



**GREAT WATERS GROUP
NEWSLETTER**

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com

Spring 2022 NO. 1



These first African American environmental pioneers were honored in 2020. The third group will be honored Feb. 21.

Photo by Yvonne Kemp

Environmental pioneers to be honored

Honoring Black History Month, the third annual African American Environmental Pioneer Awards on Feb. 21 will recognize those in Milwaukee’s African American community working for a better environment. In the past two years this program, co-sponsored by the Great Waters Group, has recognized 25 community members for their environmental contributions.

People of color have been involved in the movement for environmental justice for many years but are often not recognized for that work. This celebration, which will honor 11 awardees in 2022, seeks to change that.

This memorable event had hoped to return to the Wisconsin Black

History Society/Museum, but COVID-19 levels may limit the in-person event to awardees and speakers. We hope you’ll join us on Zoom instead. Put 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 21, on your calendar and register now at www.bit.ly/green-pioneers-2022 to get updates and the Zoom link.

The celebration is sponsored by a coalition of groups that includes Nearby Nature Milwaukee, Century City Triangle Neighborhood Association, Green & Healthy Communities LLC and Urban Ecology Center – Washington Park.

In 2020, the event featured Ko-Thi African drummers, spoken-

(Continued on page 6)

Notes from the Chair

By the time this newsletter reaches your mailbox, 2022 will be well underway, but I wanted to take this opportunity to look back at what the Great Waters Group did in 2021 and share our priorities for 2022. Despite a raging pandemic, GWG accomplished a lot in 2021. Here are just a few highlights.

- We contributed to the Energy Burden report that was released in April highlighting how residents in majority Black and Latinx Milwaukee neighborhoods have to spend disproportionately more of their income on energy costs than those in majority white neighborhoods. You can read the report by searching in your browser for Sierra Club Milwaukee Energy Burden Report.
- We successfully advocated for \$2 million in Milwaukee City ARPA funding to be allocated to energy-efficiency improvements in low-income homes in the city.
- We co-hosted the second annual African American Environmental Pioneers Awards ceremony where we recognized more than a dozen leaders, innovators and emerging activists. Plan to attend the third annual awards ceremony Feb. 21.
- Editorials written by our conservation chair, Eric Hansen, helped shed light on the Line 3 pipeline in Minnesota and the efforts by water protectors and Native communities.
- We are an active member in a coalition of other local organizations led by Mandi McAllister of HummingbirdMKE to build a multicultural environmental movement.
- The activism of members like you led to We Energies pledging that all of its energy generation will be coal-free by 2035.
- We led monthly programs on issues like the lead emergency, Project Drawdown, the health of Milwaukee's

rivers and plastics pollution.

- We continued our partnership with Nearby Nature through events such as a camping expo, river clean-ups, and hikes and paddles in the 30th St. corridor and Lincoln Creek area.
- We continued our fight to prevent the building of a golf course at Kohler-Andrae State Park.

At a January planning retreat (held online for safety, of course), the GWG Volunteer Leadership Council selected our priorities for 2022.

1. We will focus on combating climate change by partnering with other local environmental organizations, addressing issues that affect Milwaukee (e.g., flooding, energy burden and the expansion of I-94) and working to slow and reverse habitat destruction.
2. We will strive to organize many more outings than we did in the past two years because COVID-19 limited in-person gatherings. Be on the lookout for notices of hikes and other outdoor events.
3. We will ensure that all of our work is in line with the new set of values recently released by Sierra Club at the national level. These values include anti-racism, justice, collaboration and transformation. We will pursue these values by continuing to be part of efforts to build a multicultural environmental movement and by supporting efforts like the Every Kid Outdoors Act.

We look forward to seeing you at monthly programs, outings and other GWG events in 2022 as we work to realize these priorities. If you'd like to help bring these priorities to life, please get in touch with any VLC member. Thanks for being part of GWG!

Jenny Abel

Mayoral election a key to fair, green future

*By Rose Both
Political Chair*

The Milwaukee City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity has set ambitious goals, including a 45% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and a 100% reduction by 2050. Last March, the city announced plans to build a solar array that will be one of the largest in Milwaukee.

This is a watershed moment in the city's history, one that could make Milwaukee a national leader in green jobs and affordable, clean-energy housing for city residents. Tom Barrett is gone, and seven candidates are campaigning for

the job of Milwaukee mayor. The next mayor will be a critical figure in implementing Greater Milwaukee's plans for a future that is both green and fair.

