



**GREAT WATERS GROUP
NEWSLETTER**

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Fall 2022 NO. 3



Sister Janet Weyker addressed a news conference at We Energies headquarters, where the Clean Power Coalition demanded that the utility retire its Oak Creek coal-burning plant. Participants included (from left) organizer Keviea Guiden, Milwaukee County Supervisor Steven Shea, state Sen. Chris Larson and Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter Director Elizabeth Ward.

Photo by Daniel Folkman

Don't delay coal plant closures

The Clean Power Coalition, including the Sierra Club, hosted a news conference outside We Energies in Milwaukee last month to say that the delay of coal plant closures is wrong for Wisconsin.

Proof of that can be found in research from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission.

Every two years the PSC publishes a Strategic Energy Assessment to evaluate the current and future electricity supply. The PSC just released this year's draft, which shows that Wisconsin's electricity generation capacity in 2021 and 2022 consistently had the ability to make more electricity than would be needed to power our state, even under extreme conditions like prolonged heat waves.

So why have many media outlets run stories questioning the reliability of Wisconsin's electric grid? These stories are inaccurately representing a different recent report showing that the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) could face peak capacity shortfalls beginning this summer in its northern and central U.S. regions.

It's true that one or two zones within its footprint have generation reserve margins at or below MISO's liking, but those zones lie

Fall Programs

We have a great lineup of monthly programs for 2022-23, and we hope you'll join us – in person. Check our E-letters, website and Facebook for details and changes, and register for the programs at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar to get updates. Masks and possibly vaccinations required.

Indian Community School Connections to Mother Earth
Monday, Sept. 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Milwaukee Indian Community School,
10405 W. St. Martins Road, Franklin

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Notes from the Chair

The work of environmental activists can seem thankless and daunting at times, especially in the face of recent setbacks. Among those are the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling prohibiting the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gas emissions from power plants; the state Supreme Court's decision to deny standing to Friends of the Black River Forest, a group that has long been fighting to protect Kohler-Andrae State Park from development; and the announcements by Alliant Energy and We Energies of plans to delay the retirement of coal plants in the state.

Rather than being crushed by these events, it's more important than ever to band together and work to create the future we want to see.

Many opportunities exist to join forces with fellow Sierra Club volunteers in activism and fellowship. Our monthly programs return in September with chances to learn about sustainability efforts at the Indian Community School in Franklin and efforts to protect Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs in Ozaukee County.

Our popular outings started up again in May and continue into the fall with hikes and more at area parks. The energy burden work group is trying to ensure that the state's Focus on Energy program addresses the needs of predominantly Black and Latinx Milwaukee residents who spend a disproportionate amount of their incomes on electricity and gas bills.

Among many other things, Nearby Nature works to restore and protect Lincoln Creek to make it an inviting space for neighbors to gather. And our friends at the Wisconsin Chapter host a volunteer night via Zoom on the second Wednesday of every month to work on things like letters to the editor, data entry, social media posts and graphic design.

Even in the midst of gloomy news, there are myriad ways we can join forces to enjoy and protect our planet. Reach out to anyone on the Great Waters Group Volunteer Leadership Council to help build a sustainable future.

*Jenny Abel
GWG Chair*

Nominations welcome for Exec Committee

Do you care about environmental issues and wish you could do more about them? We have an opportunity for you!

The Executive Committee of the Great Waters Group, which covers Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties, is an elected board of Sierra Club volunteers who meet about nine times a year to determine Group priorities and policy. Our ExCom members take an active part with a committee as part of their volunteer commitment. We expect to have three openings, which are for two-year terms.

A nominee must be a member in good standing of the Sierra Club and the Great Waters Group and must give consent.

If you are interested in becoming a member of our ExCom or in nominating someone, please contact Jenny Abel at jabel209@gmail.com by Sept. 24. Want to wade in more slowly? Join any of our Volunteer Coordination, Conservation, Political, Communication or Fundraising Teams. Email us at greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com.

Volunteer Leadership Council Contact List

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Get pensions out of fossil fuels

A new grassroots group of Wisconsin Retirement System members is campaigning to get their retirement savings out of fossil fuels. If you are a member of the Wisconsin Retirement System, please sign and share this petition asking the State of Wisconsin Investment Board to divest at bit.ly/CSPWPetition.

Don't delay closures

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well south of Wisconsin. In short, there is no reliability crisis in Wisconsin today. And there won't be in 2023, with 500 MW of solar and wind generation coming online by next July.

This narrative shift opened the door for utilities to announce delays to coal plant retirements as if they were for the public good. In June, WEC Energy Group and Alliant Energy announced they will delay the retirement of three of Wisconsin's largest coal plants, the South Oak Creek plant near Racine, Columbia in Portage and Edgewater in Sheboygan County, by 12 to 18 months.

To quote Michael Vickerman of RENEW Wisconsin, "This announcement underscores the risks involved in putting all of our clean energy eggs in the utilities' basket." Though utility-scale wind and solar are a necessary component of the clean energy transition, without regulatory and legal requirements, utilities can back out of their promises to meet Wisconsin's ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

Wisconsinites deserve lawmakers who take emissions reduction legislation seriously. We deserve utilities that keep their promises to make changes supporting health and safety. We deserve investments in energy-efficiency measures that keep electricity prices low, especially for low-income households. We will continue to fight for that future for our state.

