



GREAT WATERS GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2020 NO. 3



Crude oil train s passing through heavily populated areas pose a growing threat to everyone who lives near the tracks they use, especially since a federal judge has ordered the closing of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Photo by Citizens Acting for Rail Safety

Oil train danger may be growing

*By Eric Hansen
Conservation Chair*

A ferocious explosion and fire shook the community of Lac Megantic, Quebec, in Canada during the pre-dawn hours of July 6, 2013. A crude oil train that had previously passed through Waukesha and Milwaukee counties had derailed, creating a catastrophe that took the lives of 47 citizens.

It could have been us. It could have been any of the nearby communities that the crude oil trains traveling on Canadian Pacific railroad tracks pass through: Walker's Point in Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, Pewaukee or Watertown.

Seven years after the Lac Megantic oil spill and fire, the damage
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to the residents, and local waters and environment, lingers.

Crude oil trains are inherently dangerous. Now, with a federal judge ordering the Dakota Access Pipeline to shut down, the oil transport industry is preparing for a possible resurgence in oil by rail shipments.

DeSmog Blog's Justin Mikulka authored an analysis of the implications of these new oil industry developments in an article titled "Return of the Bomb Trains." Local oil train activists from the Milwaukee and Watertown chapters of Citizens Acting for Rail Safety first met Mikulka at the 2015 Oil Train Response Conference in Pittsburgh, and they value his insights.

To read Mikulka's new article, go to www.desmogblog.com/2020/07/12/return-bakken-bomb-trains.

Notes from the Chair

It's an understatement to say this spring has been unlike any other in my life. The current health situation has shown me both the best and worst of people. I choose to focus on the best.

I know that people have been out collecting trash and pulling garlic mustard on their own, in lieu of organized events. Thank you.

I've seen the Great Waters Group Volunteer Leadership Council pull together and work even harder than before. This is saying a lot, as our leadership team has been a highly motivated, hard-working group for as long as I've been involved, and I'm guessing for many years before.

We've been meeting online, which I find is a more tiring way to

get things done. We've worked to keep communications going, make plans for virtual beer gardens, find ways to celebrate the GWG's 50th anniversary, hold educational program meetings virtually, increase our efforts toward equity and generally keep the work of the GWG moving forward even while Sierra Club events can't be held in person.

One positive for me personally: I've been working extra hard to hike and bike outside in an effort not to sit at my computer all day, so I've seen species of flowers and birds that I haven't noticed before because I wasn't in the right time or place. It was an extra special treat watching my four-year-old nephew discover several species of tiny frogs while walking in the woods Up North. I hope you've found some delightful surprises, too.

Stay safe, and enjoy the outdoors as much as you are able!
Crystal Hoecherl



Hiking and biking provide a welcome relief from the shut-in world of Covid-19. Sights like these wild white indigo at Spirit Lake are waiting for you to take a break from your computer.

GWG Zooming into anniversary fete

By Ed Anderson
Membership Chair

This is a big year for the Great Waters Group. In September we will celebrate 50 years of fighting for the environment, getting people outdoors, and creating lifelong friendships and fond memories.

We were planning a large celebration for our 50th anniversary, but COVID-19 has made such gatherings impossible. We hope to have

a proper party when it's safe, but for now we are kicking off the celebration of this milestone by holding a beer garden party on Zoom at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 10. Please join us. You can share your favorite club memories and outings.

Sign up at greatwatersgroup.org to get the Zoom link and further details.

The Wisconsin Sierra Club (John Muir Chapter) broke off from
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GWG will host three sessions on anti-racism

In response to the national discussion on racism in America, the Great Waters Group is hosting a three-part Zoom series on Building an Anti-Racist Environmental Movement. The Thursday workshops will begin on Sept. 24 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and continue on Oct. 1 and Oct. 8. Registrants are asked to commit to all three sessions, if possible.

