



GREAT WATERS GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2022 NO. 2



The Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs provide unique lake bluff and migratory habitat on Lake Michigan, but efforts to preserve the area are being threatened by legislators in Madison.

Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs threatened

*By Rose Both
Political Chair*

Sierra Club members who were looking forward to hiking at the Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs were dealt a setback this spring when an anonymous member of the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance raised an objection to \$2.3 million in funding to the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust.

OWLT has been engaged in a 10-year effort to preserve the area, which provides unique lake bluff and migratory habitat on Lake Michigan. The group then expressed willingness to accept a smaller, \$1.6 million grant from the state even though the DNR had already signed off on the higher amount.

But Joint Finance refused to move ahead before the session ended

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in March. Conservative legislators on the committee feigned surprise when a buyer appeared who wants the bluffs for a profit-making venture. The anonymous buyer issued public comments on why they should become the owner of the bluffs and promised to be "sensitive" to the environmental importance of the area.

OWLT's preservation effort was to be funded using Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund dollars, money that has been set aside for conservation purposes. Conservative lawmakers have been pushing back against the popular program in recent years.

For the full story and links to donate to the preservation effort and take action, please visit the GWG website at <https://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters>. The bluffs are not lost, but OWLT can use our help to make up for the loss of state funds.

Notes from the Chair

This year marks the quadrennial review of Focus on Energy, a statewide program that provides rebates to businesses and homeowners that make energy efficiency upgrades to their properties. The Public Service Commission, which conducts the review, is accepting comments and will implement changes to the program based on what it hears from constituents.

The Great Waters Group is using this review as an opportunity to raise awareness about energy-burdened Milwaukee neighborhoods and to ask the PSC to shift the aims of Focus on Energy to address the needs of those who have to spend a high percentage of their incomes on energy bills.

In March GWG members delivered fliers door-to-door in high energy-burden Milwaukee neighborhoods and did extensive phone banking urging residents to submit comments to the PSC. Thanks to these efforts, 323 comments were submitted, 27 of them from high energy-burden ZIP codes. Some of the comments include:

“In my area we are paying too much for utilities. It’s hard

deciding to pay my rent or light bill or eat healthy all month.”

“I’m handicapped and low income. Yes, I agree that my energy bill has gotten overwhelming, and I can use extra help.”

“My neighborhood has many residents who have housing instability – utility costs are part of that! People are passionate about sustainability, but they need the financial barriers to sustainability overcome. This can also be a step towards updating many of the duplexes’ utilities in my neighborhood in a way that can prevent future house fires and other safety issues.”

Because of comments like these, the PSC is considering implementing a Focus pilot project in a high energy burden neighborhood. There will be more opportunities to submit comments later. If you are interested in helping with canvassing or phone banking in May or August, please contact me or Linda Frank.

Thanks for all you do to preserve and protect our environment.

Jenny Abel

Enbridge Line 5 campaign far from over

Stay tuned as the high stakes campaign to apply common sense to Enbridge’s proposed expansion of Line 5 continues. Wisconsin’s Department of Natural Resources reports that it is reviewing “over 10,000 written comments.”

Enbridge’s proposal threatens so much: Lake Superior, Copper

Falls State Park and the Bad River, as well as the wild rice, treaty rights and drinking water of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

That proposed expansion plan is also a giant step backward in protecting our planet’s climate. It is time to move decisively away from fossil fuels, not to build new infrastructure to transport them.

Key point: DNR’s environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Line 5 proposal is seriously inadequate. Left unchallenged, that EIS would weaken protections for our waters, our community health and our planet’s health.

Insist that officials follow the clean government procedures that protect clean water.

For campaign updates, go to <https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/decommission-line-5>.

Join us at the beer gardens

Our popular beer garden social events are resuming this spring. Drop by from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and join us! These are the tentative dates and places. Look for updates in our monthly E-letter or at <https://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters> and <https://facebook.com/SierraClubGWG>.

May 26 – Hoyt Park, Wauwatosa
June 22 – Humboldt Park, Bay View
July 27 – McCarty Park, West Allis (tentative)
August 24 – Hubbard Park, Shorewood
September 22 – South Shore Park, Bay View
October 19 – Estabrook Park, Shorewood

Final Spring Program

Raising a Child in Nature

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

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

Join Urban Ecology Center early childhood educator Matt Flower for a guided hike and outdoor talk in Riverside Park. Explore outdoor education with Matt and discover why spending time in nature is so critical to early childhood growth and development. He will offer practical suggestions to organize safe, enjoyable and educational outdoor adventures with the children in your life.

