

The Lookout

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group

Spring-Summer 2020

50 YEARS OF EARTH DAY!



Political Committee

Getting Creative with Political Outreach



Outings Update

Introducing our new Virtual Hikes and Exercise Guides

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

Executive Committee Chair Dan Ezekiel with the latest news from the group

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COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

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November Election

Help HVG Get Out the Vote from your own home!

Thoughts from the Chair

Dan Ezekiel

HVG Executive Committee Chair

I hope everyone reading this-and their loved ones-are safe and well, but I know that isn't true for all of us. My heart goes out to everyone who is struggling.

As a community, we are facing a crisis that is moving faster and is more difficult than most of us have seen in our lifetimes. Many of us are cut off from friends and family, fearing for our health and the health of those most dear to us. Also, many of us are cut off from our sources of income.

We are all trying to figure out ways we can pitch in to help. HVG member Susan Schmidt is the genius behind the "Thank You Health Care Workers" signs that have popped up around town.

Personally, this has been a tumultuous period for me. If my column here skips around a bit, I hope you will forgive me. In the space of eight days, I gained a healthy new grandchild—whom I have yet to see or hold because of social distancing—and lost a parent, who died after a long illness (unrelated to Covid). One of my children has had to postpone their wedding. All our in-person HVG outings and meetings have had to be canceled and moved to the virtual sphere, which has involved a steep learning curve. I want to thank those HVG leaders, including Jaime Magiera and John Metzler, who have helped us learn how to do that.



Dan and Tina Ezekiel with Debbie Dingle in her DC Office

One of the first cancellations of the pandemic was public commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Like today, back in 1970, we faced terrible environmental issues. The scenic beaches of Santa Barbara, CA were blackened by an oil spill that killed seabirds and mammals. Despite the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, DDT was still legal. Ann Arbor authorities sprayed it from aircraft in a vain attempt to control the beetles that spread Dutch Elm Disease, helping to drastically crash the population of birds of prey like the Bald Eagle. The oil-fouled Cuyahoga River in Ohio actually burst into flames. The Huron River, from which our group draws its name, was so polluted that it had an evil stench and was jocularly referred to as the Urine River.

Grassroots groups around the nation planned rallies to highlight concern for our polluted planet, to be held on John Muir's birthday, April 22. One of the groups was in Ann Arbor, but the date didn't work with the U-M's academic calendar, so the local rally was moved up to March, in the recently-built Crisler Arena. Thus, Ann Arbor ended up hosting the very first Earth Day gathering.

I attended that rally as a teen and was galvanized. Crisler was packed to the rafters, and thousands more people gathered outside to listen to the speeches on loudspeakers. Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, a mighty environmentalist, was keynote speaker.

HVG member John Russell – then a young high-school science teacher – was one of the key organizers of the rally, along with his students. Their group, Environmental Action (Enact), later morphed into the Ecology Center. I first heard the word “recycling” at that rally. A few years later, I joined others in founding Recycle Ann Arbor, the first curbside recycling collection in the midwest, one that still does great work today.

The Ann Arbor Earth Day celebration was so unexpectedly big, it became a media moment, similar to Woodstock or the recent March for our Lives. The media reported how passionate people were for the environment (along with publicity stunts, like destroying a car with sledgehammers on the Diag). Out of that moment came the greatest environmental laws that have ever been passed, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

Despite those successes, today we face equally dire environmental threats, primarily climate change and the policies of the most environmentally destructive president in at least a century. Much of the painstaking work



John Russell

environmentalists have accomplished since the 1970s is being undone before our eyes.

President Trump's anti-environmental initiatives are too numerous to list comprehensively, but some "lowlights" include withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Accord, denying the reality of human-caused climate change, claiming wind turbines cause cancer (!), removing protection from treasured western lands President Obama had designated national monuments, and throwing open public land and seabeds for fossil-fuel mining.

HVG leadership has identified the November election as our top priority for 2020, but the pandemic is stymying our ability to get out to knock doors in the campaign for an environmentalist president and state legislature. Elsewhere in this issue, you can read Janet Kahan's article about one initiative we can still take from home, writing letters to "low-inclination" voters. Please consider taking part!

Last year, HVG endorsed the Ann Arbor Public Schools bond issue, because the campaign promised serious spending on sustainability issues. After the bond passed narrowly, the serious work of planning and implementing began. We have been meeting with AAPS staff and school board members to advocate for serious carbon reduction and, eventually, a carbon-neutral district. Important steps include setting strong numerical goals for carbon and landfill waste reduction, hiring a sustainability officer, and forming a sustainability committee that answers to the school board. Feel free to contact school board members at boardofed@a2schools.org to share your support for strong sustainability efforts.

