



## GREAT WATERS GROUP NEWSLETTER

WWW.GREATWATERSGROUP.ORG greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com

Spring 2021 NO. 1



*Protestors made their feelings known about the Canadian tar sands pipeline that would go through tribal lands in Minnesota if approved.  
Photo by Susan Simensky Bietila*

# Do your part to halt Canadian pipeline

*By Eric Hansen  
Conservation chair*

A historic confrontation has begun in Minnesota, one that may well become another Standing Rock. Enbridge, a notorious Canadian crude oil pipeline company, is attempting to begin construction on its tar sands pipeline 3 despite pending lawsuits and ferocious resistance by impacted tribal nations.

Novelist Louise Erdrich, who is a Chippewa tribal member, authored a New York Times op-ed – “Line 3, Not Just Another Pipeline” – that frames the story well:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/28/opinion/minnesota-line-3-enbridge-pipeline.html>

Like Standing Rock, the Line 3 issue has gone national. We want President Biden to stop Line 3. Help the campaign to stop Line 3 by:

1. Going to Minnesota if you are able.
2. Donating funds for legal defense
3. Visiting these sites for information: [stoline3.org](http://stoline3.org), [honorearth.org](http://honorearth.org) and [www.facebook.com/giniwcollective/](https://www.facebook.com/giniwcollective/),
4. Spreading the word and contacting public officials, including the petition at [addup.sierraclub.org](http://addup.sierraclub.org).

## Spring Programs

*Our monthly educational programs continue to be held online. You can register for the African American Environmental Pioneer Awards and other programs at <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar>*

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## Notes from the Chair

The first action of 2021 by the Great Waters Group Volunteer Leadership Council was a strategic planning meeting. While we are involved in various local issues, our two primary goals in the coming year are to work on mitigating climate change and to increase active participation of club members. These and all other group activities will be planned while keeping racial justice, equity and inclusiveness in mind.

One strategy we plan to use to work on climate change is to increase our partnerships with other local organizations working on the same goal. As the year progresses, you'll be hearing more about how we're going about accomplishing these goals.

I'm looking forward to being able to meet in person before the end of 2021. Until then, please keep signing up for our virtual events.

– Crystal Hoecherl



Filmmaker Debby Lee's movie "Microplastic Madness" tells the story of a group of fifth graders from Brooklyn, N.Y., who waged a campaign against single-use plastic in the cafeteria.

## Fifth graders show the way on plastics

Thanks to all who tuned in to our uplifting January movie, "Microplastic Madness," about 56 fifth graders in Brooklyn whose interdisciplinary study of plastics in our waters, homes and schools led them on an extraordinary plastic-free cafeteria campaign. Filmmaker Debby Lee Cohen joined the Great Waters Group for a thoughtful Q&A afterward.

If you're interested in showing the movie for a school or want more information about taking action on plastics, go to [www.cafeteriaculture.org](http://www.cafeteriaculture.org). Learn more about the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act of 2020 there or at [addup.sierraclub.org](http://addup.sierraclub.org).

The Great Waters Group also is pleased to announce that it has signed on as a member of the Plastic-Free MKE coalition. Check out the list of lake-friendly certified restaurants, bars and cafes and other resources at [www.plasticfreemke.org](http://www.plasticfreemke.org).

## Quality of life issues roil communities

By Rose Both  
Political Chair

It's easy to assume that municipal governments, being the most "local," are the most keenly responsive to the will of their constituents. But municipal politicians – members of city councils and county and village boards – are highly susceptible to pressure from the business community, often because they have close ties with local businesses and are themselves business owners.

What's happening in Franklin over the Strauss Brands "expansion" is a case in point. In October, the Common Council voted down Strauss Brands' bid to construct a 152,035-square-foot meatpacking plant at West Loomis Road and Monarch Drive, next to the proposed Ryan Meadows subdivision. The site now includes wetlands and is adjacent to a conservancy area. Bald eagles are routinely sighted there.

In November, the Franklin Common Council reversed its decision, with Mayor Steve Olson providing a tie-breaking vote in favor of the project. It all came down to Ald. Shari Hanneman, who changed her vote because, she told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, she "got taken to the woodshed" by constituents.

Those "constituents" were likely members of the Franklin Business Consortium, who said in an open letter that public meetings on the development were "detrimental to the health and future of Franklin businesses and thus the citizens of Franklin." The letter further threatened that some businesses considering expansion in Franklin were now "questioning our trust in the city."

