



SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club

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>4

From the Chair
by Tom Rutkowski

These late summer evenings, dragonflies hover along the lakeshore in a static swarm, a name that captures well a thousand insects quickly darting overhead, a lot of motion going nowhere. They're there for weeks and one day they're gone. As black walnuts ripen, squirrels are chasing each other around the tree in a frenzied pursuit that will last as long as there are nuts to fight over. While there is still sweet corn at the farmer's market, bushels of apples have already appeared. From the early Jersey Macs and Paula Reds to late October's Golden Russets, the apple harvest itself contains its own unique phases. There could easily be a dozen seasons, some distinct, some overlapping, between late summer and the end of October when that dramatic transition between brilliant leaves and bare branches marks another threshold crossed. We call most of that time fall, from the old English word "feallan", though so much more than falling and dying takes place. For brevity and habit's sake we divide up the year into four seasons, but the rhythm of the year is greater than four. Just four names for all that change seems an imprecise and crude measure.



Are you noticing more than four seasons?

Last summer, my wife was reading Pico Iyer's *Autumn Light* when she paused in the middle of a page to tell me that first in ancient China and later in Japan there were seventy-two seasons. As often happens, I noticed another reference to these expanded seasons in a magazine which in turn led me to a beautiful app called *72 Seasons* (Yes, there is a free app for that, too!) which explores Japanese culture and the natural world throughout the year. Just the names of these seasons are a window into a world when people were attentive and attuned to the cyclical changes of the natural world. This was a nation of phenologists and they seemed to have a knack for poetic naming. This time in the beginning of September is called *Earth and Sky Begin to Cool*. Others have names like *Thunder Lowers Its Voice*, *The North Wind Brushes the Leaves*, and *The Salmon Gather to Spawn*. Some of these are specific to Japan—*The Rice Ripens*, *The First Paulownia Fruit Ripen*—

wouldn't mean much here in Southeastern Wisconsin. These seasons, lasting four or five days each, also offer a glimpse of a world that must have been much more regular and consequently more predictable.

Now the seasons are scrambled, with some seasons growing longer, others shorter. The climate, in general, has become more erratic and with that variation the interaction between species is confused and interrupted. Scientists who study these changes call this phenological mismatch. It's what happens when flowers bloom before pollinators arrive, when snow melts before winter fur is shed, when predators show up late for dinner. Since the speed of this change is something new, it isn't clear how well the participants in this complex, intricate dance will be able to adapt their diet, their migration, their hunting habits. The time signature of year keeps changing. It is an accidental experiment we're conducting on the natural world and ourselves.

You've heard the joke about the two seasons in Wisconsin—winter and road repair. I suspect it is a joke told in every state where winters are harsh enough to tear up the roads. Like seventy-two seasons in Japan, it does say a lot about what matters to us, about what we pay attention to. Many of the other periods of our year revolve around holidays and the shopping that goes along with them. There are Back to School Specials, Black Fridays and Cyber Mondays, and that long stretch between Halloween and Christmas known as the holiday shopping season. Often the subject of news reports, this two-month stretch is seen as the vital sign of the economy. Then there is football season, basketball season and baseball season that come with their own unique yearly celebrations and rituals. With all that driving, and shopping, and watching, the natural world is eclipsed.

The names we use to mark our journey through a year reflect our attention but can also redirect that attention. Maybe we should note and celebrate *First Ice*, *Daffodils Piercing Snow*, and *Gray Snowdrifts Finally Gone*. We'll drink beer, of course, instead of sake, and adapt other customs appropriate to our place. We'll name and rename the more than four seasons of the year so that we'll better notice our surroundings and how quickly the world is changing. -TR

GET INVOLVED → START HERE!

SEGG Program on Wind Power with Christopher Nolan, Vestas Senior Manager

Thursday, October 17 at 6:30 PM - Gateway Technical College-Burlington Campus,
Room 100 - 496 McCanna Parkway, Burlington, WI

If you've ever driven through a vast field of wind turbines and gotten a boost of spirits, this program is for you. We hear much about new solar developments, but wind power often gets less attention in our region. Join us as Burlington's own Christopher Nolan, a Vestas Wind Systems Senior Manager, talks about the state of wind power and its great potential. Vestas is the energy industry's global partner on sustainable energy solutions.