This is an intensive three-week series of two-hour anti-racism workshops that grew, in part, out of last October's "On The Table" discussion on Environmental Justice and Equity. At that discussion participants agreed that the environmental movement cannot continue to be splintered by the same racial divisions that divide Milwaukee into hyper-segregated communities. This workshop series is intended to address the problems and help participants learn how to break patterns and begin systemic change.

Our facilitator, August Ball, a recognized professional in anti-bias training, will facilitate the series. The class size is limited, so sign up early. Registrants will receive the Zoom link the week before the event.

It's free to attend, but participants will be invited to donate to offset the workshop costs. The program is funded in part by GWG and grants from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Mosaic.

For more information, contact David Thomas at david@thomerwald.net or (414) 344-1044.



Maybe by winter GWG can host outings like this trip to St. Peter's Dome in Ashland, WI, again. But in the meantime there are many nearby sights to enjoy.

Summer outings canceled

In light of the current pandemic and the increased cases seen across the country as of July 16, all Sierra Club outings, including those by the Great Waters Group, are canceled through September 30.

While we are just as sad as you are that we are not able to host any outings, it is of course vitally important to reduce the chances of spreading COVID-19. We hope that you are still able to explore our beautiful nearby places.

Fall Programs

Despite the pandemic, the Great Waters Group will offer a full suite of monthly programs starting in September. The first several will be held virtually via Zoom, and we also are carrying forward a few from the spring that had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

Here is the lineup for the first few months of our program season.

How to Build a Multicultural Environmental Organization

Sept. 24, Oct. 1 and 8; 6-8 p.m., online

In a departure from our usual third Monday of the month format, we will have a three-session program beginning

Thursday, Sept. 24. The official title is "Building an Anti-Racist Environmental Movement - Workshop Series," and we are fortunate to have August Ball of Cream City Conservation & Consulting facilitating this valuable opportunity to learn and reflect. This series was planned for March, but had to be canceled due to COVID-19. The event will take place via Zoom from 6-8 p.m. on three consecutive Thursdays. Registration is required at www.greatwaters-group.org.

Forest Preservation: Kohler-Andrae State Park

Oct. 19, 6:30-8:30, location TBD

This presentation was originally scheduled for May at the

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Menominee River faces fresh danger

By Eric Hansen
Conservation Chair

American Rivers, a national organization that defends our country's waterways, declared the Menominee River to be one of the nation's 10 most endangered rivers in April. This is the second time in four years that the Menominee River is on that endangered list.

Aquila Resources, a Canadian mining exploration company, is seeking permits for a massive metallic sulfide mine project next to the river near Stephenson, Mich., barely inside the Michigan border. A long stretch of the Menominee River defines the state border between northeast Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula

Those mining proposals have met ferocious resistance from tribes and citizens on both sides of the Menominee River.

American Rivers commented, "This mine poses an unacceptable risk to the Menominee River and Lake Michigan. We cannot allow mine tailings to demolish the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin's sacred sites or send toxic waste into drinking water supplies, potentially risking millions of people."

For more information about the Menominee River, the growing coalition defending it, and what you can do to help these righteous efforts, see the Coalition to SAVE the Menominee River's website, jointherivercoalition.org.



The beauty of the Menominee River where it runs between northeast Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula is endangered once more by mining interests. They must be stopped.

Mining plans pose threat to Wolf River

By Eric Hansen
Conservation Chair

Wisconsinites defeated an attempt to create a dangerous metallic sulfide mine at Crandon, near the headwaters of the Wolf River, in a 27-year-long campaign that ended in 2003. A powerful coalition of tribes, anglers and common-sense conservationists prevailed over mine promoters that included Exxon, then one of the largest corporations on the planet.

Today, there is a new mining threat to the headwaters of the Wolf River. Badger Minerals, a Michigan-based subsidiary

of a Canadian mining company, began exploratory drilling in early June. That drilling is only the first step in any potential mining project, but it is an ominous one.

The key concern is the drilling seeks rock core samples in a sulfide rock band that may contain copper, silver, gold or lead. Because of the sulfides, any mining would release sulfuric acid, a dangerous pollutant that turns rivers orange.