As a member of the Great Waters Group, you are in a position of influence. What do you want to ask the mayoral candidates? Your questions will help guide us in putting together the Sierra Club's candidate endorsement questionnaire in advance of the April 5 election.

Send your ideas to GWG's political chair at rboth@gmail.com and help the Great Waters Group be part of the local solution to the climate crisis.



This winter scene near Gordon and Riverside Parks is one of the striking urban nature vistas by photographer Eddee Daniel, who will talk about the wealth of nature in the Milwaukee River Greenway on March 21.

Spring Programs

A hike or even a walk in public green space in all seasons calms and gives us energy. We relax when we're in nature, whether we're alone or with family and friends. Our presenters will show us natural places all around us close to home. Nature heals.

Bill Baurecht, Programs

African American Environmental Pioneer Awards

Monday, Feb. 21, 6:30 p.m.

Join us as we honor those in Milwaukee's African American community working for a better environment. See related story and register at www.bit.ly/green-pioneers-2022 for the Zoom link.

Experience the Wealth of Nature in the Milwaukee River Greenway

*Monday, March 21, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wauwatosa Public Library, 7635 W North Ave, Wauwatosa**

Eddee Daniel, the founder of A Wealth of Nature website and photographer of the urban wilderness, will guide us through the surprises and beauty of the natural landscape within the city that are illustrated in his photographs of the urban wilderness along the Milwaukee River.

* Proof of vaccination and masks required. We may switch to Zoom if needed for safety; please register at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters to get updates.

Earth Day activities

Saturday, April 23

Honor the Earth in various ways. Join us for a cleanup on Lincoln Creek. See related story.

Raising a Child in Nature

Monday, May 16, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Urban Ecology Center – Riverside Park, 1500 E. Park Place, Milwaukee

Matt Flower, an environmental educator at the Urban Ecology Center, will explain how parents can ensure that their children don't suffer "nature deficit disorder" by taking kids to observe and feel the benefits of the natural world from an early age to begin their life-long journey of environmental appreciation.

This event will be outdoors at UEC – Riverside Park. Registration recommended.

In this challenging time of anxiety, nature and springtime will help us on our journey of hope and renewal.

Charges should be dropped

Hundreds of water protectors were arrested at construction sites when Canadian oil pipeline company Enbridge was completing its environmentally damaging Line 3 tar sands pipeline. They are patriots, not criminals, and charges against them need to be dropped.

Enbridge was four years behind schedule when its pipeline became operational in late 2021, thanks to massive resistance by citizens who acted to defend water, treaty rights and a livable planet. Write and call Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Attorney General Keith Ellison and insist that justice be done.

To take action, see www.dropline3charges.com.

To view noted musician Jackson Browne's tribute to the Line 3 water protectors, see "I Am A Patriot" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji7SWpiZgrw.

Highway expansion not prescription for fair transit

By Victoria Gillet
Conservation Chair

I am very excited to be the Great Waters Group's new conservation chair. I am also a primary care physician in Milwaukee. I got into medicine to help people who are suffering. I advocate for environmental justice solutions because there is only so much I can do to help my patients from my exam room.

Highway expansion, like the project currently proposed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for I-94 and the Stadium Interchange, is NOT an environmental justice solution.

More than 50,000 people die prematurely each year in the U.S. because of exposure to vehicle emissions. Road pollution causes stillbirths, preterm births, delayed cognitive development in children, asthma, heart attacks, cancer, strokes and dementia. It is not right that just breathing air can hurt our health.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Many other forms of transportation exist, and not only are they better for our air, using them is better for our bodies. So many of my patients want to know what they can do to stay healthy and avoid taking medications, and my answer is always the same: Exercise.

Exercising at least 150 minutes a week adds up to five years



Conservation Chair Victoria Gillet demonstrated her preferred and much healthier alternative to auto travel.

of your life. But when the closest park is on the other side of a highway and you're priced out of even a YMCA gym membership, exercise can be hard to find.

Honestly, the only reason I can follow my own exercise advice is because I am a bicycle commuter. When I practiced in Madison, I recommended that my patients do the same. Now I do not. Disconnected cycling infrastructure, disintegrating roads and dangerously fast traffic means that for most of my patients a bike ride is neither feasible nor safe.