With the pandemic swirling around us, the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability developed a draft plan to meet the city's (and county's) goal of carbon neutrality by 2030. The plan is comprehensive and strong. It will require a lot of personal, institutional, and financial investment. HVG backs this bold plan, and you can learn more about it at a2zero.org. If you live in Ann Arbor, learning about the plan and emailing our city council to voice your support for the city funding the initiative is another action you can take from home.

As we think about the pandemic and what comes after, let's remember that the horrors of climate change will fall most heavily on those who are least able to protect themselves: the poor, people of color, and those in the developing world –just as the toll of the coronavirus has. We need to come out of this crisis with a new resolve to work for environmental justice in the same way we attack climate change. It will mean changing the way we live, but we are proving we can do that, right?

In honor of the heroes of Earth Day 50 years ago, let's resolve to fight for a second wave of environmental action to counteract today's environmental threats, especially environmental justice issues and climate change. Among first steps will be electing an environmentalist president and an environmentalist majority in the Michigan House of Representatives. What are your best ideas for accomplishing these goals? Sharing our best ideas and our best work, we can do this!

Stay safe and stay strong; I look forward to hearing from you.

Communications

Jaime Magiera

HVG Executive Committee

Communications Committee Chair

As self-isolation due to the pandemic enters its third month, I want to take a moment to share the work being done on your behalf to maintain communications through the Sierra Club Huron Valley group.

First and foremost, the Executive Committee have moved our monthly meetings to BlueJeans videoconference. These meetings are open to the membership and other interested members of the community. We've also moved our monthly program events online. So far, we've had three talks, all of which have been well-attended. Our most recent monthly program event ("Really Stupid Goals, Bike Adventures, and Riding on Every Continent") had 40 attendees! The presentations are very informative and enjoyable, and the conversation is lively. You can find information on all our video meetings at <https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/virtual-meetings>

Next, I want to highlight our Exercise Guides. The brainchild of member John Metzler, these guides take you through some of the most beautiful natural areas in lower Michigan. John is an amazing photographer with a keen sense of geography. We're encouraging members to submit their own photos of their trips as well. We'll share the best to our website and social media. You can find the Spring/Summer 2020 guide at <https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/blog/2020/04/exercise-guide-spring-summer-2020>



Since the last newsletter, the Executive Committee has sent several communications to Ann Arbor City Council regarding important policies that greatly impact climate action. First, we sent a message in support of the Resolution Directing Planning Commission to Create a Transit Supported Development District. Housing along transportation corridors increases opportunities for people to utilize mass transit, walking, and biking – thereby decreasing CO² emissions. Likewise, the we sent a message re-affirming our support of the “40/40/20” millage allocations towards climate action, affordable housing, and pedestrian safety, respectively. Lastly, we sent a message voicing our support for the city’s A2Zero plan, which aims to make the city carbon neutral by 2030.

Looking to the future, the HVG Executive Committee will continue providing our meetings, programs, and other events online until it's safe to meet in-person. Soon, we'll be starting a discussion about the benefits and downsides of distributing our newsletter in digital format only. Stay tuned.

I wish you good health and wellbeing always.

Conservation Committee Update

Stephen C. Brown

Conservation Committee Chair

Local Conservation issues remain:

- 1) **Preservation of natural features and parks.** Minimizing turfgrass and converting it to native ecosystems provides many benefits. Construction of trails such as the B2B, Treeline, and others will enhance non-motorized access to the countryside. Please help advocate for governmental support of these projects throughout the HVG domain.
- 2) **Improving Air and Water Quality.** Release of toxics remain a threat to wildlife and people. The 1,4-dioxane plume (first identified in 1987) continues its infiltration toward the Huron River, and has reached the downtown area. PFAS, other toxics, and micro plastics continue to threaten the health of the Huron River watershed. Spreading biosolids on fields in Lenawee County threaten the health of local residents, the River Raisin watershed, and contribute to the growing harmful algal blooms in western Lake Erie. DTE coal plants and ash pits in Monroe County contaminate our region with Mercury, other toxic metals, gases, and PM2.5 that fuel high respiratory disease incidence. Eliminating burning of fossil fuels will choke the demand for pipelines, fracking, and other disasters to our shared environment.
- 3) **Improving livability of the region.** Given the existential threat of the Climate



Huron River

Emergency, getting our communities to Carbon Neutrality ASAP is paramount and long overdue. Achieving this goal will enable all others consistent with the Club's values. Locally, this means renewable energy, affordable housing, public transportation, biking and walking streets and trails, and enhanced local plant food production and distribution.

