



SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club

APR-JUN 2020
VOLUME 39, No. 2

Power for People Vote Like the World's on Fire!

From the Co-Chair
by Laura Buska

The Sierra Club Southeast Gateway Group is planning to host a concert, *Power for People*, sometime in late summer, 2020. The purpose of the concert is to engage and build the political power of young people in protecting their rights and the rights of the natural world. Since young people will be most affected by the climate crisis, it is crucial that we amplify their voices now.

**AMPLIFY
YOUR
VOICE!**



**WE
NEED
YOUR
HELP**

Power for People will incorporate local musicians, artists, speakers and vendors to express the importance of voting and protecting the environment. We hope to invigorate young people to take to the polls with the knowledge of what the candidates are saying about environmental issues, and to provide information to youth about how to get more involved in local environmental activism.

To get out the vote, the Wisconsin Conservation Voters and the Sierra Club will be on-site to answer voting questions and get people registered. In addition to local food vendors and green craft vendors, we'll show off Kenosha's new automated waste trucks that allow for better recycling practices. We'll host other environmental organizations that can share their information, upcoming events and more ways for young people to become involved in local environmental issues.

We need your help!

Our concert team has a list of things we need to make this event a success. We humbly ask fellow Sierra Club Members for any donations, sponsorships or aid that can help us reach our goal. Volunteers are also needed to help us get things crossed off our many to-do lists.

If you know a band/musician/artist who feels strongly about environmental issues and voting rights, we would love to meet them. If you know a sustainable business, we would love to discuss sponsorship or vendor opportunities with them.

Our budget includes the cost of renting an outdoor location with stage and sound equipment, plus event insurance, to start. We'll also purchase beer and wine to be sold at the event for profit. For more information and inquiries please reach out via email to the Power for People team: Powerforpeople@currently.com

PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION

Donations will help to ensure the event is a success. Donations for this event should be marked CONCERT. Make checks payable to *Sierra Club* and mail to our treasurer: Jeff Systma 3508 Washington Avenue Racine, WI, 53405.

GET INVOLVED START HERE!

April Program

Fair Elections Matter to Everyone

Thursday, April 16

from 6-8 PM (note earlier time)

John Bryant Center,
601 Caron Butler Dr, Racine



Fair elections mean you have a legislator who listens to you, and considers your point of view. As an example, some years ago a small group of us were discussing an environmental issue with a local legislator. After a bit he said, *"I'll never be green enough for you to vote for me. Why should I risk alienating those who will vote for me by taking up (your issue)?"* This legislator did not have to consider our point of view because he had a "safe" seat. The rigging was not at the ballot box but in the way the districts were drawn.

The Fair Elections Project is fighting for fair redistricting in Wisconsin by inspiring and supporting litigation, legislation, and public advocacy to stop partisan gerrymandering. The goal is to end map-rigging, so that instead of politicians choosing their voters, voters can choose their elected officials.

Matt Rothschild, the executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, will speak on why we need to ban gerrymandering in Wisconsin. He will show how it muffles people's voices and leads to uncompetitive districts and hyper-partisanship and laws that don't reflect what the people want. He'll also discuss the exciting movement in Wisconsin to finally ban gerrymandering here. Join us at the John Bryant center, 601 Caron Butler Drive from 6:00-8:00 on Thursday April 16. Please note the earlier start time.



Please contact **Melissa Warner** at melissa.warner3@a2q.com for cancellation updates regarding the two events listed above.

Fifty years ago we observed the very first Earth Day. Moved to action by seeing an 800 square-mile oil slick in the Santa Barbara Channel, then Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin was inspired to create Earth Day as a national day for environmental teach-ins. April 22 is also Senator Nelson's birthday.

A handful of US Lawmakers and other prominent leaders joined Earth Day organizer, Denis Hayes, to create the first Earth Day back in 1970. On that day, 20 million Americans demonstrated for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies. Today, Earth Day is honored in 192 countries, making it an international day of action to raise awareness, change human behavior, and provoke policy changes.

You can find all kinds of ways to observe Earth Day throughout April; go to the Greening Greater Racine website:

greeninggreaterracine.weebly.com

where you'll find up-to-date listings of events open to the public.



Two Saturdays, April 18 and 25 at 9AM

Join SEGG's Conservation Committee who will be working with **Weed Out! Racine** and the **Root River Council** for two days of buckthorn and honeysuckle removal along the riverbank, and tree planting in the floodplain.

