



SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club

JUL-SEPT 2019
VOLUME 38, No. 3

From the Chair
by Tom Rutkowski

Inequality & The Green New Deal

Before it was denounced as a plot to take away your hamburgers and air travel, the Green New Deal was supported by 80% of registered voters, according to a poll conducted in January by the Yale Program on Climate Communication. The outline for a clean energy transition, just fourteen pages of general proposals, quickly became an obsession on Fox News which blasted the report as a “thinly veiled” attempt to turn America into a socialist country because, in addition to addressing climate change and the necessary transition to clean energy, the plan addressed dramatic levels of inequality and systemic injustice. The Republican Study Committee, a caucus of 140 conservative members of Congress, issued a resolution of their own declaring that the Green New Deal wouldn’t work and would cost too much. It also reminded people that, “in the 20th century alone, socialist and communist regimes were responsible for the deaths of over 100 million men, women, and children.” Seriously.

Previously conservative critics labeled ambitious environmental policies that addressed inequality as watermelons—a green on the outside, red on the inside kind of sneak attack that would dismantle our economic system and replace it with tyranny. The Green New Deal would be the biggest, ripest of these watermelons, one that would generate an enormous economic stimulus. Noting that since the Great Recession, 91% of economic gains went to only 1% of the population, the Green New Deal’s radical proposal is that this stimulus be shared more equitably in a way that directs “investments to spur economic development, deepen and diversify industry in local and regional economies, and build wealth and community ownership, while prioritizing high-quality job creation and economic, social, and environmental benefits in frontline and vulnerable communities”. As perhaps our last, best chance at limiting the worst consequences of climate change, the Green New Deal is necessarily bold. Though inequality and climate change are not bound together in a cause and effect relationship, they are intimately related, and addressing both of these problems at once makes perfect sense.

It’s true that if you’re worried about your next meal or a place to sleep at night, visions of climate disaster, even ten years or thousands of miles away, will not be your priority. At a time when too many Americans are an accident or a health problem away from bankruptcy, climate change has been called the ultimate first world problem. Though it might seem to be a luxury for anyone with more immediate problems to address, isn’t this concern for the future, for leaving a legacy of culture and for making sure someone is around to inherit this legacy, an essential element of civilization? That we have dismissed this crisis as not pressing enough to address, that we’ve failed to act over thirty years, shows how unequal we’ve become and how badly we’ve failed to insure that basic needs are met. Inequality has blunted our will and ability to act and depleted the

resources needed to limit the slow, steady accumulation of climate-changing greenhouse gas.

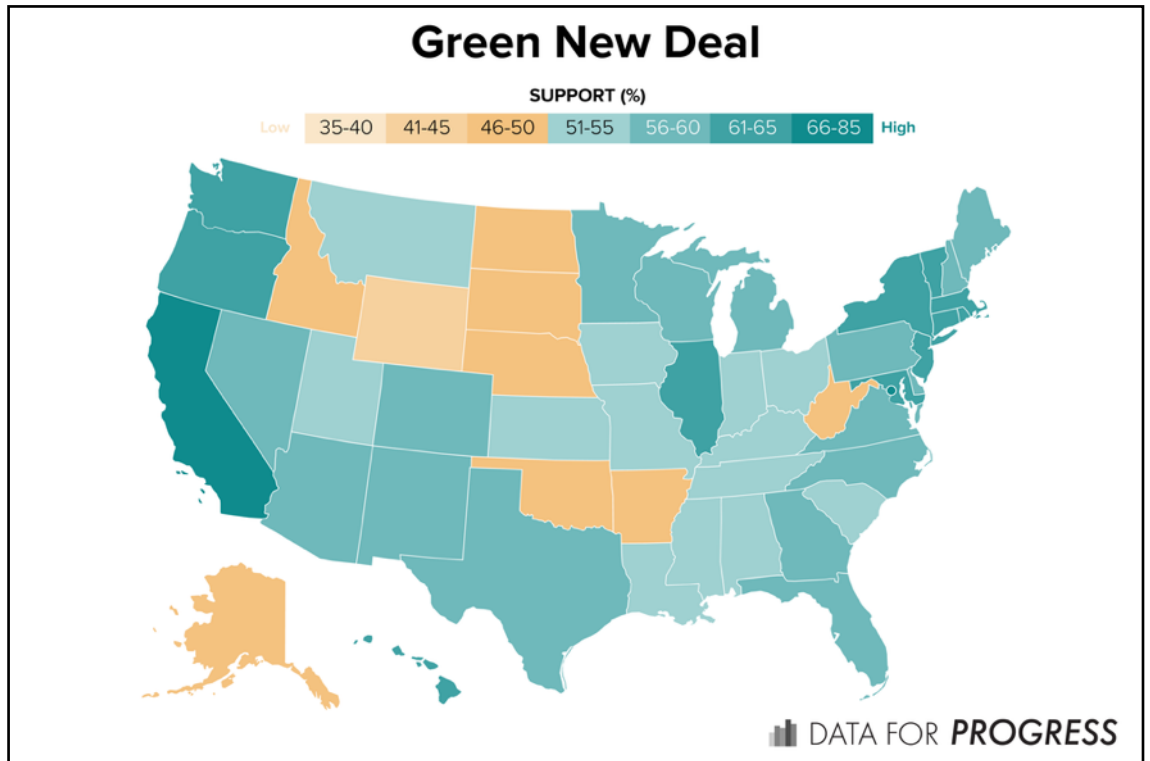
Inequality has not only prevented us from acting on climate change; it will largely determine who suffers most from the consequences of weather extremes. In some ironic, inverted karma, those who contribute the least to the problem will be the ones most exposed to traumatic consequences. According to an Oxfam study, “the richest 10 percent of people produce half of the planet’s individual-consumption-based fossil fuel emissions, while the poorest 50 percent—about 3.5 billion people—contribute only 10 percent.” Those people we see in photographs left behind on rooftops after intense flooding or traveling to higher ground with their belongings in hand had little to do with cause and endure the most effect. Those who most contributed left the scene long ago, insulated from the worst effects by their wealth and resources. So it makes sense that the Green New Deal considers these frontline communities, those who are most vulnerable, when considering how economic benefits will be distributed and where efforts should be focused. *Con’t. on page 2*



