



News of the  
Southeast Gateway Group  
of the Sierra Club  
DECEMBER 2015/JANUARY 2016  
VOLUME 34, NO. 6

# SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

## CELEBRATE THE SEASON WITH SEGG

As we approach the solstice, we notice shorter days and chillier nights. We anticipate (or dread) the snow, and wonder what 2016 will bring. It's the time for Sierra friends and members to share good times and good food. So please join us as we celebrate the season with our annual potluck on Thursday, December 17th, at Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church, (Space Ship Church) 1700 South Green Bay Road (Hwy 31) in Racine. Roy Bohn will share a selection of his favorite nature and outdoor photographs.

Arrive at 5:30 p.m. to help us set-up and share appetizers and conviviality; we'll aim to serve dinner about 6:15. The church permits wine and beer. Please bring appetizer, main dish, side dish, or dessert – whatever is tasty and convenient for you. Volunteers are needed to come early and help set up the room and the kitchen. Plenty of parking is available.

We will also have potluck decorations! In addition to your own place settings, those who can are asked to bring a tablecloth, a candle, or a bit of seasonal décor. We will create our own festive atmosphere.

We have a few outdoor-related items for sale to support SEGG, thanks to Bev Bedford, so come prepared to take home a treasure you didn't know existed, but now can't do without. Sierra Calendars will also be available.

### **Madison Judge Overturns PSC Decision Blocking Clean Energy**

On October 30, Judge Peter Anderson overturned a Public Service Commission decision that allowed WE Energies to add additional fees to homes and businesses that generate their own renewable energy. Meant to decrease the economic incentives for clean energy, the PSC decision overlooked WE Energies' own study that concluded that distributed renewable energy is a net benefit for the utility.

Other health and environmental benefits of solar power were not considered in the PSC decision, not to mention the effect it would have on businesses that make and install such systems. RENEW Wisconsin and the National Alliance for Solar Choice joined forces to challenge what was to become a model for

other utilities that perceive renewable energy as a threat and not an opportunity.

If you're interested in installing your own photovoltaic system, now would be good time to take part in the Sierra Club's Solar Homes Program. Partnering with H & H Electric in Madison, the Solar Homes Program offers incentives to homeowners in addition to the state and federal incentives available. You can find out more about the Solar Homes Program through this site: <http://hhgroupholdings.com/solar/solar-homes/>

If you would like to talk about the potential of home energy production feel free to send your questions to Tom Rutkowski- [natom@wi.rr.com](mailto:natom@wi.rr.com).

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## DECEMBER

**December 14th**, Monday, 2:00 pm, ExCom meeting at Kenosha Northside Library, 1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha. Meetings are open. If you have items for the agenda, contact [natom@wi.rr.com](mailto:natom@wi.rr.com) or any ExCom member (see p. 7)

**December 17th**, Thursday, 5:30 pm set-up, 6:15 pm dinner. **Holiday Potluck**, Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church, (Space Ship Church) 1700 South Green Bay Road (Hwy 31) in Racine (See article on p. 1).



## JANUARY

**January 16th**, Saturday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, Annual Planning Meeting. Location is still to be determined, so contact [natom@wi.rr.com](mailto:natom@wi.rr.com) or any ExCom member (see p. 7) closer to the date of the meeting, or sign up for the January E-News Update by contacting Melissa Warner, [melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net).

**January 21st**, Thursday, 6:30 pm, Program Meeting, *The Plight of Pollinators*, Gateway Technical College, Biosciences Building, Room 120, 3520 30th Ave, Kenosha. (See article on p. 6)

**SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS  
MAKE GREAT GIFTS  
PICK SOME UP AT THE  
DECEMBER POTLUCK OR CALL  
JOHN BERGE AT 262-633-8455**

**YES!** I want to be a member of the Sierra Club and help preserve the beauty of the Earth.

**FREE GIFT WITH MEMBERSHIP**  
(new members only)

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From time to time, we make our mailing list available to other worthy organizations. If you prefer your name not be included, please check here.

