



News of the  
Southeast Gateway Group  
of the Sierra Club

OCT / NOV 2016  
VOLUME 35, No. 5

# SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

## Feel the Berm

From the Chair  
*by Tom Rutkowski*

Weeks ago I attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at O&H Bakery in Racine. SunVest, the installation firm, and RENEW Wisconsin, a renewable energy advocacy group, organized the event to call attention to a large array of solar panels that had been in place since last Fall. The 150 kW installation on the roof of the new facility, which produces close to \$15,000 worth of electricity annually, is invisible to people passing by on Washington Avenue.

Maybe a well placed rainbow and a scattering of Pokemon characters would have enhanced the mood of the occasion, but it's hard to imagine a more feel-good event than a celebration of solar power and kringle. There were a lot of jokes, of course, about the state pastry which Racine is known for, but the event rightly recognized O&H for becoming the local leaders in renewable energy by installing the largest solar array in Racine and certainly one of the largest in Southeastern Wisconsin.

The press conference also served to call attention to a distributed form of energy that is clean, efficient and, unlike large scale wind

farms, usually unnoticeable. In fact, I often think that solar panel installations should include some flashing red lights or make an occasional noise just to compensate for their unassuming low profile. The panels will sit for thirty years, quietly producing electricity close to where it is used without need for much maintenance, a fuel supply or waste storage.

Not far away, on the shore of Lake Michigan, WE Energies makes electricity on a staggering scale at the Oak Creek Power Plant. It's less than ten miles from the O & H Bakery, but in many ways it's another planet compared to that happy place of solar-powered kringle. To a coal miner this massive operation might be a reassuring vision of job security. To an engineer this vast utility could be a monument to the best of 20th or even 19th century technology. To the rest of us it isn't a pretty picture.

A few months ago, on a trip to Milwaukee, I noticed that We Energies has constructed a new berm, one of a series of berms that mostly obstructs the view of the power plant, the mountain of coal that fuels the plant, and the long line of over 100 train cars waiting to be unloaded. *Continued on page 6*



WE Energies Power Plant on Hwy 32

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## OCTOBER

**Thursday, Oct 20:** Program on Challenges to Our Great Lakes, by Dr. Michael Carvan, UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences. 6:30 PM, Gateway/SC Johnson iMET Center, 2320 Renaissance Boulevard in Sturtevant. (page 3)

**Saturday, Oct 22:** SEGG/Weed Out! Racine, Join us for the Community Make-A-Difference Day at the Kids Cove Playground just south of North Beach, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM. Details at [www.facebook.com/events/286543738390233/](http://www.facebook.com/events/286543738390233/)

Invasive Species Workday, 9:00-Noon, Pringle Nature Center, 9800 160th Ave, Bristol. Bring work gloves.

**Thursday, Oct 27:** Deadline to Order Cranberries!! (page 6)

**Sunday, Oct 29:** SEGG/Weed Out! Racine, Colonial Park, 9:00 AM-Noon. Working to remove more honeysuckle and buckthorn from the flood plain. Use parking lot at the end of West High Street. Dress for the weather with long trousers and sturdy shoes. Bug repellent and drinking water advised.

**TBA:** Fall Work Day at the Lulu Lake Preserve in Walworth County. Check website for details or contact Allan Sommer: [sommerallan4@gmail.com](mailto:sommerallan4@gmail.com), tel. 262-716-6955 for more information. (page 3)

## NOVEMBER

**Saturday, Nov 5:** Pringle 5K Prairie & Woods Train Run/Hike, 10:00 AM. Entry fee \$15, T-shirt guaranteed before Oct. 14. [www.pringlenc.org](http://www.pringlenc.org)

**Thursday, Nov 17:** History of the WI Mounds, presentation by Josephine Greendeer Lee, Museum Director for the Ho-Chunk Nation, 6:30 PM, Gateway/SC Johnson iMET building (page 3).

**Friday, Nov 18:** ExCom Ballots Due!! (page 7)



Thank you UW-Parkside Softball Team Members for helping to plant trees in Colonial Park!!



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# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

## October Program: Challenges to Our Great Lakes

You probably know that the Great Lakes hold about 20% of the planet's liquid surface freshwater, but did you also know that the region is home to more than 105 million people? That its GDP is \$4.7 trillion (USD) or that it supplies 46 million jobs (30% of US and Canada)? The large number of people and that amount of industry presents challenges to both the water quality and the integrity of the ecosystem.

UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences is in the forefront of efforts to protect this vital resource, conducting both lab and field research right here in Milwaukee. **Our guest for the October 20th program, Dr. Michael Carvan,** is one of those researchers. His particular interests are in environmental toxicology and environmental genetics.