Con't. from page 1

From the Chair

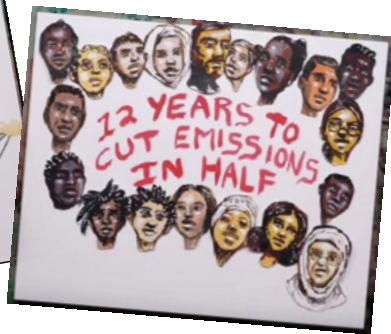
Over the past thirty years, inequality has allowed a wealthy few individuals and the richest corporations the world has ever seen to cloud the scientific consensus on climate change and delay necessary action. Taking a cue from the previous public relations battles to defend tobacco and flame retardants, the fossil fuel industry and their well-financed think tanks successfully cultivated doubt about whether the climate was changing and whether human activity was the cause. They didn't need to sway everyone, just enough people to polarize the issue and stall efforts to mitigate the problem.



According to a March 2019 report from DataForProgress.org, the Green New Deal has net positive support in 41 states that contain 36 Democratic Senators and 34 Republicans who have not endorsed the Green New Deal.

Success of this effort can be seen in the political polarization that persists on this issue. Only in America does your stance on climate change reflect your identification with one party or another; only America is attempting to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord. Inequality has had a more direct effect on our will to act in the form of campaign contributions that have yielded tremendous return on investments in the form of deregulation, subsidies and favorable policies to fossil fuel companies. That one percent of the population who contributes over 40% of campaign financing isn't motivated by altruism.

Early in June, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that recent measurements of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached 414 parts per million, a high mark well past the safe limit of 350 ppm set over a decade ago and another step toward the upper limit of 450 ppm that will lead to "catastrophic and irreversible" global heating. The good news is that for the first time climate change is a priority in a national election—at least for one major party. At this point, all of the major Democratic candidates for President have embraced some form of the Green New Deal. If one of them wins the election, it is likely that the price of your hamburger and your air travel will rise as prices begin to reflect the true cost of carbon-intensive industries to the environment. That cry of socialism, raised anytime attention is drawn to our record economic inequality, is wearing thin, especially among younger people, the same people who will bear the more severe consequences of a changing climate. The original New Deal ushered in decades of shared prosperity, providing jobs and security for many Americans in need and establishing beneficial programs still with us today. We need a Green New Deal to ensure that the great economic stimulus of a clean energy transition will be shared more equitably and that concern for the most vulnerable remains a measure of who we are. -TR



What if we actually pulled off a Green New Deal?

What would the future look like?

Go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search "A Message from the Future" to watch a short film narrated by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, illustrated by Molly Crabapple, and posted by The Intercept.

GET INVOLVED → START HERE!