We'll meet at the Root River Steelhead facility (navigate to 2200 Domanik Drive) at 9:00 and work until noon. Dress for the weather. We'll work in a drizzle, but not in actual rain. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes. Bring your own drinking water. Tools and gloves provided, but you are invited to bring your own.

Kenosha Celebrates Earth Week

The city of Kenosha plans to celebrate Earth Week with a variety of activities. We hope you can join us in this momentous occasion!

April 17: Tour of Carthage College's Sustainability Projects

April 18: Kenosha Gateway Earth Day Celebration

April 22: Screening of Al Gore's An Inconvenient Sequel-Truth to Power at Bradford Community Church

April 22: Rally at Bryan Steil's Somer's Office

April 24: Kenosha Green Congregations Fund Raising Concert at Bradford Community Church

April 25: Invasive Species Removal at the Pringle Nature Center

For more information, please contact Barry Thomas: bthomas6@wi.rr.com



PLEASE NOTE: The Covid 19 virus has already caused many event cancellations. Please check our website, Facebook, Meet Up site, or contact the event coordinators for cancellation updates.

Spring Edible and Medicinal Plant Walk

Saturday, May 2 from 10-Noon

Cliffside Park, 7320 Michna Road, Caledonia

Meet at the parking lot for picnic area #3

Register through our Meetup Group or email Jessica at jessicatruer@yahoo.com



Join us for a casual walk through Cliffside Park in search of spring wildflowers and other plants that have been used historically for food and herbal remedies. Learn basic plant identification techniques and start to recognize the many beautiful and useful wild plants that grow in Wisconsin.

Note: We will not be gathering or tasting any plants on this walk. This is an easy walk, between one and two miles, depending on what kind of plants we find and what the group wants to do. The trails might be wet or muddy, so wear sturdy, water-resistant shoes. Children are welcome with a parent or guardian, but please leave dogs at home. You'll be asked to sign a Sierra Club waiver.



Jessica True is an avid biker, gardener, permaculturist, herbalist, and writer. She loves spending time outdoors and has finally accepted that she will never be able to identify all the plants in Wisconsin (although she keeps trying).

STAY CURRENT

Sign up to receive our **Monthly SEGG E-News** filled with upcoming SEGG programs, events, meetings & other local happenings by Emailing: melissa.warner3@a2q.com

Wednesday, April 8 at 5:30 PM

SEGG Conservation Committee Meeting

The Dish Restaurant, 1220 Ohio St., near SE intersection of Hwy 31 and Spring St, Racine

Are you concerned about the decline in the number of birds in our County Parks and other public areas?

Are you concerned about the use of pesticides at your neighborhood public schools, which can affect the health of our children?

The SEGG Conservation Committee is very concerned about the great decline or absence of birds. We are also concerned about the lack of insects in these areas that many birds depend upon for food. Without birds and insects flying in the air, our parks have a "plastic" feel to them. The parks become "just scenery", with very little bird and animal life.

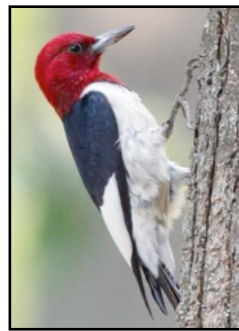


Photo: allaboutbirds.org

Being an avid birder, I have personally reported to our Conservation Committee that there are very few wild bird sightings in the parks and public spaces where pesticides and insecticides are used in the summer. One specific example is the noticeable absence of a rare Redheaded Woodpecker at Kenosha's Petrifying Springs Park. A noted pair had nested there during the summers of 2017 and 2018. The woodpeckers' absence in 2019 was very possibly due to the lack of insects they rely on for food.

If you are interested in helping our group to hopefully reduce the amount of pesticides used in parks and school areas, please join our next SEGG Conservation Committee meeting April 8 at The Dish. -Mary Schroeder

Please contact Laura Feider at if you have any questions: ljfeider@hotmail.com .



Clean Power Coalition (CPC) of SE WI

Don't Miss the Next Coalition Meeting!

The CPC usually meets every third Tuesday of the month at 6:30PM

At the Eco-Justice Center, 7133 Michna Rd, Caledonia, WI 53402
Join us to develop and implement strategies to move We Energies away from dirty coal and to clean renewables.

Questions? Email Jess Haven at jess.haven@sierraclub.org

cleanpowerwi.org

Standing-Room-Only Crowd Gathers for Documentary Screening and History of Coal Presentation

Around 130 people packed the River Bend Nature Center on January 23 for the premiere screening of a video produced by members of the Clean Power Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin.

