



News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015
VOLUME 34, NO. 5

SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

A FOND FAREWELL

LD ("Red") Rockwell passed away on August 30, 2015. Our sincere sympathies to his wife, Judy, and family.

Although relatively new to Sierra Club, joining in 2005, LD was an active member of the Southeast Gateway Group and had served on the group's Executive Committee since 2011. He was elected Chair in January 2015.

His passion for the environment and the Sierra Club was evident from the level of his commitment. He was an at-large member of the Executive Committee of the John Muir Chapter and also served as the Chapter delegate to the Council of Club Leaders (CCL). CCL meets once a year at Sierra Club headquarters in San Francisco to discuss issues that are pertinent to all sixty-four chapters around the nation.

Finding his enthusiasm contagious, his wife, Judy, volunteered to serve as the Group's Delegate to the JMC ExCom and, in 2013, joined him as an SEGG ExCom member.

Another of LD's passion's was Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge, which was recently established in Illinois and Wisconsin, and site of the 2015 SEGG annual picnic in June.

Although experiencing some health issues recently, LD submitted his newsletter column, as always, well in advance of the deadline. His final column appears on page 3.

We will all miss him. Memorials to the John Muir Chapter have been suggested by his family.



L.D. Rockwell
1939 - 2015

Environmental Impacts of our Food Choices:

The food that you eat affects more than just your body, it also has a profound impact on our planet! Learn about some of the ways that our food choices impact the environment and simple changes you can make to help minimize your impact.

Join us on November 19th at 6:30 PM in Room 120 of the Biosciences Building at Gateway Technical College Campus, 3520 30th Avenue in Kenosha. Jamie Ferschinger is a Branch Manager at the Urban Ecology Center - a not-for-profit environmental community center in Milwaukee. Her background is in Conservation Ecology and Naturopathic Medicine. She strives to live lightly on the earth and cook delicious, healthy, whole foods.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER

October 12th, Monday, 2:00 pm, ExCom meeting at Barnes & Noble, 2170 S. Green Bay Rd., Racine. Meetings are open. If you have items for the agenda, contact natom@wi.rr.com or any ExCom member (see p. 7)

October 15th, Thursday, 6:30 pm, Program Meeting, *Where Do We Go From Here?* Gateway Technical College, Biosciences Building, Room 120, 3520 30th Ave, Kenosha. (See article on p. 4)

October 24th, Saturday, 9:00 am - noon, Invasive Species Work Day in Colonial Park and Bristol Woods. Contact Barry Thomas, bthomas6@wi.rr.com, (Bristol Woods), or Melissa Warner, melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net, (Colonial Park) for more information.

NOVEMBER

November 9th, Monday, 2:00 pm, ExCom meeting at Barnes & Noble, 2170 S. Green Bay Rd., Racine. Meetings are open. If you have items for the agenda, contact natom@wi.rr.com or any ExCom member (see p. 7)

November 19th, Thursday, 6:30 pm, Program Meeting, *Environmental Impacts of our Food Choices*, Gateway Technical College, Biosciences Building, Room 120, 3520 30th Ave, Kenosha. (See article on p. 1)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Bristol	Robert Anderson
Burlington	Lance Koll
Delavan	Cheryl Schmidt
East Troy	Mike Beck, Andrea Belka Van Buren
Elkhorn	Rhinehart Lintonen, Philip Schneider
Genoa City	Yvonne Mirocko
Kenosha	Ruth Beth, Joshua Brown
Lake Geneva	Susan Kalbantner, Val Lura, Christine Mohr, Archie Turlakes
Pleasant Prairie	Donna Carner
Racine	Dianne Anderson, Diane Melander, Patricia Neilson, Michael Vance
Trevor	Steve Arnold
Union Grove	Philip Czecholinski

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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CITY STATE ZIP
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EMAIL (optional)

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.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (check one)	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
SPECIAL OFFER	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	
Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$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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To join Sierra Club Canada, visit www.sierraclub.ca
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**DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FOR YOUR SEGG EXCOM..
BALLOTS (p. 7) ARE DUE BY NOVEMBER 20th.**

FROM THE CHAIR

By LD Rockwell



So now we have just watched the best legislature money can buy throw our children under the bus by cutting two hundred-fifty million dollars from school funding, then providing the same amount for a new Bucks arena. As I mentioned in the previous newsletter all of this comes at great expense to our environment. This new facility will require more electricity, more water usage, and produce more sewerage on an already over-stressed system. All for the supposed jobs it will provide.