According to a complaint filed in December by Franklin Community Advocates, the proposed slaughterhouse raises  
(Continued on page 8)

# Task Force set for strong 2021

By Linda Frank  
Committee Representative

The City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity heads into 2021 poised for strong results. New energy and direction are evident following the appointment of the city's Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO) director, Erick Shambarger, as project manager for the Task Force, and the approval of a project charter drafted by Shambarger and the county's sustainability director, Gordie Bennett.

In the joint resolutions that launched this effort, the city and county legislative bodies charged the Task Force with developing recommendations for achieving a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions community-wide by 2030 and achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

This includes reducing longstanding racial and income inequality, particularly through the targeting of living wage green job opportunities to underserved populations. The Task Force recommendations will call for the creation of a Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan, with a draft plan due by July 2022, according to the new timeline.

The Task Force has just created a new set of 10 working groups that will contribute to the plan. Each working group is chaired by a Task Force member and includes one or more additional Task Force members, as well as other stakeholders who apply to join. Working groups cover such topics as Green Buildings, Transportation, Jobs and Equity, and Land Use, Urban Agriculture and Reforestation.

Several members of the Sierra Club's Great Waters Group and Wisconsin Chapter have signed on to a working group, and members are still being added. A great way to apply to join a working group or receive updates is to click the link on the ECO Task Force webpage (search for Climate Plan – City of Milwaukee).

A major accomplishment of the Task Force has been the completion of the first-ever citywide greenhouse gas inventory. The inventory shows that the largest contributors to emissions in the city are the production of electricity from fossil fuels and the energy demands of commercial and residential buildings, followed by internal combustion engine vehicles, with a much smaller portion attributable to waste and wastewater.

Recently, We Energies announced the planned closing of several coal plants and construction of renewable energy infrastructure, with a stated goal of reducing its emissions 70% by 2030. Preliminary indications are that achievement of the utility's stated goals could bring the Milwaukee community halfway toward accomplishing our 2030 target.

*(Continued on page 5)*



*You can make a virtual visit to Glacier National Park.*

## Join our virtual outings

While we are still isolated from one another and unable to go on any in-person Sierra Club outings, we would like to extend an invitation to join us for virtual outings via Zoom.

Twice a month, we plan to share a video of trips to National Parks and other interesting places, and make space for discussion during and after the video. Please visit the Great Waters Group website for specific dates and times. ([sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters](https://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters)).

## Toxic waste project needs environmental study

By Eric Hansen  
Conservation chair

Waste Management Wisconsin wants to exhume a buried toxic waste dump at its Menominee Falls landfill. That material is so toxic that it has Superfund status.

Common sense tells us that the risks involved require the rigorous examination, study and reflection of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Speak up for common sense and a citizen's right to know. Write the DNR. Insist that an EIS is the only reasonable path forward.

See [www.weal.org](http://www.weal.org), the website of the Waukesha County Environmental Action League, to learn more about how to effectively ask the DNR for an EIS.



*Intrepid hikers like these will experience the healing powers of nature when they gather safely on Feb. 20 for a hike at Havenwoods State Forest.*

*Photo by Anne Stadler Vailancourt*

# Nearby Nature plans Healing Hike

*By David Thomas  
Nearby Nature chair*

Nearby Nature is an environmental justice and equity initiative that focuses on building a healthier, resilient community by connecting with nature. On Saturday, Feb. 20, at noon at Havenwoods State Forest, Nearby Nature is hosting a guided “Healing Hike.”

The event is especially geared to help participants experience the healing effects of nature by walking and pausing for brief meditative moments. It will be led by Nearby Nature staff members Martina Patterson and Steven Hunter.

Participants are expected to follow COVID-19 protocols, wearing face masks and keeping six feet of social distance. Dress for the weather with sturdy winter boots. Information and RSVP on [Facebook.com/NearbyNatureMKE](https://www.facebook.com/NearbyNatureMKE)

## Youth programs restarted

Nearby Nature continues to fund environmental education programs in youth serving agencies. After a long hiatus due to COVID-19, programs have restarted at Lighthouse Youth Center. In the fall, the program restarted with 100% outdoor activities. Now with colder weather and early sunsets, the program has shifted to a hybrid online/in-person model.