Statewide and Nationally, go to the Club's websites to contribute to these campaigns. Join the HVG Outings programs when they resume, and make the most of our social distancing until then. I make two phone calls a day to government representatives, based on calls for action that can be found at these websites. Please keep in mind the principles of Environmental Justice as our work goes forward. The Club is strong and getting stronger, if we are all willing and active.

Monthly meetings have moved to on the BlueJeans platform due to the Covid-19 pandemic, please see the HVG Virtual Meetings webpage or contact Stephen C Brown (browns6887@att.net) for more information.

Outings Update

Anya Dale
Outings Chair

Photos by John Metzler

Explore, Enjoy and Protect. These are the guiding principles that inspire the Huron Valley Group of the Sierra Club to host weekly outings throughout the year. Our passion is to encourage Sierra Club members and community members to experience and fall in love with their natural areas, so that we are more connected to the places we can work to protect for future generations to also explore.

Covid-19 and the required social distancing has meant putting a temporary pause on our group outings, but thankfully the outdoors is still available to help people find intriguing places to explore, as well as some much-needed respite.

To help our community continue to enjoy natural areas, and perhaps even seek out new experiences, the HVG has been providing “Exercise Guides” on our outings platform - MeetUp. These “events” post suggested hiking routes, along with maps and trail recommendations to encourage members to get out and explore on their own. Those that “rsvp” can share their photos and comments with others who indicated they planned to visit the area as well.

“The entire idea was to try to motivate people to get out and to give them the tools to do so - decent maps and some pictures of things I’d point out if I was leading a group hike,” said John Metzler, co-chair of the Outings



Mallard hen, Whitmore Lake Preserve

Committee. “We’re starting to see some feedback of the type I was hoping for - people getting out on trails and sharing pictures. It’s awesome!”

So far it has been a success, with participants signing up for each session and often sharing with others the experience they had. “Like many people, I wanted to get outside for a mental break and exercise during the lockdown, so I was excited to discover a few new hikes via the Meetup group exercise guides” shared Katrina Folsom, MeetUp member. “The maps demystify some of the smaller local preserves for which up-to-date maps are often hard to come by. I went for a hike at Marshall Nature Area and it was lovely!”

While these unusual times certainly provide a challenge for us all, we hope that we can encourage people to use their time to reconnect with nature, explore new areas, and help us to find new ways to share these experiences with our members! If you have any recommendations, please reach out to the HVG Outings co-chairs John Metzler (johnmetz@applecon.com) or Anya Dale (anyaaudubon@gmail.com).



Hepatica acutiloba, West Lake Preserve



Hepatica nobilis, Barton-Kuebler Nature Area



Bluebird, Park Lyndon & Pinckney State Recreation Area



Osprey, Matthaei Botanical Gardens



Blanding turtle, Waterloo State Recreation Area



Fallen tree, Nichols Arboretum

Political Committee Update

Erica Brown Ackerman

Political Committee Chair

Getting Creative with Political Outreach

The COVID-19 crisis is forcing all activists to find new avenues for reaching voters. In addition to the Vote Forward letter-writing campaign described on page X, we will be using social media, phone, and text to get out the vote and elect environmentalists up and down the ticket. If it becomes safe before the November election, HVG will collaborate with other Sierra Club groups to re-elect front-line environmentalist candidates such as State Rep. Laurie Pohutsky and US Rep. Elissa Slotkin. If you would like to help in any capacity, please contact Erica Ackerman (erica.ackerman@gmail.com).

HVG Endorsement of Felicia Brabec for the Michigan State House, 55th District

The Huron Valley Group is pleased to endorse Felicia Brabec for the Michigan State House. Felicia will champion issues of cleaning up contaminants such as PFAS and 1,4 dioxane; safe water for all; climate change; and environmental justice. In line with the Sierra Club's policy, she believes that Line 5 needs to go. To prevent any ensuing hardship in the UP, she supports the immediate development of sustainable energy sources there. In addition, Felicia is a strong proponent of "polluter pay" legislation, which would ensure that taxpayers won't bear the cost of corporate pollution.