I recently saw a report from Dr. James Hansen on PBS. He stated, "It is probable that we have waited too long to take corrective action and 2050 is not an acceptable time table for stopping/slowing temperature reversal."

And this from News Analysis:

The Clean Power Plan Is Barely Better Than Kyoto; IPCC Says: We Must Remove CO2 From the Atmosphere

Sunday, 16 August 2015 By Bruce Melton, Truthout: News Analysis
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The EPA's Clean Power Plan is 12 percent more stringent than the Kyoto Protocol, yet since 1978, the US has emitted as much carbon dioxide as we emitted in the previous 228 years. <http://www.wri.org/resources/data-sets/cait-historical-emissions-data-countries-us-states-unfccc>. Globally, since 1984, our civilization has emitted as much carbon dioxide as in the previous 236 years.

William Rivers Pitt, *Greed Dies Hard in a Poisoned Land*, Tuesday, 18 August 2015 <http://www.truth-out.org/>

All this, along with all the other spills and explosions, the ravages of fracking and the Keystone XL pipeline with its gruesome tar sands oil augurs toward an irrefutable truth: We are killing ourselves with coal, with chemicals, with carelessness and with greed. The people behind all this don't care, and won't care until they are made to. Navajo Nation activists literally chased a sitting US senator down the road and off their lands in an attempt to force the issue.

So what is the next best move? We all need to improve our "environmental foot print" by less use of fossil fuels so that there are fewer permits from the Federal Government for drilling/fracking. Telling Congress and EPA we need stronger and more stringent controls on carbon emissions.

On a good note let me end with this:

Students Plant 50 Trees at Iron River National Fish Hatchery
<http://refugeassociation.org>

July 13, 2015 by: Katie Steiger-Meister National Wildlife Refuge Association

"At the Iron River National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin, a group of school children from nearby South Shore Elementary volunteered their time to perform maintenance, learn about their environment, and improve the local habitat – all in a single day's work.

The hatchery has been in growth since the 1970s as staff continues to improve its facilities and landscape. Most recently, a new hiking trail was unveiled. The three-mile Simpson Trail system, completed in 2012, can today be accessed year-round. Visitors can begin their exploration on either of two loops accessible from the hatchery parking lot, complete with trailheads. The trails can be used for just about anything done on foot including hunting, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and bird watching."

Second good note:

Yesterday Judy released the last of nine monarchs into the yard having nurtured them from their beginnings as eggs to final release. Good job, well done.

<http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway>

Cranberry Time!

The Southeast Gateway Group of the Sierra Club is again offering fresh cranberries direct from a family-owned Wisconsin farm. They are packed the day they are picked up from the farm. These are the plump variety that are rarely found in grocery stores and come in a full one-pound bag. Use them fresh for the upcoming holidays or keep them in the freezer for up to 12 months.

Each one pound bag costs \$3.75. Get a bunch to help support the Southeast Gateway Group as we work on local conservation projects. Deadline for ordering is October 28th. Delivery and pick up will begin on November 1st. Orders will be taken at the October 15th meeting or contact Jeff Sytsma at (262) 637-6845 or Jeff12759@aol.com.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Wisconsin's proud history of natural resource protection is under threat. We have seen a loss of DNR staff positions in science and education. Gag orders on state staff have made the news. The budget reduces funds for state parks and stewardship, as well as requiring the DNR to sell land. Clean air and water are jeopardized by weaker regulations on both metallic and frac sand mining operations. We have a tar sands pipeline through the state that may be insufficiently protected. So we may well ask, where do we go from here? Where will our efforts have the most impact? Bill Davis, Director of the John Muir Chapter will explore answers at our October Group Meeting. "So where do we go from here? First, we need to recognize it took a while to get here and it will take a while to get better. What we can't, and won't do, is give up, nor assume things will get better on their own. I firmly believe the things the John Muir Chapter advocates for – clean water, clean air, rational transportation, recreational opportunities, renewable and reliable energy – are winning positions with Wisconsinites. My ultimate goal for the chapter can be summed up as follows: No significant environmental decision is made in Wisconsin without the knowledge and consent of the John Muir chapter."