Help protect the Wolf River, one of Wisconsin's most beloved waterways. Learn more about this renewed mining threat and the history of successful resistance to mine proposals along the Wolf River at wolfriveractioncommittee.com.

Nearby Nature works for equity

By David Thomas
Nearby Nature Chair

Despite social distancing, racial equity work is still essential and must continue. The tragic, violent murder of George Floyd has sparked an important national dialogue on race and racism. The environmental justice principles underlying the Nearby Nature Milwaukee project appear more important than ever.

While the youth outdoors programs have been suspended since March, the project is looking at ways to restart a limited program to get youth outdoors. In January, the Nearby Nature project hired Martina Patterson, an accomplished fabric artist and youth educator, to prepare for launching new youth outdoor education programs with an arts angle.

In March, of course, everything came to a screeching halt. Youth centers were closed along with everything else. Like many other organizations and businesses, Nearby Nature had to figure out how to continue. Martina agreed to try to create videos that can inspire kids to learn about the natural world during social distancing.

Nearby Nature, which operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Milwaukee Environmental Consortium, was fortunate to get a small technology grant to help equip efforts to support remote learning. At this juncture, we feel it might also be safe to start venturing out in small groups, taking precautions while taking kids out for carefully organized neighborhood outings.

The volunteer board has realized the need to either expand the program and hire a project manager or face other difficult options. Foundation funders are giving us tremendous flexibility to get



Litter never rests, even during a pandemic, but you can stay ahead of it as evidenced by this collection at the Sanctuary Woods in Wauwatosa.

through the crisis, but we still rely on and desperately need private donations.

In 2020-'21 a generous grant from the James E. Dutton Foundation has promised to match all personal contributions up to \$10,000. To try to reach this goal, Nearby Nature has set up a crowdfunding page with IOBY.org, an acronym for "In Our Back Yards," which supports grass-roots nonprofit fundraising with low costs.



Martina Patterson

To support Nearby Nature's environmental justice work, you can donate at www.bit.ly/nn-mke-funding.

Nearby Nature co-sponsors DIY Cleanup on Saturday, Aug. 15

An important step in being a good ally to the Black community is to show up and be ready to work. Nearby Nature is planning a socially distant cleanup on its adopted section of Lincoln Creek in partnership with Northwest Side Community Development Corporation. Bring your own gloves, water and snack. Sanitized buckets, trash pickers and bags will be available. Please wear a mask and maintain a proper, safe distance from others. (Note that this is not a Sierra Club activity.) DIY Cleanup is on Saturday, Aug 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at 35th and Congress by the Bee Bus sign .

Holiday party date's the same, but the format may be different

We do intend to hold the Great Waters Group annual Holiday Party, but we're just not quite sure what form it will take. It's more likely to be virtual than in person. We have special plans to use this year's party to help celebrate the GWG's fiftieth anniversary.

We expect to keep the date of Sunday, Dec. 6, so mark your calendar. Watch for details in the next newsletter and in the monthly e-letter. If you have ideas of what you would or wouldn't like to see, drop us a line at greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com.





While most spring clean-ups were canceled, you can still go out on your own and pick up trash while exploring local parks such as the Monarch Way station in Lincoln Park.

Anniversary fete scheduled on Zoom

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the Great Lakes Chapter in 1960, but no other local groups were formed until the Great Waters Group was officially created on Sept. 10, 1970. At that time, it was called the Southeast Group and included all of southeastern Wisconsin, not just Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington Counties.

Regional groups were established to supplement the state chapter's work and concentrate on local conservation and environmental needs. Issues of the day keep evolving, but the first committees 50 years ago addressed returnable bottles and snowmobiles.

The John Muir Chapter was advocating for the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, which was established in 1970. Climate change was not on the radar at that point. The first group meetings were held at Hubbard Lodge in Shorewood.