Better bicycle infrastructure would give patients the ability to make healthy choices. Better public transit also benefits public health, because individuals who use public transportation get more than three times the amount of physical activity per day than those who don't.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation says that the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation's popular "Fix at Six" alternative to the proposed I-94 eight-lane expansion is so expensive that it will leave only around \$70 million for alternative transportation investments, rather than the initially predicted roughly half-billion-dollar difference. It is hard not to fear that this funding increase projection was specifically engineered to undermine expansion alternatives.

All of this is to say that when I list things my patients need to live better, healthier lives, I have never included "bigger highways." But that list does include cleaner air, more active transportation and decreased greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the worst consequences of climate change. I-94 expansion does nothing to help my patients. Milwaukee deserves better.

Volunteer Leadership Council (VLC) Contact List

Jenny Abel, Chair: jabel209@gmail.com
Bill Baurecht, Vice Chair: wbaurecht@gmail.com
Scott Coulthurst, Secretary: scott.coulthurst@olympusgrp.com
Jane Schneider, Treasurer: janes0502@gmail.com
Veronica Bell: mabellmela@gmail.com
Rose Both, Political Chair: rboth@wi.rr.com
Dan Buckler, Membership Chair: daniel.c.buckler@gmail.com
Linda Frank, Chapter Delegate: linda@frankenvironmental.com
Victoria Gillet, Conservation Chair: torrig@gmail.com
Marco Marquez, Outings Chair: marco@acespace.org
Von Roberts, Trails Chair: vroberts47@gmail.com
Jasmine Viges, Programs Chair: jasmine.viges@gmail.com
Karen Samelson, Publicity Chair, Newsletter Chair, Communication Team: ksamelson16@gmail.com
David Thomas, Equity Chair, Communication Team: david@thomerwald.net
Janet Anderson, Communication Team: janeta16@sbcglobal.net
Dale Hofmann, Newsletter Editor: dhofmann@yaho.com

Four newcomers embrace roles With GWG ExCom

By Jenny Abel
Group Chair

The Great Waters Group Volunteer Leadership Council is pleased to welcome Scott Coulthurst and Marco Marquez as new Executive Committee members. We also welcome Victoria Gillet and Jasmine Viges, who joined the ExCom in August to complete unexpired terms. Both are now beginning official two-year terms.

Our four new members are jumping into active roles. Scott is joining the officers as secretary; Marco is the new outings chair; Victoria is conservation chair; and Jasmine will take over the role of programs chair.

The other officers remain the same as last year: Chair Jenny Abel, Vice Chair Bill Baurecht and Treasurer Jane Schneider. Continuing ExCom members Linda Frank and Dan Buckler are providing invaluable support as chapter delegate and membership chair, respectively.

We're grateful for the countless hours contributed by VLC members Karen Samelson (publicity chair, newsletter and communications team), David Thomas (equity chair and communications team), Rose Both (political chair), and Dale Hofmann and Karen Jensen (newsletter editing, layout and design).

We also want to express deep gratitude for the many contributions of outgoing ExCom members Eric Hansen and Crystal Hoecherl. Eric served as conservation chair and kept us all informed of developments affecting natural resources in Wisconsin, including the Back 40 mine, Line 3 and Line 5 pipelines, and the Menomonee Falls landfill. Crystal led the GWG as chair from 2019-2021 and served as secretary for the past year.

We will miss their dedicated involvement, but we hope to see them at an outing or program. We also extend heartfelt thanks to Laura White, who coordinated production of the newsletter for the past year.

If you are interested in serving on the VLC, we have several open positions that could use your talents. We are looking for fundraising, volunteer and newsletter chairs. If you're interested in contributing to the GWG's work in any of these roles, please get in touch with the chair or any VLC member (See contact box in this newsletter).

Spring 2022



Some 20 hardy souls braved the drizzle at Havenwoods State Forest for a holiday hike.

It's not too late to donate to GWG

While it was disappointing that COVID-19 put the kibosh on the Holiday Party, the hike that replaced it was a success, and the online fundraiser has passed the halfway mark.

About 20 hardy souls turned out Dec. 5 in the drizzle as Dan Buckler shared information about holiday-related plants at Havenwoods State Forest.