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\$175

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\$1000

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\$35

Student

\$25

\$35

Limited Income

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\$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletter.

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Cover image ©Tim Fitzharris.com



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1

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**Get updates monthly - sign up for Sierra Club E-News to get new or updated information between Southeast Sierran issues. Contact Melissa Warner, [melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net) to sign up.**

# FROM THE CHAIR

By Tom Rutkowski

## Of Refuge and Refugees

For months now we've seen the heartbreaking images of exhausted Syrian refugees fleeing the violence and instability of their home and desperately seeking a refuge in safer, more stable countries. At one point the Syrian crisis must have felt distant to the people in Western Europe, but now, faced with a continuous influx of people with great needs, the problem that was far away has become near. America has agreed to absorb ten thousand of these refugees, but for now the crisis remains for us disturbing, but distant.

Last March the National Academy of Sciences published a paper that connected climate change with the crisis in Syria, tracing a link between drought and rising food prices to the migration of people into cities where rebellion began. Recently Secretary of State John Kerry emphasized this connection, saying, "It is not a coincidence that immediately prior to the civil war in Syria, the country experienced the worst drought on record." What makes climate change a difficult problem to confront is that such connections are complex and not always obvious. Acknowledging this difficulty, Kerry went on to say, "I'm not telling you that the crisis in Syria was caused by climate change.... But the devastating drought clearly made a bad situation a lot worse." Such causal connections are recognized by the Pentagon as a direct threat to national security, a threat that "will aggravate existing problems — such as poverty, social tensions, environmental degradation, ineffectual leadership, and weak political institutions — that threaten domestic stability in a number of countries." The flood of Syrian refugees demonstrates that such problems defy borders.

Here in the Midwest we face a future that seems relatively safe from the worst effects of climate change. Far from rising coastal waters and far from the forest fires, hurricanes and droughts, Southeastern Wisconsin might face a longer allergy season and a few more tropical diseases; but, in general, many people would welcome a warmer winter though summers would be longer

and hotter. In short, we might become that place of refuge for others dislocated by a changing climate. At Milwaukee's Sustainability Summit last spring a panel of scientists, along with Racine's own mayor, discussed how our area would adapt to an influx of people relocating to our area with its abundant fresh water and comparatively moderate temperatures. How would our region meet the needs of these newcomers? In some cases the process has already begun. In my own neighborhood we have a family that decided to relocate from New Orleans, fearing that Katrina would not be the last of such extreme weather events. This is one way the effects of climate change will be brought closer to home.

Long before the internet, world trade, and travel connected us all, some of the oldest religions of the world observed that everything is connected. Touch any point on Indra's net and the farthest jewel trembles. With an atmosphere that freely circulates the causes and effects of climate change, our use of fossil fuels plays an undeniable role in effects felt far away — a bleaching coral reef in the Philippines, a melting glacier in Greenland, or flooded farmland in Bangladesh. Such distributed, distant consequences create a diffusion of responsibility that makes climate change so difficult to address. At the same time distant causes — a coal plant in China or deforestation in Brazil contributes to higher food prices, more extreme weather or maybe even the arrival of refugees here at home.

Recognized as the last best chance to meet the deadline that climate change imposes, the ongoing Paris climate conference might bring about an unprecedented level of collaboration and cooperation between nations. Now is the best time to add your voice to the many around the world already demanding meaningful action to reverse the course of climate change. You could disparage the effect of speaking out as just a drop in a bucket, or you can recognize the cumulative effect of individual actions, an effect British author David Mitchell so well captures in the conclusion of his novel *Cloud Atlas*, "What is any ocean, but a multitude of drops?"

