



# SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the  
Southeast Gateway Group  
of the Sierra Club

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From the Chair  
*by Tom Rutkowski*

## Cultivate Local Energy

In recent years we've rediscovered the value of locally grown food. We see the strength of the local food movement in farmers' markets and in thousands of backyard and community gardens. We need a similar momentum to harvest local energy, a movement that will make the energy provided by sunlight accessible to all.

Like locally grown food, locally produced energy offers many benefits—efficiency and self-sufficiency, resilience, and better health. According to Inside Energy, 8% of electricity produced in Wisconsin is lost in transmission and distribution. Producing electricity on a nearby rooftop, closer to where it will be used, reduces this waste by reducing the distance traveled. A distributed network of locally produced energy can also make our energy infrastructure more resilient and less vulnerable to extreme weather. Given the increasing frequency and severity of storms, micro grids, powered by local solar installations and incorporating storage capacity, could be configured to provide power when the larger grid is damaged. In addition, the harvest of sunshine that falls on Wisconsin will limit the loss of twelve billion dollars a year that leaves the state to pay for fossil fuels. Most significantly, the transporting and burning of coal has been a slow moving, far-reaching disaster in terms of public health and our environment. Solar panels require no warning labels.

Already, large scale solar installations in Southeastern Wisconsin by companies like Ikea demonstrate the value of locally produced, renewable energy, and prove that such efforts are economically viable alternatives to centralized energy production. At this time, Foxconn and We Energies are in discussion about building an array that is sixty to ninety times the size of Ikea's Oak Creek installation, the largest commercial array in the state. While more and more homeowners and small businesses are also participating in this transition to locally produced energy, many are prevented from installing solar due to shading, the orientation of their rooftop, or more likely, the initial cost. In the long run, producing your own energy will be far less expensive, but not everyone can afford to pay the initial investment.

In many parts of the country, and in other parts of our state not serviced by We Energies, community solar projects have allowed individuals who can't install on their own houses to own panels elsewhere, on a nearby school or business, for instance. The electricity produced from the panels purchased is deducted from their energy bill. Such an arrangement and other "third party ownerships" are common in other states, but discouraged by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission and disallowed by We Energies. A change in such policies would make locally produced energy accessible to many more people in our area.

Several years ago, both the solar and fossil fuel industries watched Wisconsin as We Energies tried to slow the momentum of renewable energy by proposing what amounted to a 30% tax on renewable energy co-generated by their customers. This tax was eventually denied by a court ruling that said that such systems were a benefit, not a burden to the electrical grid. At the same time, We Energies raised the fixed rate for all customers, reducing incentives for energy efficiency and for producing local energy.

In the past several months, We Energies has announced that they will build large solar farms as part of the new goal to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. Clearly, these are steps in the right direction, but the reality is that this new target means that even thirty years from now, We Energies will still be burning a lot of coal—more than most states with more ambitious adoption of renewables. Explaining this new turn toward large scale solar projects, Gale Klappa, chairman and CEO of WEC Energy Group, has stated that utility-scale solar is now a viable option, not only because prices have fallen dramatically, but also because solar energy can "better balance our energy supply with our customer demand..." and "help reduce power supply costs and reduce carbon dioxide emissions." All of these stated benefits apply to smaller-scale solar installations as well. Embracing utility scale solar while limiting smaller scale installations makes perfect sense for a utility that operates as a regulated monopoly, particularly one determined to recover its assets sunk in one of the last of America's large coal plants to be built. For the rest of us, it represents lost time and opportunity.

The temperatures and the seas are rising. We need to deploy renewable energy as quickly and widely as possible and to use a variety of strategies to do so. We need a utility that can more quickly adapt to new possibilities and technologies and use its great resources to promote rather than obstruct the many forms of a clean energy transition.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## SEGG PROGRAMS

Join like-minded people and learn from experts as SEGG offers informative public programming on environmental issues every **third Thursday** of the month at various locations. Membership in the Sierra Club is *not* required to attend.

Sunday, October 14:

### White River Canoe/Kayak Outing

1PM Meet in the town of Lyons  
A good outing for beginner paddlers.  
See Page 5

Thursday, October 25:

### SEGG Program: Water Matters Foxconn & Development

6:30-8:30 PM  
Gateway iMET Center Auditorium  
2320 Renaissance Blvd, Sturtevant  
See Page 3

Tuesday, October 30:

### Deadline to order Cranberries

See Page 5

Saturday, November 3:

### Tree Planting in Colonial Park

8AM - 2PM  
Meet in the lot at the Root River Steelhead  
Facility in Lincoln Park, 2200 Domanik Dr.  
See Page 4

Wednesdays at Noon

### Smart Cities Brown Bag Lunch Discussions

UW Parkside - Molinaro D137  
See Page 3

## PLEASE NOTE

Details for the November 15 program and December potluck will be announced on our website, Meetup and Facebook pages, and in our E-News. Sign up for SEGG E-News by emailing: [melissa.warner3@a2q.com](mailto:melissa.warner3@a2q.com)



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

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**Thank You!**

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# GET INVOLVED START HERE!