Felicia holds a PhD in psychology as well as an MSW, and will continue to fight for expanded



Felicia Brabec

mental and physical health resources and support a sustainable economy that works for all people. In her eight years as Washtenaw County Commissioner, Felicia demonstrated her passion for these issues, while at the same time helping balance the budget every year and retaining the County's AAA bond rating, which saved taxpayers millions of dollars.

As she has put it, "There's lots to be done, so it's all hands on deck. Let's get going!"

Help HVG Get Out The Vote in November (without leaving home)

Janet Kahan

HVG Member

Dan Ezekiel

HVG Executive Committee Chair

Worried about more than viruses? Is November on your mind? You still can do something important while staying at home! If you can get on-line and you have a printer, you can prepare Get Out the Vote letters! These letters go to “low-inclination” voters, and you write a personalized message encouraging them to vote and telling why you always vote. Because of the easy-to-use format, each letter takes about 5 minutes.

Vote Forward is an on-line portal that assists us to contact voters who are considered unlikely to move and unlikely to vote. It provides lists of names and addresses and letter templates to print, then you customize with a couple of sentences. HVG has already generated more than 300 letters. You provide paper, envelopes and stamps. You address and stamp the envelopes. Vote Forward provides you a return addresses so you can retain your privacy while making a personal connection. After you fold the letters and put them in the envelopes, you HOLD the letters until October.

Vote Forward makes the claim that in multiple randomized trials voters who got a letter were significantly more likely to vote.

If you end up writing letters, please keep track of how many you write, so we can ultimately add them to the HVG total.

Report From the HVG Book Club: Authors Confronting the Flint Water Crisis

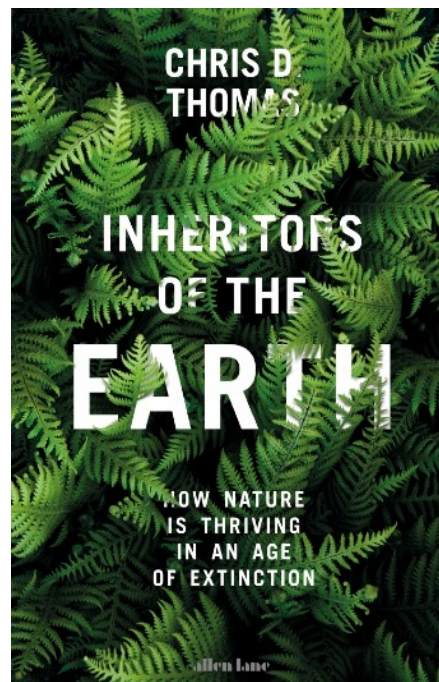
Nancy Shiffler



The constraints of the club's current shelter in place requirements have complicated our book club schedule. For our May 12 meeting (7:30

pm) we experimented with a video conferencing format for our discussion of *Inheritors of the Earth: How Nature is Thriving*

in an Age of Extinction, by Chris D. Thomas. Looking ahead, we will be taking our traditional hiatus from meeting in June, July, and August, with plans to restart in September -- either in person at



Nicola's Books or on line. To give you a head start on reading for the fall, we will post the book titles for September and October on the website calendar by June. For questions or information, contact Nancy Shiffler at nshiffler@comcast.net.

Call for HVG Executive Committee Candidates

The Sierra Club is the largest democratically run environmental organization in the world, with direct election of leaders at the national Board, state Chapter and local Group level each year. The Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group (HVG) is responsible for the administration and operation of the group. HVG members will be electing three ExCom members this fall, for two year terms beginning in January 2020. The election process starts this Spring, with the actual voting taking place in the Fall. HVG is an all-volunteer organization which needs the talents of all its members to accomplish its environmental goals.

About the Executive Committee

The HVG Executive Committee (“Excom”) consists of 7 people from the HVG membership who are elected to two year terms by the membership. They help define rules for the group, administer the group activities, and craft position statements. There are monthly committee meetings, generally on the first Thursday of the month. Excom members are also required to participate in one or two of our smaller committees (e.g. Membership Committee, Communications Committee, Conservation Committee, etc.). The time commitment for ExCom participation is roughly 10-12 hours a month.

Becoming an Candidate

Members interested in serving on ExCom are encouraged to attend one or more ExCom



meetings to get a feel for what we do. Likewise, it's helpful to reach out to current ExCom members for guidance. Their email addresses are available in this newsletter. If you decide to make the commitment, please email Nominations Committee Chair Richard Barron (rmorleybarron@gmail.com) with your full name, phone number, member number, and a 500 word statement on why you wish to run for ExCom.