Thanks to everyone who contributed toward our fundraising goal of \$2,500 to help pay for this newsletter, Earth Day activities, programs and activism. We still have a way to go, so please consider making a donation of \$5, \$25, \$50 or more at www.teamsierra.org/wisconsin/gwg50.

If you would like to write a check, send it to:
Great Waters Group of the Sierra Club
PO Box 26798
Wauwatosa, WI 53226

Thanks for your continued support and participation.

New outings chair

Hello, everyone! I'm Marco Marquez (he/him), and I'm thrilled to be the new outings chair for the GWG. I spend a lot of my time going for walks and hikes along Lake Michigan, bike riding, rock climbing and coaching/playing soccer.

No spring outings have been scheduled yet, but please look for updates in our monthly e-letter and on the web at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters, like us on Facebook at @SierraClubGWG or follow us on Twitter @SierraClubMKE.

I'm so excited to meet all of you and have some fun in our amazing region! If you have any suggestions for outings, or would like to assist in leading an outing or get training to become an outings leader, please reach me at Marco@acespace.org.

Give input for spring hearings

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress needs you in 2022!

The WCC is a state-funded organization responsible for voicing citizen concerns regarding natural resources and working with the Natural Resource Board and the Department of Natural Resources to create policy and regulations and take positions that are often referenced by lawmakers. You can learn more at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/about/wcc>

By getting involved, you will help this group gain a broader focus than just hunting, fishing and trapping. Sierra Club members can add fresh perspective, cultural diversity and eco-friendly representation.

Instead of the in-person Spring Hearings, residents are expected to have an opportunity to weigh in on the resolutions online around April 11.

You also can submit your own or Sierra Club-supported resolutions for your county. Citizen resolutions are expected to be due around March 11 – earlier than in the past.

Look for the Sierra Club –Wisconsin Chapter’s guide to the resolutions in the chapter’s spring newsletter, blog and social media.

You also can run for a delegate position for your county.

Sierra Club members are invited to learn more about the WCC and how they can volunteer their time by completing this form: <https://forms.gle/C2ZGfKyov6LVibFeA>

GWG backs justice project

The Great Waters group has committed to supporting a project directed at confronting white supremacy in the environmental movement through a series of collective learning and action sessions and an exploration of the book *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad.

The initial orientation for these sessions began Feb. 1, but signup is still open for those who would like to work through the book independently or join in collective action. Read more about the project and sign up at www.hummingbirdmke.com. You can use this link to connect with the project and join the next orientation: www.bit.ly/building-2022

The environmental movement has historically been impacted by a culture of racism and exclusion, and that history is blatantly reflected in the composition of leadership today. Join us in collective learning and action to dismantle the systems that have allowed this to happen and work toward environmental justice.

We invite community members and organizations to join in our mission to build a multicultural environmental community and movement in Wisconsin by dismantling white supremacy, fighting racism and advocating for environmental justice.

Journalist Holmes environmental hero

The Great Waters Group recognizes journalist Isiah Holmes as its 2021 Environmental Hero of the Year for outstanding reporting that protects our environment as well as our democracy.



Isiah Holmes

Holmes received his award Jan. 17 during the January virtual program that featured Professor Al Gedicks’ talk on “Environmental Alliances with the Indian Nations of Wisconsin.”

Holmes, a videographer as well as a reporter, was recognized for his work involving issues affecting our communities. His articles and reports cover a broad spectrum of environmental and social justice causes as well as threats to our fundamental democratic rights.

A lifelong resident of Milwaukee and graduate of Wauwatosa East High School, he has insight into both the problems – and promise – of our metropolitan area.

Holmes is a staff writer for the Wisconsin Examiner, and his writing has also been featured in Urban Milwaukee, Isthmus and Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service.

GWG Chair Jenny Abel said, “As the climate emergency and other environmental issues reach critical stages, it’s more important than ever for facts-based journalism to raise awareness and help spur people to action. We are honored to be able to recognize Isiah Holmes with this annual award.”

David Thomas, GWG equity chair, added, “This nomination reflects the Sierra Club’s recognition that the work of saving the planet and fighting for social justice cannot be separated.”

Environment pioneers to be honored

(Continued from page 1)

word artist Kavon Cortez-Jones and a keynote by Brenda Coley of Milwaukee Water Commons. The 2021 event featured music and drumming of Jahmes Finlayson and poetry by Daveed Nelson, a founder of Harlem’s Last Poets who in the 1960s laid the groundwork for rap and hip-hop. Information about the 2020, 2021 and 2022 events is available at

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters.