Thursday, October 25, 6:30 PM

## Water Matters: Foxconn & Development

Gateway iMET Center Auditorium  
2320 Renaissance Blvd, Sturtevant

Foxconn is the biggest thing to come to SE Wisconsin in our lifetimes. The impacts and consequences of Foxconn's selection are far-ranging and beyond our ability to predict accurately. Emotionally loaded guesses run the gamut from economic miracle to environmental disaster. The Greening Greater Racine Water Council (GGRWC) advocates for healthy and resilient watersheds, so we seek to understand the likely effects that Foxconn and its operations will have on our watersheds.



The SEGG October program meeting, Water Matters: Foxconn and Development, aims to share up-to-date information on the impacts this and other projects are having (and will have) on our watersheds.

What is the latest information on water withdrawals from Lake Michigan? How will the water be treated before it's returned? Who is paying for what? What effect will the loss of wetlands and the increase of hardscaping have on ground water supply and surface water flooding?

The public has a right to know the answers to these and other questions!

Join us to hear Keith Haas, General Manager of Racine's Water Utility, and Dave Giordano, Executive Director of

Root-Pike WIN share their knowledge on what is known at this stage of development.

Thursday, October 25  
6:30 to 8:30 PM  
iMET Center Auditorium



## Smart Cities Brown Bag Lunch Discussions

Wednesdays at Noon

(Now through Nov. 14)

UW Parkside - Molinaro D137

"When you get to a critical mass, the data on the benefits of a Smart City is so compelling:

- 50% reduction over a decade in energy consumption
- 20% decrease in traffic
- 80% improvement in water usage
- 20% reduction in crime rates."

- McKinsey & Company,  
Global Management Consultants

The Smart Cities vernacular has become a prolific phrase in our community over the last year. Now through November 14th, UW Parkside is hosting a weekly series of discussions about the potential and problems presented in Smart Cities.

Join us every Wednesday at noon for an hour to consider the various issues raised by the development of wired and integrated cities.

These brown-bag lunch discussions are free and open to the public.

### Of particular interest to Sierra Club members:

**October 3:** It's Not Easy Being Green:

Environmental Challenges and Smart Cities

**October 10:** Developing a Smart and Sustainable City: Is Masdar City the Answer

**November 7:** Digitization and the Electrical Grid

For a full list of topics visit [uwp.edu/smartcities](http://uwp.edu/smartcities)





# Reforesting Colonial Park

By Melissa Warner

SEGG, along with Weed Out! Racine, has worked in Racine's largest natural area, Colonial Park, since 2004 when we planted hundreds of woodland wildflowers along the then new Root-River pathway. We've also been removing honeysuckle and buckthorn and controlling other invasives, making gradual improvements in the quality of this important natural area. But the emerald ash borer has suddenly changed Colonial Park forever. This tiny insect caused the death of ash trees throughout the region, and because the dead trees are a falling hazard, the dead and dying ashes were removed late last winter.



Weed Out!  
Racine



## Now we start the challenge of reforesting Colonial!

Our aim is to create a functioning ecosystem that protects water quality, creates habitat for the critters that live there, and enhances the experience for the people that use the park. School and community groups will continue to plant small trees each spring, but we need a bigger jumpstart. Matt Koepnick, City Forester (pictured above), has 450 whips (six to eight foot tall root trees) that need to be planted, watered and mulched on November 3. Your help is needed!

**We'll be planting from 8:00 to 2:00 on Saturday, November 3—come when you can, leave when you must.** Meet at the Steelhead Facility in Lincoln Park. Please dress for the weather with long trousers and sturdy shoes. A porta-potty will be on-site, but bring your own drinking water. Equipment is available but you might want to bring your own gloves and garden shovel.

Questions: contact [melissa.warner3@a2q.com](mailto:melissa.warner3@a2q.com) (262 639-0918) or [Matthew.Koepnick@cityofracine.org](mailto:Matthew.Koepnick@cityofracine.org)



# White River Cruise



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

SEGG Outing's Coordinator, Allan Sommer, will be leading a canoe/kayak trip on a short but beautiful section of the White River, a good river for beginners. It is scenic and clear and shallow enough that if you tip over you simply need to stand up to save yourself. The last portion has some optional whitewaters!

Meet in beautiful downtown Lyons at the park where Ore Creek and the White River meet, in the gravel parking lot south of Water St. on Mill St. From here we will transport boats to the launching spot on Sheridan Springs Road. Then we will coordinate moving all the cars back to the park since there is no parking allowed on Sheridan Springs Road.

The outing should take 2-3 hours, including the boat drop-off and trip back to the parking area. The town of Lyons offers several watering holes to visit after the trip.