He will address emerging water quality issues in Wisconsin and the Great Lakes, including non-point source pollution (atmospheric, surface water, groundwater, stormwater) with a focus on nutrients and veterinary drugs from agriculture, the pesticide atrazine, and mercury pollution from coal-burning power plants.

**Please join us at the Gateway/SC Johnson iMET Center, 2320 Renaissance Boulevard in Sturtevant, Thursday, October 20. The general meeting starts at 6:30 PM.**

## November Program: History of the WI Mounds

Woodland peoples of Wisconsin built mounds for burial and other spiritual purposes. Some were formed in the shape of animals, other were conical or linear. Here in SE Wisconsin, fourteen mounds are located in Mound Cemetery, according to a plaque placed there by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1959.

What do we know about how, why and when these mounds were built? What is known about the people that built them? What significance do they have for First Peoples today?



**Josephine Greendeer Lee, the Museum Director for the Ho-Chunk Nation,** will tell us about the history of mound building in the area, the importance of mounds to the Ho-Chunk Nation and the broader Wisconsin population, and maintaining mounds.

Lee studied Anthropology and American Indian Studies at the University of

## Fall Work Day on Lulu Lake



This October you are invited to join Jerry Ziegler, Mukwonago Land Steward for The Nature Conservancy, at Lulu Lake Preserve for a day of invasive species removal and other maintenance projects.

Lulu Lake glitters amidst the rich marshes of the upper Mukwonago River watershed. When viewed through the lens of species richness and water quality, this 95-acre kettle lake (a lake created by the glaciers) and its watershed comprise one of Wisconsin's highest quality natural areas.

Check the website for date and time or contact Allan Sommer for more information: [sommerallan4@gmail.com](mailto:sommerallan4@gmail.com) or 262-716-6955

Wisconsin-Madison. While there, she volunteered for the State Archaeologist. In 2013 she graduated from University of Washington with a Master's degree in Museology. There she focused on collections management and building tribal cultural centers. She recently returned to Ho-Chunk Nation to help pursue their dream of opening their own tribal cultural center.

**Please join us Thursday, November 17 at 6:30 PM at the Gateway/SC Johnson iMET building, 2320 Renaissance Boulevard in Sturtevant, to hear what promises to be a fascinating presentation!**



This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Toxic Substance Control Act passed by Congress back in 1976. Should we be celebrating this Act that was meant to protect us from harmful chemicals in our environment and products we use every day or should we be rueing the fact that it has failed miserably?

The ultimate example of the latter was that the federal government was not even able to meet the law's requirements to prove that asbestos was harmful and should be controlled. They couldn't meet the requirements for lead or formaldehyde, either. The requirements for proof were just too strict and the EPA did not have the money or power to regulate. Companies did not have to clear even a basic safety review before using a chemical in consumer products and the EPA had little power to remove hazardous materials already in the marketplace.

I am (or was) a scientist, trained and employed as a PhD chemist, and so I am not one to consider anything called a "chemical" as necessarily harmful. Water and oxygen are both chemicals and we would be pretty bad off without them. Our bodies are mostly water and oxygen with a bunch of other chemicals such as fats, proteins and enzymes thrown in to the mix. But intellectual man (and woman) has been able to synthesize other chemicals that are not supposed to be part of us, or at least not in the quantities that might result from their presence in our environment. Some of these are harmful to us or the environment and therefore should be regulated.

Finally, last June, Congress overwhelmingly passed the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act which gives the EPA the tools necessary to better ensure the safety of chemicals and significantly strengthen health protections for all of us. Richard Denison, an Environmental Defense Fund scientist has said that this bill is a "solid bipartisan compromise that fixes the biggest problems with our current law". Denison has worked to reform TSCA for decades.

#### **EDF listed three important things in the new bill:**

1. It requires the EPA to review the safety of all new and existing chemicals with clear priority-setting and concrete deadlines for decisions and regulatory action.
2. It gives the EPA new power to require testing and limits companies' ability to hide information about chemicals as "trade secrets".
3. It explicitly requires protection of vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women.

Obviously, testing and rule making will take time, but some companies are already making changes to their products to remove chemicals that may be proven hazardous. **As good environmental stewards, we should endorse their actions by buying their products and sending them thank you notes. We also should be sending notes to Congress and administration leaders to make sure the EPA is adequately funded to do their job as expediently as possible.** The chemical industry's fees will only cover part of the costs. Many chemicals are useful and safe; we need to prove which ones are and which are not. ●

## Feel the Berm

*Continued from page 1*

It's impossible to conceal the two plumes extending from the stacks, but you can only catch a brief glimpse where the road into the plant interrupts the landscaping .