Fortunately, our first Chairman Bob Diggelman, Vice Chair Ron Horn, Treasurer Carol Diggelman and a number of other early leaders, including Dave Wehnes and Bill Beverly, are still with us today. Many of you may remember going on canoe outings with Bob Diggelman.

My first outing with the Sierra Club was with Bob leading a memorable trip down the Wisconsin River where he introduced my six-year-old son to the joys of canoeing and the outdoors. We owe a debt of gratitude to these people and the numerous dedicated leaders and activists who followed and shepherded GWG over the years. Thank you!

Richards' work was invaluable

The Great Waters Group would like to extend its heartfelt thanks for the years of environmental work by Barbara Richards, who has left the group for greener pastures – literally.

Barbara, who has been the conservation chair as well as the newsletter chair for the past two and half years, has moved to acreage near La Crosse where she can live her values and grow her own food.



Barbara Richards

A retired Milwaukee Public Schools Montessori teacher, she has represented the Sierra Club on the Milwaukee City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity and has presented an update to the GWG for the May program. Linda Frank, an environmental attorney and John Muir Chapter ExCom member, is the new task force representative.

Barbara has been a huge advocate for public transit, leading by example by traveling throughout the city by bus or bicycle. She made a point of wearing her bike helmet at news conferences on oil train safety. She has also been a key supporter of the GWG's anti-bias work and has been involved in countless organizations and actions tied to justice, transit and local food in addition to being an advocate for a downtown food forest.

While it will be impossible to replace Barbara's passion and knowledge, writer and activist Eric Hansen has agreed to be the conservation chair. We are still searching for a newsletter chair – if you're interested, drop us a line at greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com.

Volunteers are welcome

The Great Waters Group offers opportunities for members to use their skills to pursue their environmental goals. These include both leadership opportunities and participating on committees. If you're interested in any of the following, or even if you don't see what you'd like to work on, please contact a member of the VLC.

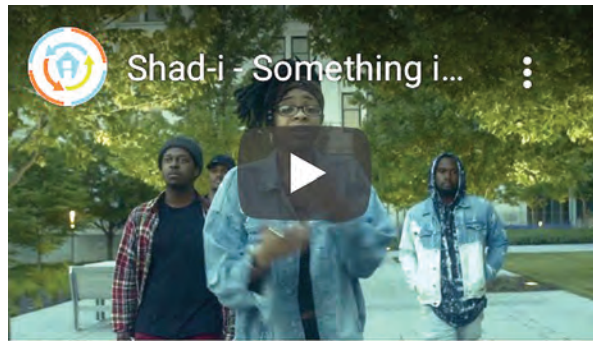
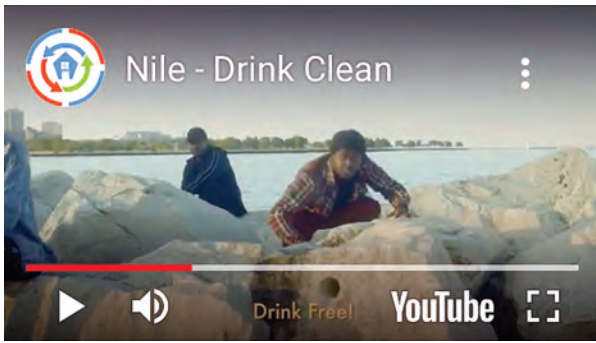
Newsletter Chair – Collects articles and coordinates the process of those articles becoming our quarterly newsletter.

Membership Chair – Welcomes new members and helps them connect with other members.

Fundraising Chair – Coordinates fundraising to help us meet our goals.

Executive Committee Members – Work together to make GWG decisions and provide leadership.

Each of the above can also use more committee members. So can the conservation, political and communication committees.



The Milwaukee Repertory Theater is one of the community partners working with the Coalition on Lead Emergency. It recently sponsored four hip-hop videos starring young people from the Amani Neighborhood.