The documentary, entitled "We Neighbors," focuses on the experiences of the neighbors who live near We Energies' coal-fired South Oak Creek and Elm Road power plants. After the screening, audience members had the opportunity to ask questions of several of the neighbors featured in the video, including Sister Janet Weyker of the Eco Justice Center and siblings Frank Michna, Charlie Michna, and Maureen Wolff who have lived near the plant their entire lives.



The second half of the program featured a presentation on the history of coal in southeast Wisconsin and on the impact of coal trains that travel through Racine by local historian and train expert, Keith Kohlmann.

The event was cosponsored by the Sierra Club, the Eco Justice Center, the Root River Council, 350 Milwaukee, Racine Dominicans, and Greening Greater Racine, six of the more than twenty-five groups that support the coalition's mission:

To urge We Energies to retire its coal plants and adopt renewable energy.



Did you know?

We Energies' coal-fired power plant in Oak Creek receives 5-6 trains a week (numbers fluctuate slightly).

A regular coal train has about 140-145 cars, and each car holds **120 tons** of coal. A Union Pacific double coal train from Wyoming can have up to 240 cars.

Oak Creek coal trains travel thousands of miles from either Wyoming or West Virginia. Norfolk Southern engines usually indicate the train is from West Virginia, and the coal they carry is more toxic than the coal from Wyoming.

Coal cars are not covered because that would raise the cost of shipping. Railroads require that the mines spray a plastic agent on top of the coal in the cars to help keep coal dust from blowing off in transit. This is not done to protect the health of the people living along the route of the tracks, but rather to keep the dust off of the tracks because it is caustic to the rails. Empty cars still contain a lot of dust, but they are not sprayed with the plastic coating.

We Energies owns the largest fleet of privately owned railroad cars in Wisconsin. The marking "WEPX" on the side of a car means it is owned by Wisconsin Electric Power; the "WPSX" marking means it is owned by Wisconsin Public Service.



Thank you to local historian Keith Kohlmann for this information!

For the past eighteen months, the PurpleAir monitors purchased by the Clean Power Coalition have been installed in six locations to the north, south and west of the We Energies Oak Creek Power Plant; one monitor is located downtown Racine near the train tracks.

The monitors provide information in real time, 24/7, related to the amount of particulate matter in the air, although they cannot identify the source of the pollutant. A professor and doctoral student from UW-Madison have been assisting the Clean Power Coalition data committee in examining the pattern of spike periods and comparing the data received with the air monitors We Energies uses in the area.



www2.purpleair.com

One substantial benefit of the PurpleAir monitors is accessible, real-time air quality information available to the public. We encourage you to check the PurpleAir Monitor map online at any time, where you can view current air quality ratings captured by the monitors in the area around We Energies' Oak Creek power plant.

What can you do with this information?

Protect yourself. If you or a member of your family has a health sensitivity or condition exacerbated by poor air quality, you may be able to alter your routine and take additional precautionary measures to avoid a greater level of exposure on days when you see concerning air quality data. Talk with your health care provider about measures you can take, specific to your health history and status.

Contact the DNR. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for monitoring compliance with legal regulations established in the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts and ensuring that We Energies is abiding by limitations outlined in environmental permits they hold. The DNR operates a confidential hotline for reporting suspected environmental violations: 1-800-TIP- WDNR, or 1-800-847-9367

Contact We Energies. If you're concerned about high levels of particulate matter you're seeing on the PurpleAir monitor map near the power plant, let We Energies know and ask how they plan to address your concern. 414-221-2345



A Valentine for We Energies

By Carl Lindner of Racine

Just to say we're watching
all the things you do,
like how the coal ash you create
is one big toxic stew--
arsenic and mercury,
and lead is in it too.

You wet it down in open pits
and let it soak and leach.
And when the bluff collapses,
it contributes to our beach.
The rest--all heavy metals--
you spill into our lake,
poisoning our water
for short-term profits' sake.

And thank you for the coal dust
you distribute far and wide,
throughout southeast Wisconsin,
no matter those who've died
from cancer, or the children
struggling to breathe free--
those you've helped get asthma
bronchitis, emphyse--ma--and, of course,
our parents, the many elderly,
who don't enjoy their golden years
living with COPD.

So don't pretend we're "neighbors"
until you show you care.
Transition to renewables!
It's time to clear the air.