Growing up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin, Nolan saw the environmental footprint that individuals and companies can have on this world and he knew he could make a positive impact. Years of studies—from proper farming practices to limnology studies around flooding and the Fox River—began his path in the Renewable Power Generation.

Working up from Site Safety Coordinator to Senior Manager for Operational Excellence, Nolan has been active in the transportation, construction, operations and maintenance of wind turbines, along with repowering aging assets. His influence within the industry spreads across 11 countries throughout Europe, North America, Central America, Oceania, and Asia.



Conservation Committee Meeting - Thursday October 24 at 5:30 PM

Meet at SEGG Secretary, Laura Feider's condo, 1451 Pheasant Run Dr. Unit 201, Mount Pleasant, WI 53406. Come discuss our conservation goals and some action items we can come up with to help meet those goals. Email Lmflowerpower@hotmail.com for more info.

Join us in October and November as we discuss two new books that focus on the details and the need for a **Green New Deal**.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

WHY THE FOSSIL FUEL CIVILIZATION
WILL COLLAPSE BY 2028,
and THE BOLD ECONOMIC PLAN
TO SAVE LIFE ON EARTH

JEREMY RIFKIN
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE THIRD INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Green New Deal: Why the Fossil Fuel Civilization Will Collapse by 2028 and the Bold Economic Plan to Save Life on Earth, by Jeremy Rifkin

Monday, October 21 at 6:30 PM - Racine Brewing Company, 303 Main Street,
Racine, WI **RSVP: natom@wi.rr.com**

"In *The Green New Deal*, *New York Times* bestselling author and renowned economic theorist Jeremy Rifkin delivers the political narrative and economic plan for the Green New Deal that we need at this critical moment in history.... With twenty-five years of experience implementing Green New Deal-style transitions for both the European Union and the People's Republic of China, Rifkin offers his vision for how to transform the global economy and save life on Earth."

ON FIRE

The (Burning) Case for a
GREEN NEW DEAL
NAOMI KLEIN
Author of the New York Times bestseller THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

On Fire: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal, by Naomi Klein

Thursday, November 7 at 6:30 PM - Racine Brewing Company 303 Main Street,
Racine, WI **RSVP: natom@wi.rr.com**

Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine* and *This Changes Everything*, makes the case for a Green New Deal—explaining how bold climate action can be a blueprint for a just and thriving society. The foremost chronicler of the economic war waged on both people and planet, Klein writes for a broad audience from the frontlines of contemporary natural disasters, not just giving us dire warnings of what awaits us if we refuse to act, but also hopeful glimpses for a better future.

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



2020 Sierra Club Calendars are Here!

Sierra Club Wilderness Calendars have been America's best-loved wall calendar for more than 40 years. These full-color calendars filled with stunning photos make nice holiday gifts—plus they are a great way to support your Southeast Gateway Group activities!

Engagement calendars are spiral-bound with a week-by-week format and include 56 full-color images by America's leading nature photographers. Engagement calendars cost **\$16**.

The spiral-bound wall calendar features twelve stunning landscape photographs for **\$15**.

Calendars are available for purchase at SEGG programs or by contacting Judy Rockwell at jjrockwell@gmail.com or 262-742-4306.

Cranberry Time!!!

SEGG is again offering fresh cranberries direct from a family-owned Wisconsin farm. These are the plump variety rarely found in grocery stores, packed the day they are picked. Cranberries are rich in vitamins C, B-6, potassium and magnesium.

Use them fresh for the holidays or keep them in the freezer for up to 12 months. Each 1-pound bag costs \$3.75 and helps support your Southeast Gateway Group.

Deadline for ordering is October 30. Delivery/pick up will begin November 2. Contact Jeff Sytsma at (262) 637-6845 or Jeff12759@aol.com to place your order.