GWG puts focus on equity, inclusion

By David Thomas
GWG Equity Chair

The Great Waters Group has decided to make equity and inclusion a top priority for two years running. Some of our efforts are very public, as seen in other articles in this issue involving building a multicultural environmental movement and the third annual African American Environmental Pioneer Awards. But many of our efforts are less public.

In the past year GWG volunteers have been a mainstay in activities of Nearby Nature Milwaukee, coming out to support community cleanups, tree planting, trail building and the fall Camping Expo at UEC-Washington Park.

Members have also contributed generously to support Nearby Nature Milwaukee's Youth Program, which this fall came back to pre-pandemic levels, conducting four concurrent environmental education programs at inner-city youth-serving agencies by focusing on safe outdoor activities.

But much remains to be done, and much is being planned for 2022. Here are some examples:



Volunteers have been the backbone of Nearby Nature Milwaukee activities, supporting cleanups, tree planting and trail building.



Nearby Nature
Milwaukee

- We are building a Lincoln Creek work group to focus on improving, restoring, and activating green spaces in the central city along Lincoln Creek.
- We are joining in a coalition to tackle the problem of trash and illegal dumping in the city.
- We are hoping to expand our outings program to include getting more folks out of the city on outings, including a paddle on the Underground Railroad, the African American Heritage Water trail on the Calumet River in Illinois.

All of this takes all of us. Another thing Nearby Nature accomplished this year was a professional logo design and a new website www.NearbyNatureMKE.org. Please take a moment to visit the site, sign up for the Nearby Nature newsletter, and if you are able, contribute to continuing this work.

River cleanup planned

Our rivers need you.

Join the annual Milwaukee Riverkeeper Spring Cleanup on the morning of Saturday, April 23. We haven't received details about sign-up and safety protocols yet, but mark your calendar for this huge citywide event.

We will be joining Nearby Nature at the Lincoln Creek site at 35th and Congress. Registration will open in March.

The Great Waters Group also hopes to work with the Urban Ecology Center – Washington Park on additional Earth Day activities, but COVID-19 has complicated planning. Look for details about the cleanup and other activities in our monthly e-letter, www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters, Facebook and Twitter.

Among the other service activities taking place:

- The Urban Ecology Center will be doing an Earth Week of Service Pull-a-Thon at Riverside Park from April 25 to 30. Details at www.urbanecologycenter.org.
- Friends of Lincoln Park also have planned weed-outs from 9 a.m. to noon on April 30, May 28 and June 11. Details at facebook.com/LincolnParkFriends.



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

*Great Waters Group of the Wisconsin Chapter
P.O. Box 26798
Wauwatosa, WI 53226-0798*

Non-Profit
US Postage
Paid
Permit 2093
Milwaukee, WI

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Recycled Paper

Transit Equity Day recalls Rosa Parks

February 4 is Transit Equity Day, a national day of action to commemorate the birthday of Rosa Parks by declaring that public transit is a civil right.

For the past four years, a network of transit rider unions, community organizations, environmental groups and labor unions have organized Transit Equity Day in honor of the iconic figure of the civil rights era. Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to demand an end to segregation in the Montgomery, Ala., transit system. The connection to this act of resistance highlights the rights of all people to high-quality public transportation that is run on clean/renewable energy.

This year's theme is "Getting Transit on Track for the Future."

Tell DNR to reject Line 5

Canadian oil pipeline company Enbridge is proposing a detour to its Line 5 that threatens treaty rights, Wisconsin waters and our planet's health, and you can take action against it by going to <https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/decommission-line-5>

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will hold a hearing on Line 5 on Feb. 2. Written comments are due by March 4.

This day of action supports a broader strategy for a just transition from the fossil fuel economy to clean, renewable energy as a way to confront the climate crisis. Expanding non-fossil fuel, public transportation is vital for this transition.

A just transition also requires upholding worker and civil rights. This means that everyone should have access to free (or at least affordable) public transportation regardless of age, race or class. It includes supporting the rights of workers to organize in the sectors that will build, operate and maintain public transportation infrastructure, as well as provide the services.

Gov. Tony Evers has declared Feb. 4 Transit Equity Day in Wisconsin, but the goals remain important long after Feb. 4 has passed.

Look for Wisconsin activities at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin.