Stay Current with Monthly SEGG E-News and Environmentally-Minded Events Near You!
Email melissa.warner3@a2q.com to Sign Up

Kenosha Green Congregations partnered with UW-Parkside professor Ross Astoria's Environmental Policy Class this past semester to explore ways of improving Kenosha's environment and reducing its carbon footprint.

On May 7, the class presented their results to the congregation with Kenosha mayor, John Antaramian, in attendance. The class formed three task groups to investigate greenhouse gas emissions, recycling, and water issues.

The next step will be for Kenosha Green Congregations to examine the findings and determine how to implement improvements through information and action. Their next meeting will be **August 27** at 7PM at Bradford Community Church UU, 5810 8th Avenue, Kenosha. For more information, contact Barry Thomas at: bthomas6@wi.rr.com.

Green Congregations is a nationwide network of faith communities concerned about sustainability and the environment.



Please consider participating!

Sign up to be notified when the next hearing will be at: www.wisconsinrivers.org

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has announced the formation of a Water Quality Task Force, with hearings to be held around the state, including in Racine. Sierra Club's John Muir Chapter Water Team is looking for people to attend the Racine hearing. We need better manure-spreading practices, fewer high-capacity wells lowering the water table, and more financial support for replacing aging pipes that leach lead into our drinking water. The tentative date is July 24.



Join our New Meetup Group for SEGG Sponsored Outings and Activities!

Meetup makes it easy to find out about and sign up for club events like local hikes, bike rides or canoe/kayak paddles.

Start your free account today!

www.meetup.com/Southeast-Gateway-Group-Sierra-Club-Hikes-and-Activities/

The Clean Power Coalition meets monthly on the third Tuesday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Eco-Justice Center, 7133 Michna Road, Caledonia, WI 53402. Questions? Email Miranda Ehrlich at miranda.ehrlich@sierraclub.org



cleanpowerwi.org



Visit the Sierra Club's

Add Up page and click on the Campaigns tab to add your voice to a host of petitions fighting the issues you care about most:

addup.sierraclub.org

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

Let's PULL Together!

Ecosystem Workday
Saturday, June 22 ~ 9AM

Help restore ecosystems and natural habitat in our local parks by removing invasive plants like garlic mustard and by planting native trees.

Meet at the High St. entrance of Colonial Park in Racine or at the Pringle Nature Center in Kenosha. Tools are provided. Dress for the weather with long pants, sturdy shoes and socks.

For more information, contact Melissa Warner at:

melissa.warner3@a2q.com



Hwy 38 Clean Up Dates

Saturday, Aug. 3 - 8:30 AM

Saturday, Oct. 5 - 9:00 AM

Meet at Blessed Hope Church at the corner of Hwy 38 and 4 Mile Rd.

Equipment is provided. Please wear good walking shoes, sunscreen and insect repellent.

Contact Jeff Sytsma for more information:
262 637-6845 or 262 497-4761 or Jeff12759@aol.com

UPCOMING SEGG OUTINGS

A standard Sierra Club liability waiver is required to participate in all SEGG Outings. For questions, reservations and carpool info, please contact SEGG Outings Chair, Allan Sommer: Sommerallan4@gmail.com or 262-716-6955

Nippersink Creek Paddle



-- Sunday, July 14 at 1:00 PM --

Join the Southeast Gateway Group of the Sierra Club for a canoe/kayak trip down Nippersink Creek through beautiful Glacial Park.

Glacial Park is in the McHenry County, Illinois Park System and is part of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge System. It is aptly named for its glacial features, kames, kettles, bogs, etc., and it is a beautiful gem of park.



Enjoy seeing prairie plants, marsh and riverine plants, and beautiful oak woods. The river is likely to be high and fast so expect the trip downstream to last about two hours. Anticipate ten river riffles that may challenge our navigation skills.

Nippersink Creek is a locally famous destination for hand-powered watercraft. Hackmatack National Wildlife Preserve is a recent addition to the system of preserves in the Nippersink drainage basin which lies in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Meet at the Keystone Landing parking lot at 6500 Keystone Rd, Richmond, IL 60071, for a car transfer to the Pioneer Rd Landing.

A PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL ATTENDEES.

Nachusa Grasslands Hike Sunday, August 18 at 9AM

The Nachusa Grasslands near Oregon, Illinois, is a 3,800-acre preserve of prairie, wetlands, and savannas, owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy.



In 2014, a small herd of bison were reintroduced to the park. Today there are about 100 of them on the preserve.