Hwy 38 Clean Up

Saturday, Oct. 5 - 9:00 AM

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

Equipment is provided. Please wear good walking shoes, sunscreen and bug repellent. Contact Jeff Sytsma for more information: 262 637-6845 or 262 497-4761 or Jeff12759@aol.com

Make-A-Difference Day is Oct. 26

If you've been to Colonial Park this summer, you've seen quite a different park from what you were used to. The removal of over 1,000 dead ash trees in 2018 destroyed the canopy that shaded much of the forest floor, changing the ecosystem almost overnight. In order to replace the canopy, Racine Parks Forestry division

planted over 400 whips (5' tall young trees) last fall and we are pleased to note that a large percentage of them have survived and are growing nicely.

In the spring, **Weed Out! Racine**, with various student groups, planted 200 small shrubs and understory trees to help provide cover and food for wildlife. We used protective tree sleeves, which have improved survival rates over previous planting seasons. A grant from Fund For Lake Michigan enabled us to have the invasive reed canary grass treated;



that will open up the wetland area so that other wetland plants have a chance to grow.

On Make A Difference Day, October 26, the City of Racine will again plant whips - this time about 500! SEGG and **Weed Out! Racine** are charged with recruiting the volunteers that will get the job done.

Please Join Us!!

We'll meet at 8AM at the Steelhead Facility in Lincoln Park and work until the job is completed. Please come when you can and leave when you must. All help is appreciated! Equipment is provided. Dress for the weather with sturdy shoes and long trousers and bring plenty of water.

Our overall objective is to create a functional ecosystem that will protect water quality, create wildlife habitat, and provide a pleasant experience for humans that use the park. Please join us for this important work! **Questions? Contact Melissa at melissa.warner3@a2q.com or 262 639-0918**

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

White River Canoe/Kayak Paddle



-- Sunday, October 13 at 1:00 PM --

The White River connects Geneva Lake to Echo Lake in Burlington, WI, and ultimately drains into the Fox River.

SEGG Outings Chair, Allan Sommer, will be leading a canoe/kayak trip on a short but beautiful section of the White River on Sunday, October 13 at 1PM.

Meet at the park where Ore Creek and the White River connect in beautiful downtown Lyons, WI—in the gravel parking lot south of Water St. on Mill St.—and we will transport canoes and kayaks to the launching spot at White River Park on Sheridan Springs Road. Then we'll carpool to get all the cars back to the park since there is no parking allowed on Sheridan Springs Road.

The river is not a wild one, but it is scenic, clear and shallow. Should you tip over, you can simply stand up to save yourself! This is a good river for beginners.

Plan for the entire trip to take about 2-3 hours, including the boat drop off and trip back to the parking area.

There are optional whitewaters at the end!

A PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE IS REQUIRED

Clean Power Coalition Tuesday Night Meetings

Oct. 22*—Nov. 19—Dec. 17

6:30 PM at the Eco-Justice Center,
7133 Michna Rd, Caledonia, WI 53402

Questions? Email Tom Rutkowski at
natom@wi.rr.com

*Oct. date changed due to PSC Rate Hearings

cleanpowerwi.org

Nachusa Grasslands Hike Saturday, November 9 at 9AM

This hike was originally scheduled for August, but was postponed due to poor weather.



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. Given the immense size of their pasture, they are not always visible, 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 variety of prairie plants and animals that represent one of our most threatened ecosystems.

If time permits there are other Illinois State Parks nearby, such as Lowden and White Pines, which abut the Rock River and offer 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 and plenty of water. There are no dining options at the preserve, but there are restrooms.

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

A Community Program Presented by Greening Greater Racine

CLIMATE CRISIS: Science, Consequences, Solutions

Sunday, November 17, 1:30 to 3:00

Case High School Auditorium
7345 Washington Avenue, Racine
Enter through the North Theater Entrance Doors

With Guest Speaker, Bob Lindmeier
Chief Meteorologist at WKOW-TV Madison



Wins & Losses

By Tom Rutkowski

First the good news. In July, We Energies announced a settlement agreement that would end its pursuit—at least for the next few years—of the solar fixed cost recovery, otherwise known as the solar tax. Five years ago, when a similar request was submitted to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, there was resistance, but nothing like the concerted opposition that met this most recent proposal. The efforts of the Wisconsin Solar Coalition, an alliance of twenty local environmental groups, as well as the many petitions, demonstrations, and letters to the editor made it clear that this was a very unpopular measure. The Racine Journal Times and the Kenosha News went so far as to call We Energies petty for going after 400 owners of solar installations when they have over one million customers. We Energies settled with RENEW Wisconsin in exchange for RENEW's backing of a utility scale solar project. Such a tax would have made it difficult to position the utility as pro-renewable while it crushed other renewable energy participants. In the end, public opinion mattered enough for the company to withdraw the request.