After the hike we’ll gather around the campfire for a group discussion on topics such as what to wear, nature play/assessing risk and the needed naturalist skills, and backpack essentials. This program will move inside if the weather is bad. Registration recommended at <https://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters>.

Monthly programs resume in September. Look for details in the fall Newsletter.



Participants of all ages picked up trash along Lincoln Creek during the Milwaukee Riverkeeper Spring Cleanup on April 23. They picked up 18 bags of trash, plus car and bike tires at just one site hosted by the Great Waters Group and Nearby Nature Milwaukee. Sierrans also took part in Earth Day activities at the Urban Ecology Center at Washington Park.

Survey to measure reader preference

The Great Waters Group is doing an assessment of the readership of our printed newsletters to ensure we wisely use paper, money and volunteers' time. This pertains to GWG Newsletters, not Wisconsin Chapter or National. Please fill out this brief survey online at bit.ly/survey2022news or mail it to: Great Waters Group – Sierra Club, P.O. Box 26798, Wauwatosa, WI 53226-0798

How many of the quarterly GWG paper Newsletters do you read each year? ____

Would you prefer an online Newsletter 3 or 4 times a year instead of the paper Newsletter if it were an option?

Yes No Not Sure (circle one)

Do you use and read email? Yes No

If yes, do you receive the monthly GWG E-letter? Yes No

Which do you use more for learning about coming programs?

Printed Newsletter E-letter

Do you have any other suggestions? _____

Get the E-letter

If you are not getting the GWG E-letter that normally arrives the first Monday of the month, check your preferences at the bottom of a Sierra Club email where it says "Manage preferences" and make sure you've clicked *Wisconsin Chp Great Waters Group Updates* under Local Subscriptions, or do the same at your account at www.sierraclub.org.

Questions? Email greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com

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The Sierra Club and Nearby Nature set up tents at the Urban Ecology Center at Washington Park for Earth Day to interest newcomers in camping.

Water celebration set

The Coalition to Save the Menominee River will host a water celebration featuring music and speakers July 23 from noon to 6 p.m. in Marinette. Speakers include Menominee Nation Historical Preservation Officer David Grignon and noted activist Dr. Al Gedicks.

This grassroots coalition has fought a fierce campaign to block the Back 40 mine proposal, which would place a dangerous sulfide mine on the banks of the Menominee River. For more information, go to <https://jointherivercoalition.org>.



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

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Full GWG outings program is back

The Great Waters Group outings program is back with a slate of opportunities for you to explore nature. Note the outings leader training in May. We encourage you to sign up for that training to help us connect people to Wisconsin's special places.

More information and outings registration are at <https://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/outings> and in the E-letter and Facebook.

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May 15 (10 a.m. – noon) – Hiking at Kohler-Andrae State Park
May 18 (7 – 9 p.m.) – Outings leader training, Part 1 (via Zoom)
May 25 (7 – 9 p.m.) – Outings leader training, Part 2 (via Zoom)
June 18 – Bike ride on the Glacial Drumlin State Trail
June 25 – Hike at Glacier Hills County Park (Washington County)
July 9 – Big tree hunting and measuring in McGovern Park
July 30 – Bike ride on the Oak Leaf Trail
Aug. 7 – Tour of street trees in Shorewood
Aug. 13 – Kayaking the Milwaukee River
Aug. 27 – Hike at the Badertscher Preserve in Muskego

Germantown event planned

The Germantown Park and Recreation Department is again presenting Music in the Pavilion on Thursday nights this summer at the beautiful Gehl's Performing Arts Pavilion in Firemen's Park at W162-N11870 Park Ave., Germantown.

Sierra Club Great Waters Group will be staffing the Beer Garden at one event as a GWG fundraiser and membership recruitment effort. The date is set for Thursday, Aug. 25. If you'd like to help, please contact Scott Coulthurst at src.outsid3@gmail.com.

The beer garden opens at 6 p.m., and the band will be playing from 7 to 9 p.m. Food trucks will also be available. Please join us for some great music, food and drinks.