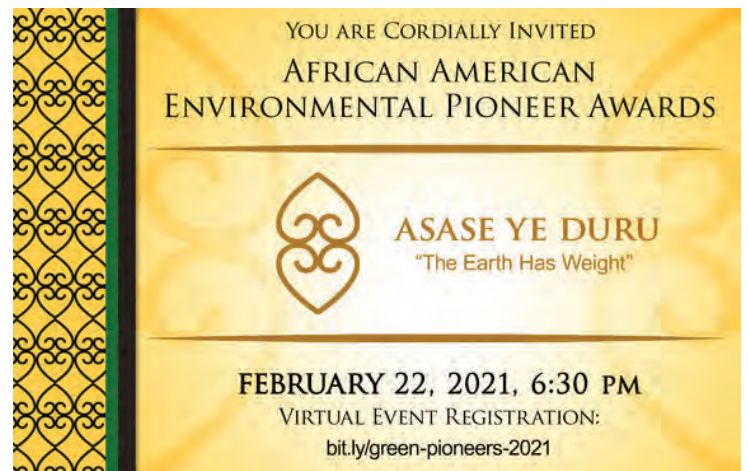
People interested in supporting this work are encouraged to go to the crowdfunding page: [ioby.org/project/nearby-nature-milwaukee](https://ioby.org/project/nearby-nature-milwaukee)

# Unlearning circles target racism

The year 2020 witnessed a shift in the conversation around systemic racism in the environmental movement. We recognize dismantling white supremacy does not happen without active engagement in anti-racism work.

The Great Waters Group, Nearby Nature and others are in talks with environmental activist Mandi McAlister of [hummingbirdmke.com](https://hummingbirdmke.com) to form “unlearning circles.” These will be peer-guided groups that will use the book “Me and White Supremacy” by Layla Saad..

For now, we have a pre-signup form at on the calendar at [greatwatersgroup.org](https://greatwatersgroup.org). If you sign up, you’ll be the first to know when the circles start to form.



*To learn more about our Feb. 22 program, co-sponsored with Nearby Nature, see the description on page 7.*

# GWG virtual party owes success to many

Thanks to all who attended and supported our Virtual Great Waters Group Holiday Party and Fundraiser on Dec. 6. It was fun to “see” you all there. If you missed it, check out the photos on our Facebook page.

Special thanks to the team who made this virtual event possible and to Patty & Craig for entertaining us with their music. (You can learn more about them at [pattycraig.com](http://pattycraig.com).) We hope we’ll be able to meet in person at the 2021 party.

Thanks, too, to everyone who contributed to our 50 for 50 fundraiser celebrating the Great Waters Group’s 50th anniversary. We surpassed our goal. As promised, we are splitting the proceeds with Nearby Nature, which works for environmental justice in Milwaukee.

We know there is still a lot of work to be done in promoting equity and protecting the environment, and thanks to all of you we will be able to continue that work.



*Is this Santa Claus or Dan Buckler? It was hard to tell at the Virtual Holiday Party.*

## Task force stresses equity

*(Continued from page 3)*

To keep moving forward with its work, the Task Force has established a regular meeting time of every other Wednesday from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. The latest meeting was Jan. 20. Task Force meetings are open to the public, and meeting details can easily be found with the search words “City of Milwaukee calendar climate.”

Spring 2021



*Bob and Carol Diggelman served as chair and secretary/treasurer when GWG was formed in 1970. Their continuing work was honored at December’s Virtual Holiday Party.*

## Diggelmans’ service earns Founders Award

*By Ed Anderson  
Membership Chair*

The Great Waters Group recognized the work of the Group’s early leaders with the presentation of the Founders Award to Bob and Carol Diggelman at the Virtual Holiday Party.

Back in 1970 when the Group first formed, they were our first chair and secretary/treasurer, and they shepherded the group as it got off the ground. Both have remained active Sierra Club members.

Many may know Bob from his canoe clinics and from the canoe trips he has led over the years with the River Touring Section.

Carol has served on numerous state environmental commissions, is active with the League of Women Voters environmental efforts, and is currently working with the American Society of Engineers addressing infrastructure needs, especially the need to replace lead pipes in our drinking water systems.

We appreciate their efforts and the work of all our leaders and activists over the last 50 years.

# Court deals setback to Michigan mine

By Eric Hansen  
Conservation Chair

Mine opponents won a key, but not yet final, victory against the proposed Back 40 Mine when a Michigan judge revoked the mine's wetland permit. That ruling found that the groundwater model presented by mine promoters Aquila Resources was not sufficient to protect wetlands.