Given the immense size of their pasture, they are not always visible to visitors. However, there are hiking trails near their grazing sites. Binoculars are recommended.

Volunteers have spent 200,000 hours clearing invasives and reintroducing native plants to the Nachusa Grasslands. The result is an unusually diverse landscape encompassing a rich diversity of prairie plants of animals that represent one of our most threatened ecosystems.

If time permits, there are several other lovely Illinois state parks nearby to visit, such as Lowden and White Pines, which abut the Rock River and offer more great hiking, cliffs and spectacular views.

Meet at 9AM at the Antioch Public Library, 757 N Main St., Antioch, IL 60002, and we'll carpool to Franklin Grove.

Bring a bag lunch. There are no dining options at the preserve, but there are restrooms.

NEW PLACES! NEW PLACES! NEW PLACES! NEW PLACES! NEW PLACES!

WHITEWATER RECAP: On June 9, a dozen SEGG friends and members met to hike nearly five miles of the Whitewater Lake segment on the Ice Age Trail. It was a challenging hike with ups and downs along many moraine formations. Part of the hike was so well vegetated, it was like walking through a hilly tunnel. At the end was an artesian well that gushed with cool, clean, tasty water. It was a welcome finish!

THE SOLAR TAX IS BACK

We Energies has revived their 2014 “solar tax” proposal from the dead.

by *Miranda Ehrlich*, Associate Organizing Representative for Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign

It just keeps getting worse. Over one million species are on the brink of extinction. Wildfires, hurricanes, and floods are ravaging communities across North America. Atmospheric carbon levels in May reached their highest levels in millions of years. The evidence is abundantly clear; for the sake of our planet and the people and creatures who inhabit it, we need to transition to renewable energy and we need to do it now. But despite these terrifying climate consequences, the Trump administration is gleefully rolling back dozens of important environmental regulations on everything from clean water to carbon standards. With no help from the federal government in sight, it's especially important now for states, local entities, and utilities to lead the way.

Unfortunately, We Energies has other ideas. They seem more focused on using their monopoly to stomp out competition than be a part of curbing the climate crisis. The company recently filed an outrageous proposal at the Public Service Commission that would impose a major extra fee on solar panel owners, including both residential homes and businesses. This proposal is a revival of a similar 2014 proposal by We Energies that was ultimately rejected by the courts, partly due to the unfairness of the proposal and lack of justification for it. Similar proposals were recently rejected in Iowa and Michigan as discriminatory and unnecessary.

Expansion of rooftop solar isn't just good for the planet, it is good for Wisconsin. We have no natural fossil fuel resources here, so every dollar we spend on electricity produced from coal or fracked gas sends money out of our state. Energy from solar, on the other hand, can be produced right here in Wisconsin, and our solar industry is booming. However, We Energies' proposal could have a chilling effect on this growing industry, costing Wisconsinites



Graphic from
ShepherdExpress.com's,
May 28, 2019 article entitled
"Critics See We Energies Trying
to Muscle Competition Out of
Renewable-Energy Market"

jobs. Solar power also is an essential tool to address the climate crisis and clean up our air, water, and soil. We have known for over half a century about the consequences of fossil fuel burning, yet utilities like We Energies have been dragging their feet on committing to a 100% clean energy transition. Taxing solar panel owners for taking matters into their own hands to reduce their fossil fuel use is clearly a step in the wrong direction. So why is We Energies insisting on pushing their solar tax forward?

We Energies claims that their solar tax is necessary for grid maintenance costs. However, this claim is petty monopoly logic that ignores the benefits solar brings to the grid. First, all customers, regardless of whether they have solar panels or not, already pay a monthly “fixed charge” to We Energies to cover non-variable costs such as grid infrastructure, construction of power plants, etc. It is especially ridiculous given that solar owners often produce extra electricity that We Energies buys back at a discounted rate, then earns a profit on by selling it back to other customers.

Second, rooftop solar reduces demand at peak times, such as hot, sunny summer days. As rooftop solar expands, this will save all customers money by eliminating the need for We Energies to build big, expensive fossil fuel plants which are charged back to customers with a guaranteed profit margin for We Energies. Fossil fuels, especially coal plants, are increasingly becoming more expensive to even operate, not just build, than clean energy. Reducing the demand on We Energies' coal plants is not only good for the area's air and water, but good for customer's pocketbooks.