## JOHN MUIR CHAPTER HONORS L.D. ROCKWELL

A JMC Wildflower award was presented posthumously to LD Rockwell at the Autumn Assembly in October. The nomination statement included not only his commitment to Sierra Club on local, chapter and national levels, but also referenced his State Senate Campaigns, his board membership with the Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, and his involvement with veterans' issues, closing with this tribute:

"Generous with his time, resources and energy, LD set a positive example for all he came in contact with at the club. As a colleague he was supportive of everyone around him and encouraging of his fellow leaders. His cheerful demeanor and can-do attitude made him a pleasure to work with. In short, LD was that rare activist whose shoes really are too big to fill but whose legacy will long be remembered."

Judy Rockwell accepted the award for her late husband.



Jim Kerler, John Muir Chapter Chair, presents the 2015 Wildflower Award in honor of LD Rockwell to Judy at the Autumn Assembly. *Photo by Melissa Warner.*

## Mike McCabe Opens Autumn Assembly

*By Tom Rutkowski*

Mike McCabe, former director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign and author of *Blue Jeans in High Places*, began Saturday's session of the John Muir Chapter's Autumn Assembly with a talk titled "Three Things Above All Else". At the very beginning of his talk, Mike identified the erosion of the democratic process, the shrinking middle class, and climate change as the three most serious of the "existential threats" that Americans face.

Stressing that these three things are interrelated, Mike illustrated how the diminishment of our own voice, our decreased representation in government, has rewritten the rules of the economy. Over the past forty years, the middle class and the American dream that it embodied, has been assaulted by special interests. Recognizing the concerns of his audience, Mike connected both of these threats to a changing climate that is likely to make our planet uninhabitable. When people are economically insecure, when they worry more about the future of their own families, they are less likely to focus on a much larger, more complex problem like climate change.

Throughout his talk Mike proposed his own ideas for housing those who feel politically homeless and for countering the apathy that affects so many potential voters. Most importantly, Mike offered several ways that citizens of Wisconsin might overcome the divide and conquer strategy that has been so effectively used against us. You find out more about Blue Jean Nation at <http://www.bluejeannation.com>

# Tar Sands Pipelines

*By Judy Rockwell*

Information about the Enbridge tar sands pipelines at 2015 Autumn Assembly was the subject of a presentation by Carl Whiting, Peter Anderson, and Mary Beth Elliot of Wisconsin Safe Energy Alliance (WiSE). WiSE is a coalition of community members, leaders, and organizations concerned about the safety, land, and environmental threats posed by proposals to expand tar sands pipelines through Wisconsin, especially along Enbridge's Line 61 tar sands pipeline.

With KeystoneXL blocked by President Obama, Enbridge is focusing on other pipelines such as Line 61 and its proposed twin Line 66 in Wisconsin to transport tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada.

Enbridge Line 61, the highest capacity tar sands line in the country, crosses through Wisconsin from Superior to Flanagan, IL. Some of the bodies of water at risk along the route are the Wisconsin River, Rock River, Lake Koshkonong, Flambeau River and Lake Superior. The pipeline travels through 10 counties in Wisconsin including Dane, Rock and the very western part of Walworth County where it crosses Turtle Creek.

Enbridge wants to double the amount of crude transported through Line 61 from about 400,000 bpd to 1.2 million bpd. In addition to the existing pump stations, including the Delavan pump station which is being upgraded, 12 more pump stations in Wisconsin and Illinois will be added to handle the load.

Enbridge is surveying land now to build a twin line, Line 66, next to Line 61. They will use eminent domain to acquire land with little concern for how it will affect the environment and the land owners. Another pipeline will substantially increase the risk of a spill and no one knows what it will take to clean up such a spill. There is concern that diluted bitumen from Canadian oil sands may be corrosive to pipelines. Enbridge claims to have updated its safety measures after the Kalamazoo spill which cost 1.2 billion dollars to clean up. Wisconsin prohibits towns and counties from requiring environmental cleanup insurance on pipelines.