The Election Process

Members willing to serve can be get on the ballot either through selection by the HVG Nominating Committee or by a petition signed by at least 15 group members. All potential candidates must be Sierra Club members at the time the Spring newsletter mailing list was extracted from the national member database.

The Nominating Committee consists of at least three HVG members, one or more of whom shall not be an ExCom member, and none of whom may be a candidate in the upcoming election. Candidates who have submitted their application materials will be notified on August 6th if they have been selected by the Nominations Committee. Interested members who did not seek or did not receive nomination from the committee can choose to submit a petition. Petitions must be submitted by the candidate to the Nominations Committee no later than the September 15

Membership Meeting. Petitions must include the name, address, membership number and signature of the signers. No member may be nominated or elected against their will.

The HVG has a separate Election Committee that is responsible for production, mailing, receipt, and counting of ballots. It consists of at least three group members, one or more of whom shall not be an ExCom member, and none of whom may be a candidate in the upcoming election.

All Sierra Club members within the HVG territory at the time the mailing list for the Fall newsletter is generated are eligible to vote. The newsletter, with accompanying ballot, will be mailed at least 4 weeks before the closing date for the election. The ballots can be returned via mail or at the December HVG General Meeting per the instructions in the newsletter. An online ballot will be made available on the website during the same time period.

The HVG Election Committee will set a time and place to count the ballots, which will be held after the December HVG General Meeting and before December 31, 2019. Candidates or their representatives may observe the ballot counting. Ballots and nominating petitions will be preserved until all opportunities for appeals are exhausted.

The HVG bylaws and standing rules describe the schedule of events for each election can be viewed at www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/about-us.

HVG ExCom Election Important Dates

July 21, 2020: Nominees must inform the Nominating Committee of their interest by the July ExComm Meeting

Aug 06, 2020: Nominating Committee notifies candidates and ExComm of nomination status.

Sep 15, 2020: Any candidate petitions and/or ballot issue petitions must be delivered to the Nominating Committee at the September General Meeting.

Oct 01, 2020: Candidate statements and photographs are due to Elections Committee.

Oct 01, 2020: Final candidate list given to the Executive Committee.

Nov 1, 2020: Eligible voter list is pulled from the member database. Election materials are finalized to be posted on the website and distributed through the newsletter.

Dec, 15 2020: Ballot count process begins, completing no later than December 31. After completion, candidates are notified.

Sierra Club Huron Valley Group

<http://sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley>

hvgsierraclub@gmail.com

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HVG Executive Committee

Dan Ezekiel

Chair

Jaime Magiera

Communications Committee Chair

Jason Frenzel

Secretary & Treasurer

Erica Ackerman

Political Committee Chair

Anya Dale

Outings Committee Chair

Amanda Sweetman

Anne Brown

Are You A New Member?

Welcome to the Huron Valley Group of the Sierra Club. When you join the Sierra Club you are automatically a member of a local group, as well as a state chapter and the national organization. Membership entitles you to this newsletter as well as all editions of the state and national member publications. Check our online calendar for announcements of Monthly Public Program topics and other activities. We will be glad to see you at our next meeting or answer any questions if you care to call. Please take advantage of your membership as an opportunity to enjoy, preserve and protect our natural environment!

How to Get HVG reminders via email!

At each HVG general meeting, there is an email sign up list. For those who missed it, or haven't joined us at a meeting, you can sign up at...

<https://sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/email-list>

The Lookout is published in Spring and Fall each year. Design, layout, and typesetting by Jaime Magiera



Shopping for the Earth

You can help the earth at no cost to you – through your regular shopping!

- Over the past 15 years, the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group's **Shopping for the Earth** has been a very successful program for supporting our efforts to protect parks, natural areas and local farmland, and to address local and regional environmental problems.
- For every \$20 of cards you buy, you get the full \$20 in store credit and earn from \$0.80 to as much as \$4.60, depending on the merchant, for the Sierra Club.

Great for:

- ✓ Regular purchases like grocery shopping
- ✓ Giving as gifts
- ✓ Planned purchases like appliances
- ✓ Making online purchases

There are two ways to order cards:

1. Mail-In Order Form for groceries from local stores including:

Ann Arbor People's Food Co-op, Arbor Brewing Company, Arbor Farms, Busches, Kroger, Meijers, Produce Station, Whole Foods, and more...