This power of public opinion was also evident in the recent Wisconsin DNR decision on the variances requested by We Energies in its Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) water permit. In a recent press release, Jason Knutson, DNR Wastewater Section Chief stated, "Public participation is essential to the permitting process, so we appreciate that so many people shared their thoughts. After considering more than 600 comments, we made some notable changes to the proposed permit and variance terms and conditions." In addition to the comments submitted, on February 11 more than 200 people showed up to a hearing in a small conference room when normally only 5-10 attend. As a result of all this input, the DNR accelerated by two years the compliance date for ending discharge of water used to flush coal ash out of boilers. If approved by the EPA, this limited window could force We Energies to reconsider how much more to spend on a power plant that is already too costly and outdated. The DNR press release also states, "Another change resulting from public input applies specifically to the mercury limitation on Outfall 007. The new permit reduces the interim mercury discharge limitation from the proposed value of 4.1 parts per trillion to 3.7, setting the first-ever cap on mercury from this outfall."

While any mercury discharge is too much and this newer limit is set beyond the monthly average criterion, it is worth noting that this is the first limit set for this particular discharge point. These are decisions usually made without much attention. It is heartening to see that when the public takes notice, the DNR responds.

Finally, We Energies has committed to two large renewable energy projects. At the beginning of August, the utility said it would invest \$130 million in Wisconsin's first utility-scaled solar farm. We Energies would own 100 megawatts of the 300 megawatt solar farm called Badger Hollow in the western part of the state. WEC Energy group also announced that they will acquire 80% ownership of the Thunderhead Wind EnergyCenter. This large scale project in Nebraska will include 108 turbines and will produce 300 megawatts of electricity by the end of 2020.

There's bad news as well, news that overshadows these increments of progress. In a recent earnings call, Gail Klappa, CEO of WEC, assured shareholders that the company will continue to burn coal until the middle of the century. Such a commitment reveals not only intentions but also priorities. Return on shareholder investment, not public health, not the climate, not even the economic interests of the residents and customers in Southeast Wisconsin are included in that bold projection.

In recent expert testimony filed on behalf of the Sierra Club, economist Paul Chernick revealed that WEC has lost an average of \$98 million a year by operating the two coal plants in Oak Creek instead of using cheaper, cleaner renewables. **The older of the two plants, the 52-year-old South Oak Creek plant, is costing ratepayers \$75 million a year alone.** Chernick's conclusion was that "ratepayers should not be charged for the costs of keeping the plants operating unprofitably." In response to this information, Brendan Conway, a WEC spokesman, has stated that the coal fleet was "essential for keeping the lights on during last winter's polar vortex." It's a justification we're likely to hear more often as people question how long we must continue to pay extra for the burden of living next to a coal plant that adversely affects our air and water, our health and climate. In an ironic twist, the stated reason for continued reliance on coal, the polar vortex, is linked by many scientists to climate change which is, in turn, produced by the burning of fossil fuels like coal.

As a regulated monopoly, WEC Energy is, to a large extent, insulated from the consequences of its decisions though such consequences exact significant costs from the rest of us in terms of our health and climate. These extra costs are written off as externalities to this powerful company's bottom line. The cost of renewable energy, particularly on a utility scale, will continue to decrease. It remains to be seen how much money we'll have to lose each year before WEC does the right thing and retires its costly, harmful, and already outdated coal plants. -TR

**PLEASE SHOW UP!!! Come Testify at the Rate Case Hearings in Milwaukee
Tuesday, October 15 at 2:00 PM & 6:00 PM**

United Community Center, 1028 S. 9th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53204

For more information, including talking points about the case, email Tom at natom@wi.rr.com

Sign Our Petition

Tell We Energies to shut down the Oak Creek Power Plant:

sc.org/retireoakcreek

College Class Meets Real World

By Laura Ann Evelyn Buska, UW-Parkside Environmental Science Major

The Spring 2019 Environmental Policy class started like any other I had taken at UW-Parkside. Required textbooks were purchased and a pad of clean (and recycled) paper was at the ready. However, upon viewing the syllabus I discovered that this class would not be structured the same as others I have previously experienced. Our goal was not only to learn new material, but to directly apply what we were learning to current and local environmental issues.