Print newsletter will continue

Thanks to everyone who responded to our recent survey about the Great Waters Group's printed newsletter. Not surprisingly, the people who answered by mail preferred keeping a print newsletter, whereas the majority of those who filled out the online survey preferred moving to an online newsletter.

Of the 25 total who responded, about half would prefer an online newsletter instead of the quarterly printed newsletter.

We aren't making any changes in the near future: Most respondents said they read almost all the issues and said they use the printed newsletter more to get information about upcoming programs. At this point, an opt-in online newsletter wouldn't necessarily save money or our volunteers' time. We will try other options to conserve money, paper and time, including reducing the number of pages to four.

In addition, we don't have email addresses for all members, and more than half of respondents said they don't receive the monthly E-letter.

Get the E-letter

If you're not receiving the E-letter (which usually arrives the first Monday of the month) and want to get updated information on programs, outings and activist events, please go to your account at www.sierraclub.org or check your preferences at the bottom of any Sierra Club email where it says "manage preferences" and make sure you've clicked *Wisconsin Chp Great Waters Group Updates* under Local Subscriptions.

Questions? Email greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com.

Full slate of outings scheduled through fall

The Great Waters Group outings program continues this fall with a variety of opportunities to learn about and commune with nature, meet fellow environmentalists and pack some miles in before bringing out the skis. More outings will be announced later. For updates, details and registration, visit www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar.

Aug. 27 – Hiking the Badertscher Preserve in Muskego

Aug. 27 – Lincoln Creek Cleanup

Aug. 28 – Kayaking the Milwaukee River (new date)

Sept. 24 – Big Tree Exploring at Seminary Woods in St. Francis

Oct. 22 – Hiking Price Park Conservancy in Elkhorn

Nov. 12 – Rambling at the Mequon Nature Preserve

Fall 2022



Sierrans enjoyed the camaraderie and fresh air at the Hoyt Park beer garden in Wauwatosa in July. Beer garden gatherings are scheduled through October.

GWG volunteers headed to Germantown event

The Great Waters Group is heading to Germantown on Thursday, Aug. 25, to staff the beer garden as a fundraiser and membership recruitment effort, especially for Washington and Waukesha County residents.

The Park and Recreation Department's Music in the Pavilion series takes place at the Gehl's Performing Arts Pavilion in Firemen's Park, W162-N11870 Park Ave., Germantown. The beer garden opens at 6 p.m., and music by the Screaming Cucumbers, an area cover band, runs from 7 to 9 p.m. Food trucks will also be available. Please join us.

Join us at the beer gardens

Want to meet like-minded people, learn what GWG is doing and enjoy an evening outside? Drop by from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and join us as at any of our beer garden events as we support Milwaukee County parks.

Look for updates in our monthly E-letter, [Facebook.com/SierraClubGWG](https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubGWG), www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters or call (262) 236-5623. You can join us on:

Wednesday, Aug. 24 at Hubbard Park, Shorewood

Thursday, Sept. 22 at South Shore Park, Bay View (tentative)

Wednesday, Oct. 19 at Estabrook Park, Shorewood (tentative)

**Support the environment
VOTE NOV. 8**



Protect America's Environment for Our Families, For Our Future

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Fall Programs

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Come experience the Milwaukee Indian Community School's oak savannah, prairie, and wetlands and hear how the school creates learning experiences for Native students rooted in indigenous values and connection to all of creation. The presentation by Head of School Jason Dropik will start inside and end with a walk around the school grounds.

Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs update

Monday, Oct. 17, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Location to be determined, possibly on Zoom

The Ozaukee County Planning & Parks Department, in partnership with Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, has been raising funds for years to buy undisturbed Lake Michigan shoreline and natural areas known as the Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs. However, the project hit a snag when an anonymous objection blocked Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds. Director of Planning and Parks Andrew Struck will give an update on this preservation project as well as his 1,000-mile (Bicycle) Ride for Lake Michigan to raise funds for this and two other projects.

Environmental Justice Matters III – A National and Local Focus

Monday, Nov. 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Central United Methodist Church, 639 N. 25th St. at Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee

“Think Globally – Act Locally” is an activist's mantra, so we've

invited local activists to share what other national environmental organizations are doing in our area. Panelists include Lamont Smith of The Nature Conservancy and Milton Byers II of Audubon Great Lakes – Wild Indigo. Both are African American Environmental Pioneer Award honorees. We'll also provide updates on other environmental justice initiatives.

Save the date for GWG party

The holidays are coming ... faster than we'd like. We are assessing whether we can safely hold a traditional Holiday Party and have the volunteers to organize it.

We are considering holding an outdoor event instead, such as a bonfire or hike, and asking for donations instead of organizing a silent auction. Since COVID-19 canceled the dinner and auction for two years, our bank account is shrinking, and we need your continued support to pay for this newsletter and our programs!

Hold this date: Sunday, Dec. 4, at Wil-O-Way in Wauwatosa, or more likely at an outdoor shelter. Look for updates via the E-letter, website and Facebook.

If you have ideas or preferences or would like to help, please email greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com.