Surely part of the reason to extend the berms is to contain the harmful coal dust from the soon to be doubled coal piles, a dust that can be found in nearby homes. The berms might also serve a defensive function; such a large centralized power plant must pose security risks. Still, aesthetics and public relations are probably the important reasons why they've worked so hard to conceal as much they can.

It's a legacy from the years when Dick Cheney invited the fossil fuel companies to write their own energy plan for America and now results in the highest electrical rates in the Midwest. At a time when coal-fired plants are being retired around the country, and coal companies are filing for bankruptcy, we're tethered to this one until it's paid for. The irony is that we're now paying to conceal it as well. There's a stark contrast between a form of energy that deserves celebration and the one we're supposed to ignore.

It seems to me that most environmental education and action involves making the distant near, the concealed revealed, the invisible visible. It's a pushing back against counter forces trying to keep what we would object to out of sight and out of mind.

-Tom Rutkowski

## Colonial Park Update: 2016 Season

# Weed Out! Racine

SEGG, in partnership with Weed Out! Racine and the City of Racine Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, has been working on restoration in Colonial Park since 2004, when John Berge headed up an immense effort planting native forbs along the Root River Bike Path with a grant from the Root-Pike

Watershed Initiative. Since that time we have coordinated community volunteers to remove buckthorn, honeysuckle, garlic mustard, dame's rocket, burdock and other pesky non-natives. We have also planted small trees, including oaks, maples and birch, in the floodplain in order to create a functional ecosystem that supports a diverse wildlife population.

In 2016 groups from The Prairie School, UW-Parkside, Wild Ones, Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps, Racine County Community Service Workers, the Spring Street Community Church, United Way Day of Caring, Johnson Financial Group, and Lutheran Church of the Resurrection Creation Care Team together contributed nearly 500 hours of volunteer service to the park. The views from the river path and the middle path are much more open now, thanks to their efforts.

**A Wild Ones donation enabled Weed Out! Racine to purchase a Weed Dragon, a propane-fueled weed**

**torch to flame young garlic mustard. We used it with some success this spring, and will use it again on first-year plants in the fall. Members of Olympia Brown UU Church donated to the group through their Share-The-Plate program; this money funds operating expenses including tool repair and replacement.**

Lesser Celandine was discovered in a wet area on the outer trail; this pretty little yellow flower reproduces rapidly not only with above-ground seeds and below-ground tubers, but also with bulbils that form in the stem axils. The bulbils detach readily, and can be transported some distance from the main plant. We will need to treat lesser celandine next spring.

If you walked in Colonial this summer, you probably noticed orange or blue paint slashes on many trees. These marked trees are the ashes, damaged by the emerald ash borer, that will be removed by a professional company this winter when the ground is frozen. Up to 50% of the canopy in the floodplain will be gone, and the additional sunlight may well facilitate the growth of reed canary grass and garlic mustard. Our efforts next year will be focused on removing these invasives, and planting more native trees.



Thank You Johnson Financial Group Volunteers!!



Invasive Lesser Celandine



Christina Russin, President of the Root River Chapter of Wild Ones, and Melissa Warner with the new Weed Torch.

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# Walworth County Parks

By Judy Rockwell

If you haven't visited these three Walworth County Parks, fall is a perfect time to hike with your family and enjoy the colors. To exercise your dog, Price Park is the place to go. Learn about the plants along the trail at Natureland Park, or walk along the White River at White River Park. Kettle Moraine Land Trust has partnered with Walworth County to work on planning and improvement of Natureland Park and Price Park.

## Natureland Park

This 122 acre park is located at W8338 Territorial Road in the Town of Richmond, south of Whitewater with a view of Whitewater Lake, in the southwestern Kettle Moraine. There are four hiking trails of varied lengths and difficulty but are all less than a mile. They are the Trail of Many Terrains, Prairie Trail, Vista Trail and High Wilderness Trail. Trail maps that include information about plants along the trails can be printed from the Walworth County Public Works website. There is a picnic area with an open-sided pavilion and a large log cabin with tables and benches.



## Price Park

Located in the Town of Lafayette at N6499 Hodunk Road, Price

Park Conservancy is 115 acres including Sugar Creek flood lands and shoreline. In addition to several miles of hiking trails and a picnic area, a one-acre dog park opened in 2014. It has an off-leash play area enclosed by a five foot chain link fence with a double gated entry. There are also picnic tables, benches, a hitching post and doggy mitt receptacles. A map for this park is available on the Walworth County Public Works website below.



## White River Park

White River Park is the newest and largest park in Walworth County. It is located in Lyons Township at 6503 Sheridan Springs Road. The 198 acre park has two miles of frontage on the White River and about five miles of walking trails. Other offerings include cross country skiing, a canoe/kayak launch, picnicking, fishing, and hunting and trapping by permit only. Two new bridges allow access to the land on the south side of the river. Future plans include a sledding hill, more trails, restored prairies and a nature center. A trail map and an application for hunting or trapping at this park are available on the Walworth County Public Works website.