Canoe/Kayak the Nippersink Creek Through Glacial Park



-- Sunday, May 3 at 1:00 PM --

Join the Southeast Gateway Group for a canoe/kayak trip down Nippersink Creek through Glacial Park in the McHenry County, Illinois Park System. Glacial Park is part of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge System. The outing will begin at 1PM on Sunday, May 3. Meet at the Keystone Road landing parking lot and we'll do a car transfer to the Pioneer Road landing before we get started.

Glacial Park is an aptly named gem of park because of its glacial features such as kames, kettles and bogs. Nippersink Creek is a locally famous destination for hand-powered watercraft. The Hackmatack National Wildlife Preserve is a recent addition to the system of preserves in the Nippersink drainage basin, which lies in Wisconsin and Illinois. Plan to see prairie plants, marsh and riverine plants, and beautiful oak woods.

The trip downstream will take about two hours though the river is likely to be high and fast. Expect ten riffles that will challenge the group's navigation skills.

It is important that you sign up if interested so that I can get hold of you should conditions be too bad to go.

Please contact SEGG Outings Chair, Allan Sommer, at Sommerallan4@gmail.com or 262-716-6955 to sign up.

Have you heard? Eastern Monarch Population Numbers Decrease 53% from Last Year

According to Monarch Joint Venture, scientists estimated only 2.83 hectares of North American monarchs were found overwintering in Mexico this past year. This is a 53.22 percent decrease in area compared to last year.

Eleven monarch butterfly colonies were located and assessed during late December 2019; three of these were located in Michoacan and eight in the State of Mexico. Most of the area occupied (2.46 hectares) was located within the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve with only 0.37 hectares outside.

Habitat availability along with increasingly severe weather patterns means our efforts to restore this population to a sustainable level is as critical as ever.

Please visit monarchjointventure.org to learn about what you can do to help sustain these beautiful animals.



MONARCH JOINT VENTURE

Partnering to conserve the monarch migration.

#DEED2020

#DriveElectric

@NatDriveElecWk



Volunteers are needed to direct people and traffic and handle registrations.

Sign up at driveelectricearthday.org
Go to Events and click a pin on the map for the event nearest to you.

Thank you!

For the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, Gateway Technical College in Kenosha (as well as in Elkhorn) is offering many exhibits that exemplify environmental sustainability. The Sierra Club Southeast Gateway Group as well as the Clean Power Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin will be represented in Kenosha. In cooperation with its co-sponsors, Plug In America and the Sierra Club, Drive Electric Earth Day (DEED2020) will be on the campus April 22 from 10-2 at 3520 30th Avenue.

DEED2020 will provide actual Plug-in Electric Vehicles—both All-Electric (EV) and Plug-in Hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV)—for you to look at, sit in and potentially test ride. A variety of local auto dealerships will be present. We will also have experts on hand to answer questions and provide ample information about EV availability, EV charging options, EV tax rebates and, most importantly, how affordable EVs are to own. They are also FUN to drive!



Your donation helps us continue to "Explore, Enjoy and Protect" SE Wisconsin. Checks can be made out to *Sierra Club SEGG* to be used towards any purpose, or to *Sierra Club Foundation* to be used strictly for educational programs and activities. Please mail donations to our treasurer:
Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave, Racine WI 53405

SEGG encourages you to *WRITE* to your legislators on the issues you care about.
 Find your representative at **legis.wisconsin.gov**



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2018 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership

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 Laura Buska (*Co-Chair/ Programs*).....lauraannbuska@gmail.com
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The newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group is published quarterly by Group members. Please send articles, event submissions, photographs, corrections and/or comments to:

Nicole Reid - nreid23@wi.rr.com
 Please use subject line: *SEGG Newsletter*

Deadline for Jul-Sept Issue:
Friday, June 5, 2020

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www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway

Celebrating The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day 1970-2020

In This Issue:

Many Ways to Celebrate Earth Week

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- Weed Out! Racine • Canoe/Kayak Outing
- Kenosha Celebrates Earth Week

BE ADVISED - COVID 19

The Covid 19 virus has already caused many event cancellations. Just before this issue was to be printed, the Sierra Club advised that all programs and events be cancelled for an indefinite time. Please check our website, Facebook Page, and Meet Up Page for updates on all events described in this newsletter.

Save a Tree & See in Color!

Email natom@wi.rr.com
to receive a full-color,
digital newsletter
instead of a paper copy.