**A PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL ATTENDEES.**

To reserve your spot, please contact Allan Sommer  
[Sommerallan4@gmail.com](mailto:Sommerallan4@gmail.com)



## Cranberry Time!!!

Sierra Club's SEGG is again offering fresh cranberries direct from a family-owned Wisconsin farm. These are the plump variety that are rarely found in grocery stores. They are packed the day they are picked up from the farm.

Cranberries are rich in vitamins C, B-6, potassium and magnesium. 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 and helps support the Southeast Gateway Group as we work on local conservation projects.

**Deadline for ordering is October 30.**  
Delivery/pick up will begin November 3.

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



## Clean Power Coalition Update

*By Miranda Ehrlich*

The Clean Power Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin held a press conference on August 24, 2018, to launch a citizen air monitoring effort around the Oak Creek power plant. Many local residents spoke at the press conference, including Michelle Jeske, a mother of four boys, and Sharon Millard, who suffers from asthma and COPD. The monitoring will provide real-time air quality results for these residents and help track the coal dust that has been plaguing neighborhoods near the coal plant. All results are publicly available at [PurpleAir.com](http://PurpleAir.com). Thinkprogress, the Racine Journal Times, and several local news channels covered the story.

If you would like to get involved, please email:  
[cleanpowercoalition@gmail.com](mailto:cleanpowercoalition@gmail.com)



Join our Meetup group to stay in the loop!  
[www.meetup.com/Southeast-Gateway-Group-Sierra-Club-Hikes-and-Activities/](http://www.meetup.com/Southeast-Gateway-Group-Sierra-Club-Hikes-and-Activities/)

# PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH

On September 8, representatives from SEGG attended the Peoples Climate March in Milwaukee. Nearly 400 people were in attendance from across Southeast Wisconsin.

Participants were invited to sign two poster petitions calling for 100% renewable energy—one dedicated to the City of Milwaukee, one dedicated to the local utility We Energies.



Photo credits to Joe Brusky.



The rally took place at Zeidler Union Square, which is in front of We Energies headquarters, and ended at City Hall. Two of the featured speakers at the rally, Sister Janet Weyker and Assembly Rep. Greta Neubauer, were from the Racine area. The rally was emceed by long-time environmental justice leader and activist George Martin of 350-Milwaukee and Peace Action Wisconsin.



In addition to the rally and march, about half a dozen organizations tabled in the park. There was also a roaming street theater cast of fossil fuel villains and climate super heroes (some of whom were played by students from the UW Milwaukee Improv Team) which added an element of whimsy and theatricality to the event.





**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. 16, 2018**

Vote for up to 2 candidates. Second box is for joint members only.



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

**Lisa Selje**

**Laura Buska**

**Lisa Selje** is currently the Director of the Matheson Memorial Library in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. A life-long environmentalist, she was born in Baraboo and grew up in Columbia County not too far from Aldo Leopold's shack. Lisa has a BA in French and Master's in Library & Information Studies from UW-Madison. She completed her Master Gardener training in Walworth County in 2016. In her spare time she enjoys reading, gardening and hiking.



**Laura Buska** is an environmental studies and biology student at UW Parkside. She has enjoyed working with the Eco Justice Center of Racine learning how to organically cultivate food crops and flowers for market, as well as teaching and mentoring younger students. As a warrior for the environment, she enjoys finding ways to lower her ecological footprint and cooking plant based meals with her family. Her goals include having a career in environmental science, operating of a self-sufficient homestead, and owning an environmentally conscious business.



**2018 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership  
Executive Committee**

- Tom Rutkowski (Chair).....natom@wi.rr.com
- Judy Rockwell (Vice Chair).....jjrockwell@gmail.com
- Laura Feider (Secretary).....lmflowerpower@hotmail.com
- Joe Dubaniewicz (Program Chair).....joeduban@yahoo.com
- Allan Sommer (Outings Chair).....sommerallan4@gmail.com
- Laura Schulz..(Webmaster).....schulz@uwp.edu

**Other Group Leaders**

- Jeff Sytsma (Treasurer).....jeff12759@aol.com
- Mary Schroeder (Hospitality).....ilovedogsandcats2@yahoo.com
- Barry Thomas (Conservation, Kenosha Co.).....bthomas6@wi.rr.com
- 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 Jan-Mar Issue:**

**Dec. 10, 2018**

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



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of the Sierra Club  
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### **In This Issue:**

October Program:  
Water Matters-  
Foxconn & Development

Time to Vote!  
Two New Candidates on  
Your ExComm Ballot

Reforesting Colonial Park  
White River Paddle Outing

People's Climate March Photos

It's Cranberry Time!

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

Twelve SEGG members and guests met on July 15 for a paddle down Nippersink Creek, through Glacial Park, Illinois. Glacial Park is part of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge System. We enjoyed seeing prairie plants, marsh and riverine plants, beautiful oak woods, plus kames and other glacial features for which the park is named. Another outing is scheduled for Oct. 14. See page 5 for details.