food or shelter did not arrive with them. Purple loosestrife was able to grow to its full potential, as tall as seven feet, drop up to 2.7 million seeds per plant per season, and spread across multiple states and Canada.

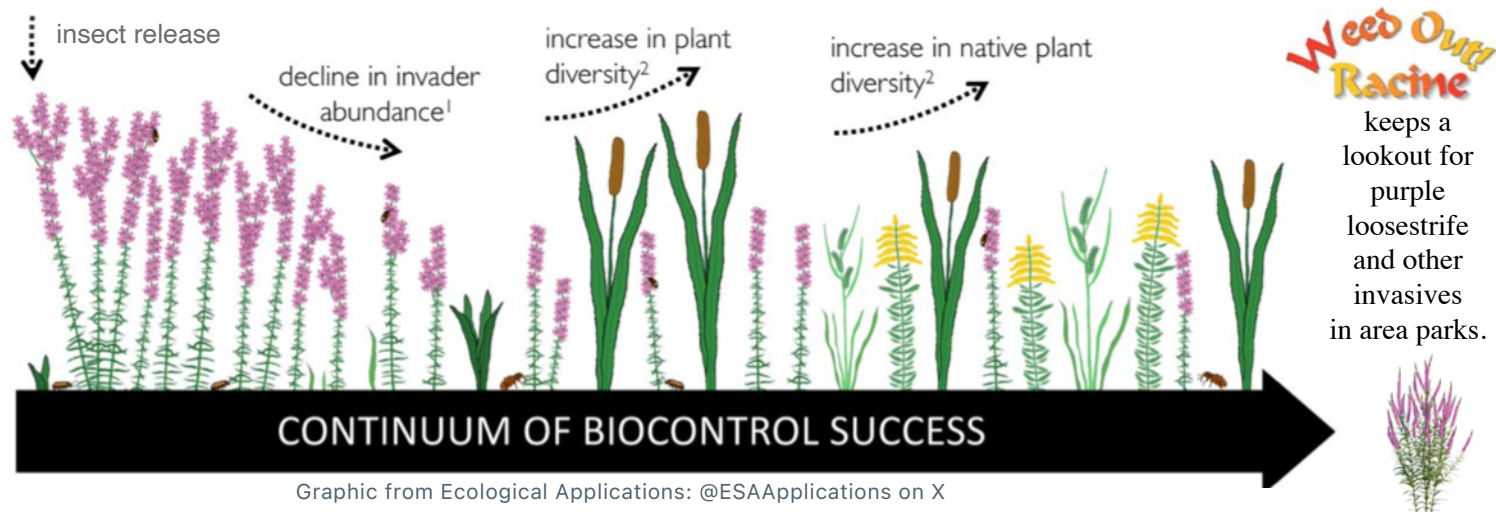


For decades, biocontrol has been utilized to control pests in agricultural settings as well as in natural settings. The first purple loosestrife beetles were released in Wisconsin in June 1994 and are now naturalized across the state, meaning they have become part of our ecosystem. Initially, the beetles had to be imported to North America, but professional aquatic invasive species (AIS) staff and volunteers have raised and released generations

of beetles for more than three decades. Even though beetles are now widespread, there are still areas with large populations of purple loosestrife that we want to control or that could use a "booster shot" of beetles now and then.

The beetles are known to travel up to 5.6 miles according to studies, and some observers report finding them much farther from known release sites. Their ability to fly to multiple patches of purple loosestrife make the beetles especially useful in areas where it's hard for people to get to the plants for digging or treating with chemicals, such as an expansive wetlands or wetlands along lake and river shorelines that are hard to safely reach by foot or boat.

Once enough beetles are introduced to an area, they can sustain themselves for many years, depending on site and weather conditions, and if enough purple loosestrife remains to support them. ♦



**SEGG is pleased to announce grant awards of \$500 each
to these great environmental organizations in our area:**

**The Racine Food Waste Composting Program
of Racine Interfaith Coalition (RIC)**

RIC's food waste composting program has collected and diverted over 13 tons of food waste from landfills since the program began in 2024.

This year, the group is starting a pilot program at Starbuck School in Racine with 4th graders to teach them about the benefits of composting food scraps. They will learn about how composting helps to reduce methane gas given off by decomposing food scraps and the ways that composted food is beneficial for soil health and gardening.



If you'd like to participate in composting your own household food scraps, you can sign up for the RIC composting program, administered by Compost Crusaders, which picks up from three drop off sites in Racine. The most recently added drop-off site is at First Baptist Church on Lathrop Avenue in Racine.

- Sign up to participate at www.compostcrusader.com
- Click on Services
- Select Self Drop
- Scroll down to Food Scrap Drop Off Locations in Racine
- Click on link and complete the sign-up form
- Press Submit

If you have difficulty, call Compost Crusader at (262) 394-6975, ext. 2 or email them at admin@compostcrusader.com.

**Weed Out! Racine's
Lower Colonial Park Restoration Program**

This is a comprehensive restoration strategy that integrates systemic invasive species removal along with re-establishment of native trees, shrubs and ground-layer forbs based on Wisconsin DNR approved restoration plan.

The project benefits the health of Colonial Park's overall eco-system, as well as the Root River which runs through the park. For the thousands of walkers, cyclists, birders and families who visit Colonial Park each year, the 75-acre park is an opportunity to interact with nature close to home.

SEGG's continued support of the project in Colonial Park has helped to restore the natural eco-system there, provides opportunities for community members to "be a part of" learning about and protecting our planet and investing in our local ecological system.

If you haven't visited Colonial Park recently, you may be surprised that this beautiful natural area is within the city limits of Racine.



For more information on Weed Out! Racine, the restoration of Colonial Park, and how you can get involved, please visit **weedoutracine.org**

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
Karol Soto..... karolsoto04@gmail.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



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Save a Tree & See in Color!

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