Let's be clear; We Energies isn't introducing this tax out of concern for customers. They're worried about their ability to control the market and continue to rake in record profits. We Energies is so desperate to stomp out competition, they are trying to stomp on their very own customers who are doing a good thing by going solar. Earlier this year, We Energies even tried to stop the City of Milwaukee from entering a partnership that would allow them to more affordably put solar panels on the central library. Increasing renewable energy is clearly a good thing and we should do everything we can to encourage it. **Con't. on Page 6**

SOLAR TAX *Con't.*

We know from history that unchecked monopolies will do everything in their power to stamp out competition and squeeze every last penny from their customers. Unfortunately, We Energies is using the climate crisis as a pawn in their games to control as much of the market as possible. As a regulated monopoly, We Energies is granted the privilege of earning a profit on electricity production while under the supervision of the Public Service Commission, which serves to ensure We Energies acts in the public interest.

The Public Service Commission should reject We Energies' self-serving solar tax in favor of an approach that supports people who have taken the initiative to produce clean energy themselves. -ME



HELP FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!!!

Tell We Energies to Support Solar Power by Signing this Petition at:
addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/wisconsincleanenergy

Every Little Piece of Land for Pollinators *By Jeff Sytsma*


Do you think that your property is too small to support wildlife? Think again!



With the right plants, small yards can make a difference. My little city lot holds about 300 square feet of native plants vital to native pollinators. Last year, I raised 70 monarch butterflies from eggs to adults in screened indoor boxes. The transformation from eggs to caterpillars to chrysalis to emerging adult is something every person, especially youngsters, should witness. My small garden of milkweed and native wildflowers helped support these beauties.

Native plants support native pollinators. Many species of bees, flies, butterflies, birds and even bats depend on native flowering plants for their survival. They get the nectar that they need to survive and as a special gift, they pollinate the plants so that seeds are produced. Seeds feed the birds and propagate next year's plants. Flower

stalks that are left to harden and dry add interest to an otherwise barren winter garden and are a beautiful sight when covered with snow. They also provide an additional food source for our feathered friends throughout winter.

You can support pollinators, too! Consider replacing some or all of your turf grass with native flowers and milkweed to attract a variety of beautiful and diverse wildlife. You'll spend less time pushing a noisy lawnmower and more time enjoying the sounds of birds and the colorful bounty of nature. 

The 2019 Monarch Conservation Implementation Plan is now available online. Compiled by the Monarch Joint Venture, a partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic programs, the plan outlines ways to help restore sustainable monarch butterfly populations. According to their website:

The eastern monarch population numbers saw an increase of 144% this year, occupying 6.05 hectares of forest in Mexico.

Western monarchs, which overwinter in along California's Pacific coast, are at an even greater risk of extinction than the eastern population.

In the winter of 2018-2019, less than 1% of the historic population size remained.

Download the Monarch Conservation Plan at MonarchJointVenture.org



THANK YOU NEW & RENEWING SEGG Members!!

John Anderson
Sandy Berezowitz
GR & AC Boucher
Timothy Canady
Sue Clohan
Laurie Cribben
Janice Czarnecki
Linda Dahlstrom
T Daley
Nicolet M De Rose
Tammie DeFranco
Jennie Dentice
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Senior Memberships \$25 / Joint \$35
Life Memberships \$1,000 / Joint \$1,250

Clean air, safe drinking water, wildlife and wild places are under attack—and once they're gone, they're gone for good. Be a champion for the environment and fight for everything we hold dear.

Sign Up for Monthly SEGG E-News by emailing: melissa.warner3@a2q.com

2018 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership

Executive Committee

Tom Rutkowski (Chair/Programs).....natom@wi.rr.com
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Laura Feider (Secretary).....Lmflowerpower@hotmail.com
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Jeff Sytsma (Treasurer).....jeff12759@aol.com
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Melissa Warner (Editor, E-News).....melissa.warner3@a2q.com

The newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group is published quarterly by Group members.



Please send any articles, photographs, letters, calendar submissions, corrections and comments to:

Nicole Reid - nreid23@wi.rr.com

Please use subject line: *SEGG Newsletter*

Deadline for Oct-Dec Issue:

Sept. 9, 2019

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Aszya and Noah from the Racine Zoo joined AmeriCorps team members, Estelle, Taylor, Josiah, Hayley and Eyzik to help restore Colonial Park. For the second year now, Greening Greater Racine has sponsored a team of AmeriCorps workers in May and June to help with Racine-area environmental tasks such as planting trees, pulling invasives and clearing trails.

THANK YOU!!

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Water Quality Task force

*...and more ways
You Can Get Involved!*

Save a Tree and See in Color!

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