2. Online ordering from over 600 national merchants including:

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bath & Body Works, Best Buy, Cabela's, Chipotle Mexican Grill, CVS/pharmacy, Econo Lodge, Glen's Market, Groupon, Home Depot, iTunes, Kohl's, L.L.Bean, Lands' End, Lowe's, Noodles & Company, Office Max, REI, Rite Aid, Sears, gas stations, Starbucks, Tim Hortons, United Artist Theatres, Walgreens, Whole Foods, and more...

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/shopping-for-earth>



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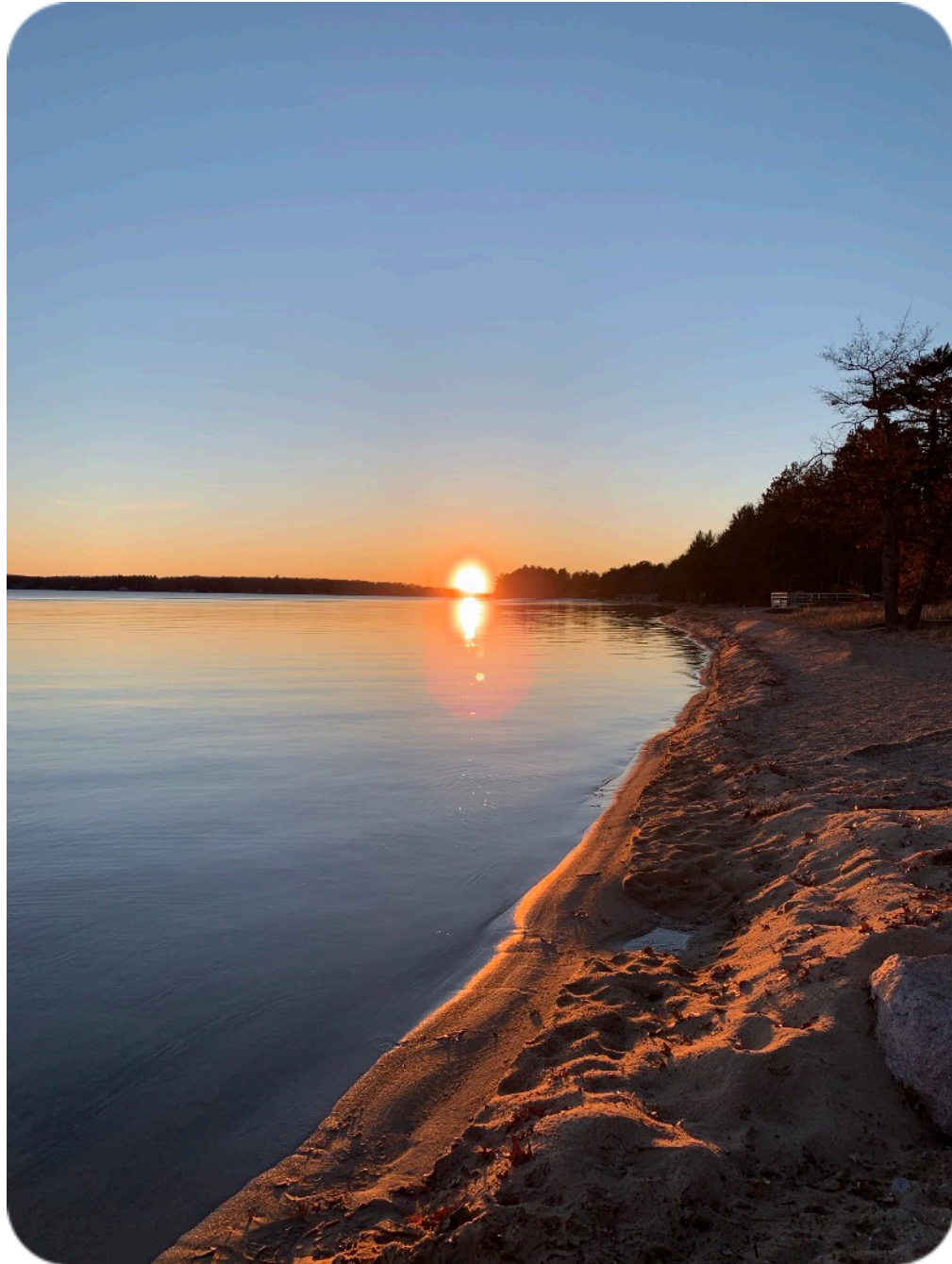


Photo by Jaime Magiera