See Wisconsin Public Radio's story for further details  
<https://www.wpr.org/michigan-judge-denies-permit-back-forty->

[mine-banks-menominee-river](#)

The Back 40 metallic sulfide mine proposal would place a mammoth open pit mine near Stephenson, Michigan, a stone's throw inland from the Menominee River. Mine waste would threaten the river, Lake Michigan and Menominee Nation burial sites downstream, and other sacred sites.

See the Coalition to Save the Menominee River's web page to learn more and find out about ways to take action:  
<https://jointherivercoalition.org>.

## Lincoln Creek cleanup planned for Earth Day

We hope to celebrate Earth Day by partnering with Milwaukee Riverkeeper to conduct river and stream cleanups throughout the city on Saturday, April 24. Nearby Nature plans to continue cleaning up on Lincoln Creek at N. 35th and W. Congress streets.

Registration will be in small groups of 10 or fewer that will abide by all COVID-19 safety guidelines. Social distancing and mask wearing will be required. We also hope to continue our tradition of helping out at the Urban Ecology Center at Washington Park. Check the Great Waters Group web calendar and Facebook page for updates.

Of course, participation in all future events depends on community and personal safety concerns. If we cannot meet in person, plan to do a cleanup or Earth Day activity safely with your household.



*Young environmentalist stand ready to help when GWG joins Milwaukee Riverkeeper in their river and stream cleanups on Earth Day.*

### Volunteer Leadership Council (VLC) Contact List

Crystal Hoecherl, Chair [choecherl@yahoo.com](mailto:choecherl@yahoo.com), 414-614-3034  
Jennifer Abel, Vice-Chair and Program Chair [jabel20@gmail.com](mailto:jabel20@gmail.com)  
Jane Schneider, Treasurer [janes0502@yahoo.com](mailto:janes0502@yahoo.com)  
Rose Both, JMC Delegate, Political Chair [rboth@wi.rr.cim](mailto:rboth@wi.rr.cim)  
Veronica Bell, Outings Co-Chair [mabellmela@gmail.com](mailto:mabellmela@gmail.com)  
Eric Hansen, Conservation Chair [ehansen@wi.rr.com](mailto:ehansen@wi.rr.com)  
Von Roberts, Trails Chair [vroberts47@gmail.com](mailto:vroberts47@gmail.com)  
Christine Zapf, Volunteer Chair and Hospitality Chair [zapfchristine@sbcglobal.net](mailto:zapfchristine@sbcglobal.net)  
Ed Anderson, Membership Chair [maidenlakewisconsin@yahoo.com](mailto:maidenlakewisconsin@yahoo.com)  
Janet Anderson, Communication Team [janeta16@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janeta16@sbcglobal.net)  
Bill Baurecht, Emeritus [wbaurecht@gmail.com](mailto:wbaurecht@gmail.com)  
Dan Buckler, Outings Co-Chair, Communication Team [daniel.c.buckler@gmail.com](mailto:daniel.c.buckler@gmail.com)  
Karen Samelson, Publicity Chair, Communication Team [teamsamelson16@gmail.com](mailto:teamsamelson16@gmail.com)  
David Thomas, Nearby Nature Chair, Communication Team [david@thomerwald.net](mailto:david@thomerwald.net)  
Dale Hofmann, Newsletter Editor [dhofmannntosa@yahoo.com](mailto:dhofmannntosa@yahoo.com)

## Walk evokes mindfulness

"It was a curious scene for a snowless week before Christmas in Wisconsin: Some two dozen people, masked, distanced and bundled up for warmth, stood spread out in a wooded glade in Havenwoods State Forest with their eyes closed. "Notice all your senses," coached dancer Jenni Reinke.

The event was a "Winter Mindfulness Walk" organized by Reinke, lead artist with ArtWorks Environmental Arts Program. This is an excerpt from Jeff Grygny's article about a beautiful event. Read more at [playonmke.com/every-tree-has-its-own-energy/](http://playonmke.com/every-tree-has-its-own-energy/)

# Executive Committee welcomes new members

Many thanks to all who voted in our Executive Committee election. The following people were welcomed back onto the committee or began their first two-year term:

Bill Baurecht    Veronica Bell    Dan Buckler  
Linda Frank    Kali Hoefert    Crystal Hoecherl

They will be joining these members who are in the middle of their two-year terms on the ExCom:

Jenny Abel    Eric Hansen    Chris Zapf

The GWG ExCom makes decisions on the Group's activities and operations. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer leader with the Group, please contact one of the members.