Bitumen extracted from tar sands has the consistency of peanut butter and must be diluted to flow through pipelines. It is thinned with chemicals, 1 barrel of chemical for every 3 barrels of oil. The exact composition of these chemicals, called diluents, is considered a trade secret. Dane County was able to get complete list of chemicals used to dilute tar sands. One example, benzene, has acute effects as well as being a carcinogen. After the Kalamazoo River spill about 60% of those exposed had symptoms. There is a need for an unbiased, immediate and long term assessment of the health risks of exposure to the tar sands oil. Alberta has had longer and greater exposures and there are rising cancer rates in First Nations.

Two-thirds of the oil that reaches the Gulf will be exported. These pipelines don't contribute anything to Wisconsin communities except risk. Our relationship with resources must be changed if we are to save the planet. We need to change our lives and be involved. Make the fight for the climate personal. We can give the next generation a chance.

President Obama's decision to block the KeystoneXL pipeline is great news. Unfortunately, it will create more pressure to expand other pipelines in the United States including the Enbridge lines in Wisconsin. Line 61 will transport more barrels per day than KXL was going to transport. Line 66, if built, expands the amount transported even more. Citizen action helped stop KXL and citizen action can keep the tar sands oil from posing a threat to our land, water and economy.

Look for current information at <https://www.facebook.com/WiSafeEnergyAlliance>.

There is a map of the pipeline which can be searched by county at <https://350madison.wordpress.com/campaigns/tar-sands-2/line-61-map/>

# Autumn Assembly Speaker Encourages Diversity in Sierra Club

By Jeff Sytsma

James Mills, a journalist, mountaineer, photojournalist and now a documentarian, shared his stories as an African-American person learning to explore nature. He encouraged us to engage people of color to explore the outdoors, starting small in our own neighborhoods and setting bigger goals such as visiting Yosemite, Yellowstone or even the Kettle Moraine.

James was part of a team that organized an ascent of Denali, the tallest mountain in North America in Alaska. All of the climbers were African-American and were featured as the cover story on a "Sierra" magazine article.

An inspiring film came of this adventure "American Ascent" which premiered in October in Madison, James' current hometown.

Do a search for his work and learn what he is doing and how you can help our local Sierra Club Group become more diverse.

## JANUARY MEETING FOCUSES ON POLLINATORS IN CRISIS

The plight of pollinators in general and native bees in particular is much in the news. Insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, habitat destruction and diseases have come together to form a perfect storm of challenges for the beneficial insect world. We, as humans, will reap the consequence of ignorance and inaction. Please join us for our January 21 meeting as Tim Fulton, SEGG member, honeybee keeper and member of Wisconsin Honey Producers, American Beekeepers Federation and Xerces Society will shed light and knowledge on this complicated problem. We will meet at 6:30 in room 120 of the Biosciences Building on the Gateway Technical College campus, 3520 30th Avenue.



### WANTED: A BOOK

The SEGG has a book club that meets about three times a year September through May. This provides an opportunity to select a book and give the club direction on what to read. Possibly it could be on a topic that we are working on legislatively, or perhaps something from the past that SEGG helped foster, such as recycling within the city. We have read some interesting environmentally connected biographies on Teddy Roosevelt, Charles Darwin and Rachael Carson. Closer to home and in our own back yard was Aldo Leopold's classic "A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC." Other possibilities might be obtained from Sierra Club

magazine and their book reviews. Anything is good if it deals with the earth, the environment in, under or around, and its organisms including man. This past October we explored a topic rather than a specific read. The chosen topic was Climate Change and the readings were of each participant's choice on that topic.

Book Club meetings include a social hour, starting with potluck at 5:30 pm, with discussion to follow around 7:00 pm. If this is something that you might like to host or participate in, or would like more information about please contact Mary Ann Ortmayer, 262-554-5058 or [maortmayer@gmail.com](mailto:maortmayer@gmail.com).

## SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATORS

| Senate District | Assembly District | County               | Name             | edress                              |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 11              |                   | Walworth/Whitewater  | Stephen L. Nass  | Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov        |
| 11              | 31                | Walworth/Clinton     | Amy Loudenbeck   | Rep.Loudenbeck@legis.wisconsin.gov  |
| 11              | 32                | Walworth/Lake Geneva | Tyler August     | Rep.August@legis.wisconsin.gov      |
| 11              | 33                | Walworth/Mukwanago   | Cody Horlacher   | Rep.Horlacher@legis.wisconsin.gov   |
| 21              |                   | Racine/Racine        | Van Wanggaard    | Sen.Wanggaard@legis.wisconsin.gov   |
| 21              | 61                | Kenosha/Salem        | Samantha Kerkman | Rep.Kerkman@legis.wisconsin.gov     |
| 21              | 62                | Racine/Caledonia     | Tom Weatherston  | Rep.Weatherston@legis.wisconsin.gov |
| 21              | 63                | Racine/Rochester     | Robin Vos        | Rep.Vos@legis.wisconsin.gov         |
| 22              |                   | Racine/Kenosha       | Bob Wirsch       | Sen.Wirsch@legis.wisconsin.gov      |
| 22              | 64                | Kenosha/Kenosha      | Peter Barca      | Rep.Barca@legis.wisconsin.gov       |
| 22              | 65                | Kenosha/Kenosha      | Tod Ohnstad      | Rep.Ohnstad@legis.wisconsin.gov     |
| 22              | 66                | Racine/Racine        | Cory Mason       | Rep.Mason@legis.wisconsin.gov       |

## NATIONAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

|                |                         |               |  |
|----------------|-------------------------|---------------|--|
| President      | US                      | Barack Obama  | <a href="https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/">https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/</a>                                      |
| WI Senator     | WI                      | Ron Johnson   | <a href="http://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact">www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact</a> |
| WI Senator     | WI                      | Tammy Baldwin | <a href="http://www.baldwin.senate.gov/contact">www.baldwin.senate.gov/contact</a>   |
| Representative | 1st Congressional Dist. | Paul Ryan     | <a href="http://paulryan.house.gov">http://paulryan.house.gov</a>  |

SEGG encourages you to contact your legislators on the issues you care about. Telephone numbers and "snail" mailing addresses are available on the legislators' websites.



## Explore, Enjoy And Protect The Planet

### SEGG Leadership

#### SEGG Executive Committee

Tom Rutkowski (Chair).....natom@wi.rr.com  
 Betsy Georg (Secretary).....bgeorg@hotmail.com  
 Judy Rockwell (Delegate to JMC).....jjrockwell@gmail.com  
 Melissa Warner (Program Chair)...melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net

#### Other Group Leaders

Jeff Sytsma (Treasurer)..... Jeff12759@aol.com  
 MaryAnn Ortmyer (Hospitality).....maortmayer@gmail.com  
 Rebecca Eisel (Webmaster).....SeggWebAdmin@gmail.com  
 Barry Thomas (Conservation, Kenosha Co.)..bthomas6@wi.rr.com  
 Vickie Stellato (Conservation, Racine Co.).....gik@wi.net

The newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group of the Sierra Club is published six times each year by the Group newsletter staff. Please send articles, photographs of group activities, letters, calendar items and/or corrections and comments to Dana Huck at:

dhuck1105@wi.rr.com

Check out the newsletter in color, calendar updates and much more at <http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway>. Visit our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/sierraclubsoutheastgatewaygroup>.

**DEADLINE FOR  
 FEBRUARY-MARCH 2016 ISSUE IS  
 JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup> 2016**

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Join us in January to learn about the plight of pollinators. Article on p. 6.



**ANNUAL PLANNING  
MEETING WILL BE HELD  
JANUARY 16, 2016. THE  
LOCATION IS YET TO BE  
DETERMINED SO CONTACT  
ANY MEMBER OF THE  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
(SEE P. 7) AFTER THE  
FIRST OF THE YEAR.**