To achieve this our professor, Mr. Ross Astoria, divided our class into three working groups; Waste and Recycling, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Water Protection. We were paired with a leader in our group's industry and spent time visiting with them and discussing their visions for, and barriers to, a more sustainable future. As a member of the Waste and Recycling Group, our team visited the Superintendent of Waste Management for Kenosha, Keir Powell, at the Kenosha Dump. There we were

given a tour and listened to Powell's concerns for the future of waste management and recycling for Kenosha.

Zack Van Den Berge, Parkside student and member of the Waste and Recycling Group, says, "This project was a much needed eye opener for me. I had always considered myself to be an advocate for the environment. But through this project, I've learned that much of what I was doing wasn't enough."

From our meeting information, each student was required to write a proposal to Mayor Antaramian of Kenosha that included the reasons for establishing a Kenosha Sustainability Committee, as well as the composition of the committee and its powers and duties.

In lieu of exams, we researched state and national policies that govern our individual workgroup's medium. We also studied other municipalities that had already made strides with the same issues to determine what worked and why. We were then required to write papers outlining the information we found. Our assignments, when compiled over

the semester, created a package of information that upon finals week were shared with our groups' local industry leaders, leaders from local environmental groups and the Mayor of Kenosha. Our final class presentation was held at UW-Parkside and included presentations from each group. We then held smaller workshops for each medium that offered in-depth details and allowed a dialogue between the groups and the guests.

This class and our experience from this project was eye opening, adding fuel to the flame every environmental science major has within them. Issues like the ones studied in this class are what brought us to school in the first place. Through this project we were able to connect with people outside of our classroom and look for ways to aid in sustainability efforts close to home. We were given freedom and flexibility within our groups, allowing us to combat the issues with care and passion. All in all, I can honestly say this was an invaluable experience in which I am grateful to have been a part of. -LB

meetup

Find SEGG sponsored events like local hikes, bike rides and canoe/kayak outings.

Start your free account today!

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

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



**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 ballot to a meeting or mail it to:

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

Deadline for voting is **Nov. 15, 2019**

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

Membership No. _____

Andy Hayes

Zack Van Den Berge



Andy Hayes is a science teacher at Tremper High School in Kenosha. He studied at UW-Platteville and received a degree in chemistry with minors in nanotechnology and sustainable and renewable energy.

Andy is a true believer in solar energy and wants to see more use of this infinite resource. He is excited for the opportunity to teach Kenosha's youth about alternative energy sources and the benefits of using each type. Andy enjoys the great outdoors and can often be seen riding his bike around the city of Kenosha.



Zack Van Den Berge currently attends UW-Parkside for pre-law and runs a branch for his family-owned real estate business. In his future, he hopes to be able to use knowledge of the law as an officer of the court to assist in cases related to environmental protection, conservation, and preservation.

Since growing up on a scenic lake, surrounded by trees and a bird sanctuary, the environment has always been an important concern for Zack. He is a published author working on his second book, an avid plant enthusiast, a cook, and a proponent for LGBT rights with the support of his boyfriend, René.

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
- Judy Rockwell (Vice Chair).....jjrockwell@gmail.com
- Laura Feider (Secretary).....Lmflowerpower@hotmail.com
- Allan Sommer (Outings Chair).....sommerallan4@gmail.com
- Laura Schulz..(Webmaster/Programs).....schulz@uwp.edu
- Laura Buska.....lauraannbuska@gmail.com
- Joe Dubaniewicz.....joeduban@yahoo.com

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. 15, 2019

Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club
1529 Crabapple Dr.
Racine, WI 53405-1705



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www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway



Awesome SEGG volunteers helped plant over 400 new trees in Colonial Park. Mark your calendars! October 26 is **Make-a-Difference Day** and our next planting date. See p.3

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Environmental Policy Class
October Program: Wind Power
*...and more ways
You Can Get Involved!*

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Email natom@wi.rr.com
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