COLE strives to get the lead out of water

By Karen Samelson
Publicity Chair

Since the water crisis in Flint, Mich., awareness has grown dramatically about the prevalence of environmental lead and the serious health problems it creates, especially to the development of children under six. The Coalition on Lead Emergency, or COLE, strives to eliminate lead exposure from water, paint and soil in Milwaukee.

COLE has a new website with a variety of resources. The Milwaukee Health Department, 16th Street Health and the Social Development Commission collaborated to create tools on reducing exposure to environmental lead that include tips on selecting a water filter, protecting your child in the summer and healthy eating.

GWG members to continue virtual beer garden Aug. 13

Miss seeing other environmentalists? Join us online Aug. 13 at 5:30 p.m. for another virtual beer garden gathering from the comfort of your own home or yard. This is a great way to meet like-minded people, learn more about the Great Waters Group and connect with Sierra Club friends.

Sign up at www.greatwatersgroup.org, and we'll email you the Zoom link. Drop in any time between 5:30 and 7 p.m. This month's conversation starter: Share something new you're doing for the environment or for racial justice while sheltering at home. We wish we could gather in person, but for health reasons we are sticking to Zoom – where we won't get rained out!

COLE is also working to engage a broad range of community partners. The Milwaukee Repertory Theater recently sponsored four hip-hop videos featuring youth from the Amani neighborhood.

To learn more about lead and see the inspiring videos, go to coalitiononleademergency.org or COLE's Facebook page.

Volunteer Leadership Council (VLC) Contact List

- Crystal Hoecherl, Chair 414-614-3034
- Jennifer Abel, Vice-Chair and Program Chair 571-305-3821
- Angelina Burkholder, Secretary 574-354-0773
- Jane Schneider, Treasurer 262-391-7502
- Rose Both, JMC Delegate and Political Chair 262-751-4802
- Veronica Bell, Outings Co-Chair 414-202-6219
- Eric Hansen, Conservation Chair 414-332-20038
- Von Roberts, Trails Chair
- Christine Zapf, Volunteer Chair and Hospitality Chair 414-429-8069
- Ed Anderson, Membership Chair 414-520-2751
- Dan Buckler, Outings Co-Chair, Communication Team 330-261-2088
- Karen Samelson, Publicity Chair, Communication Team, 414-481-1596
- David Thomas, Nearby Nature Chair, Communication Team 414-810-2286
- Janet Anderson, Facebook Administrator 414-258-5624
- Bill Baurecht, Emeritus 414-882-7218
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for Our Families, For Our Future*

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Fall Programs

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West Allis Public Library. Stay tuned to see if it will be in person or online. The Friends of the Black River Forest will talk about their work “to oppose the construction of a golf course within the Black River Forest and to promote the preservation of the integrity of that river, its wetlands, the forest and the adjoining Lake Michigan shore as an ecological whole.”

Reducing Food Waste Panel Presentation

Nov. 16, 6:30-8:30, location TBD

A panel of local activists and entrepreneurs will talk about the problem of food waste in our region and the groups working to combat it. They will talk about their efforts to reduce food waste and what we as consumers can do in our own lives to reduce the amount of food we throw away. Please join the following panelists for this exciting program: Sami Avner, Tikkun Ha-Ir; Marion Ecks, Kompost Kids; Christie Melby-Gibbons, Tricklebee Café; and Sophia Torrijos, Friedens Community Ministries.

December Holiday Party

Stay tuned for more details.

We will share details about January-May 2021 programs in a future newsletter. Please mark your calendars for Feb. 15 for our second recognition and celebration of Milwaukee Environmental Pioneers of Color.

Other topics that were highly ranked in programming discussions were:

- *Tour Wisconsin's (only) National Park(s)*
- *Update on the Lead Crisis in Milwaukee*

Don't forget to vote

Are you registered to vote? The primary election is Tuesday, Aug. 11. The general election is Nov. 3.

You can check whether you are registered and request an absentee ballot at Myvote.wi.gov, or you can call 414-VOTE-WIS. The Disability Rights Voter Hotline is 1-844-347-8683.

Voting this year is more important than ever!