Join us at 6:30 pm on October 15th in Room 120 of the Biosciences Building of Gateway Technical College in Kenosha to meet our new Chapter Director. Bill received both Wildlife Ecology and Law degrees from UW-Madison. He has worked in the environmental movement for thirty years here in Wisconsin as well as regionally including three stints as an executive director. He has worked on a wide array of issues from energy to solid waste to groundwater to water quality and air quality with a little transportation and land-use thrown in for good measure.

Home Powered in Racine

By Tom Rutkowski

Several years ago, on a visit to the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair, I attended a presentation on residential solar energy where the speaker talked about the benefits of his own backyard photovoltaic system. As so many discussions in our time end up, this one turned to the economics of his system, specifically the rate of return on his investment. More than once his friends and neighbors had asked, "What's the payback on this?" Answering with other questions, he would ask, "What's the return on your second home or your boat or your snowmobile? Why is this different?" Clearly, we own many things for various reasons that cannot be reduced to economics. Always impressed by the ingenuity and the ethic of self-sufficiency on display at the energy fair, I knew that, sooner or later, I would join the home power movement. I knew that solar electric technology had become much more efficient and more affordable: I was to discover that policies and politics still pose obstacles to clean energy in Wisconsin.

When the John Muir Chapter of the Sierra Club partnered with H & H Electric of Madison for the Solar Homes Program, I figured the time had come to install solar panels on my home on Main Street. In the previous four years, the price of solar panels had fallen

ten percent a year, certainly increasing the economic feasibility of home power. In early October of 2013, Stanley Minnick, who does site assessments for H & H, came to Racine to come up with a plan. Though my house has an east-west orientation, the south-facing roof of our garage could hold 16 panels. The panels would be partially shaded by a utility pole in the morning, but with the panels working independently, the system would still function at over ninety percent of its capacity.

I waited until December to see if Focus on Energy incentives for home solar would still be available in 2014 before making a commitment, assured that installations normally continue throughout the winter. Unfortunately, that was the winter of the Polar Vortex, which extended the frost line to five feet below the surface, delaying the work until spring. Still, there was work to be done filing the necessary paperwork. Once forms were submitted, WE Energies called to deny the application estimating that I would be making more energy than I used. In that case, my home would be considered an independent power plant, which could not be approved. Clearly, if more and more people turned to home power, business as usual for WE Energies would be threatened. *Continued on p. 5.*

Continued from p. 4.

Also in December, we purchased an electric car, a 2013 Volt. Since it was the last year's model, and because it qualified for a considerable Federal Tax Credit, the final cost was comparable to a new Prius. While some say that solar panels are a gateway to an electric car, for us the electric car came first. Knowing that your electric car is only as clean as your source of energy, it made sense that this car should run on renewable energy. After reviewing our past year's bills it became clear that this new electric vehicle would double our electric use; so, in the end, WE Energies approved our co-generation permit.

With the paperwork in order and the contract signed, we waited until the ground thawed enough to dig a five foot trench that would connect the inverter in the garage to the main circuit in the house. At the beginning of April two installers came to reinforce the garage roof and mount the panels and inverter, ready to come back the next day to complete the wiring. Then the electrical inspector came to present another obstacle in our path. Unique to the City of Racine, a regulation requires that if any work is done, the whole house must be brought up to code, even if the work is done to the garage. My house, built in 1938, had several violations that had to be corrected which included installation of new power line to the house and the replacement of outdated wiring. The electricians were surprised since no other city in the state had any such requirements. It was true that if we ever sold our house, such improvements would have to be made, but it was a cost and an inconvenience that we hadn't anticipated. This is another example of how policies need to be revised to promote the growth of renewable energy.

Finally, with all those delays behind us, WE Energies came to commission the system on June 27, 2014, almost nine months since the initial assessment. Then a few months later, just days after the election and along party lines of their appointments, the Public Service Commission granted WE Energies' request to not only raise the fixed fees paid by all customers, but also to add what amounts to a tax of 30% on renewable energy systems not owned by the utility. Their argument was that such households relied on the electrical grid, but didn't pay for it, making such customers freeloaders. Before the ruling, WE Energies grandfathered existing systems, giving me ten years before I start paying.