## Election is opportunity

*By Eric Hansen  
Conservation Chair*

Run-off election results from Georgia moved control of the US Senate to Democrats, increasing the opportunities for a Green New Deal. Sen. Bernie Sanders is expected to become the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, and Joe Biden is President.

Now is the time to push for bold action to defeat COVID-19 and rebuild our country and planet for a sustainable future. See [350.org](http://350.org) and [sierraclub.org](http://sierraclub.org) to learn about ways to take action.



*Steven Hunter will bring a smile and a love of the outdoors to Nearby Nature.*

## Nearby Nature adds Steven Hunter to staff

Steven Hunter has joined the staff of Nearby Nature to expand the work and boost our green space equity efforts. Our fall 2020 survey showed strong interest in increasing connections to nature in Milwaukee's central city.

We want to include hiking, snowshoeing, biking, paddling, and camping as well as service projects such as tree planting and clean-ups in 2021. An Outdoor Expo that was planned for April of 2020 was canceled, so we hope to revive this event by fall. We have a small committee planning these events but there is room for more. Let us know if you want to get involved in planning.

## Spring Programs

*(Continued from page 1)*

**Milwaukee African American Environmental Pioneer Awards**  
*Monday, Feb. 22, 6:30-8:30 p.m.*

In honor of Black History Month, we will present our second annual event to honor those in Milwaukee's African American community working for a better environment. People of color have been involved in the movement for environmental justice for many years but often have not been recognized for their work.

The program includes music, arts and culture in addition to the award ceremony. Last year we held an inspiring event at the Wisconsin Black History Society and Museum and honored 11 individuals for their pioneering efforts in Milwaukee's environmental community. Due to COVID-19, this will be an online event. To get the Zoom link, you must register in advance at [sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar](http://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar).

In addition to honoring "Pioneers," this year's awards will be inter-generational, as seven young "Rising Stars" are among the nominees. Another special attraction will be an appearance by Dahveed

Nelson, the pioneering Harlem poet and member of the Last Poets, credited for work that led to the emergence of hip-hop. Questions should be addressed to [contact@nearbynaturemke.org](mailto:contact@nearbynaturemke.org).

**Milwaukee, Get the Lead Out**  
*Monday, March 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m.*

Learn about the lead issue in Milwaukee from a panel of local experts. They'll talk about the levels of lead in our water, paint and soil, discuss lead abatement efforts that are underway, and offer ideas of things that we can do to raise awareness of these issues and help make our communities safe from the harmful health effects of lead.

**May 17:** Hear from local experts about Project Drawdown. The project's mission is to "help the world reach 'Drawdown'—the point when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline, thereby stopping catastrophic climate change as quickly, safely and equitably as possible." A third expert will update us on the Joint City County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity.



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for Our Families, For Our Future*

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## Quality of life issues roil communities

*(Continued from page 2)*

zoning concerns because of its proximity to a residential neighborhood. The complaint also alleges that Strauss Brands representatives engaged in a “vigorous” lobbying campaign with city politicians and even “met in secret” with Olson, resulting in open meetings violations.

Secret meetings and backstairs dealings are also a concern in Fond du Lac where residents were blindsided by the Alternate Master Plan introduced by the Common Council last spring, which detailed new plans for Lakeside Park that changed the Master Plan in place.

The city’s famed 400-acre Lakeside Park is now at risk. Designed in 1899 by O.C. Simmonds, it features four islands and a lighthouse peninsula and took nearly 30 years to complete.

The developers plan to locate a privately owned restaurant on the peninsula and create an amphitheater and “multi-purpose building” along with ample parking, in an area whose mature trees and historic lighthouse are treasured by many residents.

A new group called Friends of Lakeside Park gathered

thousands of signatures on petitions opposing the proposed development. The Friends wanted voters to decide the issue and called for a referendum.

“The city declared our legally binding petitions without merit because it had already engaged in a contract with the developers. We decided to challenge that decision in court,” said Rich Norenberg, a Friends member. The developers have formed a group called Lakeside Forward, which is now suing Friends of Lakeside Park for monetary damages if the project doesn’t go forward.

Sadly, residents who want to have an influence on important development decisions made by their cities and towns are being forced to resort to filing legal actions. These residents are often accused of adhering to NIMBY-ism. But what better place to take action than your own backyard?