For more information or reservations, contact the Walworth County Public Works Department at 262-741-3114 or [www.co.walworth.wi.us/Public%20Works/Public%20Works%20-%20County%20Recreation](http://www.co.walworth.wi.us/Public%20Works/Public%20Works%20-%20County%20Recreation)



## 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 27.** Delivery and pick up will begin on October 30.

Contact Jeff Sytsma at (262) 637-6845 or [Jeff12759@aol.com](mailto:Jeff12759@aol.com) to place your order.

# THE SIERRA CLUB'S SOUTHEAST GATEWAY GROUP OF WISCONSIN'S JOHN MUIR CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BALLOT

Those receiving this newsletter and ballot electronically are asked to print the ballot and to validate their vote by writing their membership number below. Find your membership number on your membership card or on the Sierra magazine label.

*Ballots without a valid number will not be counted.* Those receiving a paper newsletter need only cut out the ballot.

You may black out your name and address for anonymity. Bring your ballots to a meeting or mail it to:

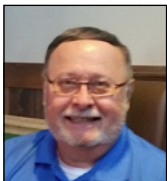
**Nancy Hennessy, 5216 Wind Point Rd., Racine, WI 53402**

Deadline for voting is **Nov. 18, 2016**

Vote for up to 4 candidates. Second box is for joint members only.

Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Joe Dubaniewicz<br><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Laura Feider | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Betsy Georg<br><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Tom Rutkowski |
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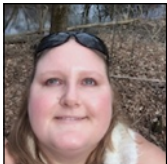
**Joe Dubaniewicz**

Joining the SEGG ExCom will be an honor for me. I moved to Kenosha in the past year and I just knew I would find a way to continue with the Sierra Club. For the past few years, I worked on the Beyond Coal campaign in the Chicago Chapter of the Sierra Club with a bunch of great people. We were very successful in Chicago and other down-state communities, but we are still working to responsibly shut down the very old Waukegan coal-fired power plant through the Clean Power Lake County campaign. Any day now. Maybe a little longer. Keep the Faith!



**Betsy Georg**

When I first decided that I wanted to run for County Board and started attending meetings as an observer, I realized that the Board dealt with many environmental issues and that my knowledge of those issues was inadequate. I joined the Sierra Club and, when elected to the County Board, served on the Planning and Development Committee for several years. Sierra Club members were always willing to answer my questions about environmental issues that came before the Board. More recently, I have served on the Kenosha Racine Land Trust board and have been the SEGG Political Chair.



**Laura Feider**

I am back from California, where I served on an anti-fracking committee. Before moving to California I had been highly involved with SEGG as ExCom Secretary, Conservation Chair and also worked with the water monitoring project before I moved. I am a first grade teacher at a private school in Racine and am glad to be back.



**Tom Rutkowski**

I've been fortunate to have camped and hiked in some of the world's beautiful places; I appreciate the mission of the Sierra Club to help others "explore and enjoy" these places as well. For several years I've worked to advance renewable energy and call for action to address climate change. I'm thankful for all the work the Sierra Club has done with these issues and all of its other efforts to "protect" the natural world.

**2016 SEGG Leadership Executive Committee**

- Tom Rutkowski (Chair).....natom@wi.rr.com
- Betsy Georg (Secretary).....bgeorg@hotmail.com
- Judy Rockwell (Vice Chair).....jjrockwell@gmail.com
- Allan Sommer (Outings Chair).....sommerallan4@gmail.com
- Barb Brattin.....bb81435@gmail.com
- Karen Hermansen.....ehermansenjr@wi.rr.com

**Other Group Leaders**

- Jeff Sytsma (Treasurer).....jeff12759@aol.com
- Melissa Warner (Program Chair).....melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net
- Mary Schroeder (Hospitality).....ilovedogsandcats2@yahoo.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 any articles, photographs of group activities, letters, calendar submissions, corrections and comments to:

**Nicole Reid: nreid23@wi.rr.com**

**Deadline for December/January Issue: Nov. 1, 2016**

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History of the Mounds  
Great Lakes Challenges

and Your SEGG Executive Committee Voting Ballot!



### SEGG Outing Recap

On July 31, one dozen canoers and kayakers launched their boats on the Root River, just upstream of the Horlick Dam.

The group was guided by the Warners who have done this trip multiple times. The rule, stated by the leader, was that if a boat tips: "Stand Up!"

Pleasures of the trip included sightings of great blue herons, a good many wildflowers in bloom, the joy of a cooling breeze, and of course, the company. After the trip the group adjourned to Infusino's.

Join us on our next "Fall Work Day" outing-details on page 3.