Lacking a vision of what a new energy system would look like, WE Energies used their influence to maintain their grip on the status quo. Since that ruling, Elon Musk, of Tesla, has begun work on a mega-factory that will produce batteries for electric cars and also home energy storage units. Called the Powerwall, the unit can store energy produced in the day for use at night. Given the high tax that WE Energies requested and the falling prices of solar panels, this relatively low cost storage unit might bring about the very thing WE Energies most fears- more and more people disconnecting from the grid. In the meantime, RENEW Wisconsin and the Alliance For Solar Choice are challenging this tax on renewable energy systems, arguing that WE Energies' own study shows that these systems are a net benefit to WE Energies, providing energy closer to the source and producing energy at peak periods of the day. If distributed, locally produced renewable energy is to flourish in Wisconsin, these policies will need to be favorably resolved.

In the first year of use, those sixteen panels on my garage have produced 85% of the electricity used in my home and in the car. The car was driven almost 14,000 miles on 52 gallons of gas. Averaging almost 300 miles to a gallon, the car is powered mostly by sunlight. Though the initial investment was significant, the photovoltaic system will pay for itself, given that the panels last almost thirty years. The timing of this payback depends, to a great extent, on policies and politics. In some states, this renewable energy revolution is incentivized by forcing utilities to pay more for clean energy, a policy that recognizes the high costs of fossil fuels on the environment and public health and the benefits of clean, locally produced energy. Wisconsin has become a model for what a state can do to obstruct this inevitable change.

When asked about the payback for my home power, I'd like to point out that no one was killed mining or drilling for this energy. No one had to fight a war to secure an oil field. No one had an emergency room visit for an asthma attack. No mercury was released into the food chain and no heavy metals from coal ash contaminated someone's drinking water. I still depend on fossil fuels, but I've reduced the emissions of climate-changing greenhouse gases by 85%. Knowing that this is a future we need to cultivate, I'd say that installing solar panels was a pretty good return on my investment.

CANDIDATES FOR SOUTHEAST GATEWAY GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Allan Sommer (right) has been married to Elizabeth for 45 yrs, raised two grown, productive children and has one grandson. He has been a member of Sierra Club for 40+ years, is a 10+ year member of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 30+ year member of The Nature Conservancy, 40+ year member of Millburn Congregational Church and a new member of Invasive Plant Assoc. of Wisc. (IPAW). Currently, he manages a small vineyard and large garden (trying to do both sustainably), and is a board member and leader of volunteers reducing invasive species for Pringle Nature Center.



Barb Brattin (left) first fell in love with nature as a child walking through the German countryside with her grandfather. A Sierra Club member since 1988, Barb moved to Wisconsin last year to serve as Director of the Kenosha Public Library. Her volunteer experience includes 4 years on the San Miguel County Colorado Open Space Commission considering Gunnison Sage Grouse, conservation easements, and payment for Eco services. In service to SEGG, Barb would focus on public education initiatives.

Judy Rockwell (right) has served on the SEGG ExCom since June of 2014, when she agreed to fill a vacancy by resignation. She has been the Group delegate to the John Muir Chapter Executive Committee since 2013. Judy grew up on a farm near Sturgis, South Dakota. Living near the Black Hills made her aware of the necessity of preserving the wilderness. Judy is retired from the Burlington Public Library. She is very interested in climate change issues.



Karen Hermansen is a resident of Mt Pleasant. She has been interested in environmental issues for many years, starting in the early 70s, when she lived in northern Virginia and organic gardening became her passion. Since then, she has lived in coastal North Carolina and Illinois before retiring back home. Her main interest now is replacing non-natives with native plantings that will support pollinators.

**JOHN MUIR CHAPTER
SOUTHEAST GATEWAY GROUP
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BALLOT
2015**

**Bring to the October or November meeting
OR mail by November 17th to:
Melissa Warner
4444 N. Green Bay Rd.
Racine, WI 5340**

Vote for up to five (5) candidates
Second box is for joint memberships only
Deadline for voting is November 20, 2015

Those receiving their newsletter and ballot are asked to print the ballot and to validate their vote by writing their membership number below. Look for your membership number on your membership card or on the line above your name on your Sierra magazine label. Ballots without a valid number will not be counted. Those receiving a paper newsletter need only cut out the ballot, mark your choices and bring it to a meeting or mail it to Melissa Warner. You may black out your name and address to yield a "secret" ballot.

Membership Number _____

- Barb Brattin
- Karen Hermansen
- Judy Rockwell
- Allan Sommer
- Write-In _____



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
DECEMBER 2015 - JANUARY 2016 ISSUE IS
NOVEMBER 1ST 2015**

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See Home Powered in Racine on p. 4. Photo by Tom Rutkowski.