



**SIERRA
CLUB**

**GREAT WATERS GROUP
NEWSLETTER**

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com

Winter 2022 NO. 4



Dan Buckler, our favorite urban forester, will lead a hike to start the Holiday Party and Fundraiser at Havenwoods State Forest on Dec. 3.

Holiday party scheduled outdoors

Get ready for a winter hike! While we will not be able to hold our annual Holiday Party and Fundraiser indoors because of COVID-19 concerns, we will hold an outdoor version at Havenwoods State Forest on Saturday, Dec. 3, from noon until 3:30 p.m.

We will hike with Dan Buckler and learn about plants important to winter traditions, then share a meal of soup and bread from the Soup Market, along with desserts provided by volunteers. We even plan on holding a silent auction, so please join in for a holly, jolly good time outdoors.

Our intention is to host everything outside, but as this is Wisconsin, we will be prepared with outdoor canopies and some space in the building should the weather become intolerable. Bathrooms will also be available indoors.

We ask participants to bring their own dishes, utensils and napkins, as well as their favorite non-alcoholic beverage. There is no outdoor seating, so please bring your favorite camp chair to sit in while you eat and socialize.

The cost to attend is \$25. This is our only fundraising event of the year to help support this newsletter, our monthly programs and the important environmental work we do.

Please register and pay in advance at <https://bit.ly/GWGHoliday2022>.

Registration and payment also can be made by check made out to
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Winter Programs

Look for program details in future e-letters, on our website and on Facebook. Please register for events at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters/calendar to get Zoom links and updates.

Environmental Justice Matters III – A National and Local Focus
Monday, Nov. 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Central United Methodist Church, 639 N. 25th St. at Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee

We invite local activists to share what other national environmental organizations (The Nature Conservancy and Audubon Society) are doing in Milwaukee. We'll also provide updates on other local and
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Notes from the Chair

In this season of selecting our elected representatives at the state and federal levels, we are also happy to conduct our annual election of Great Waters Group Executive Committee members.

In this edition of the newsletter you'll find candidate statements from four qualified and enthusiastic GWG members who would like to represent the group and help make decisions on our work and priorities for the next two years. Please cast your ballots in this election by Dec. 16, either online or by mailing in the paper ballot that you'll find in the newsletter.

Also in this edition you'll find a report on the We Energies rally that took place Oct. 15 to urge We Energies to stop its bid to raise electricity rates by 13% and gas rates by 10.7%, and instead focus on energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technology.

A broad coalition of organizations joined Sierra Club to organize this rally and submit comments to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission as strategies to protect low-income ratepayers who would be most severely affected by rate increases.

Other items of note in this edition include a recap of our October program at the Indian Community School where we enjoyed a wonderfully informative tour from School Administrator Jason Dropik, details about coming programs and an update on GWG's annual holiday party.

We look forward to seeing you at these and other events. As always, if you have questions or ideas you'd like to share, please feel free to get in touch with me: jabel209@gmail.com.

Jenny Abel

Visit to Indian Community School

Sierra Club Great Waters Group members and friends spent an early fall evening in Franklin, learning about Milwaukee's Indian Community School and its connection with Mother Earth. School Administrator Jason Dropik, a member of the Bad River Band of Ojibwe, showed off the beautiful grounds featuring three distinct ecosystems and discussed the Seven Sacred Gifts that serve as the values for the school's K-8 education.

The Indian Community School is a private school where children learn about the languages and cultures of their ancestors, specifically Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Ojibwe and Oneida, but also other Native languages and cultures as

opportunities allow. Four Native languages – Menominee, Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe and Oneida – are taught at the school, and all teachers and staff are required to learn one.

The 366 students, who represent more than 40 tribes, attend tuition-free and receive breakfast and lunch every school day. The school is not part of any state-funded voucher program and receives no tax dollars, Dropik said.

The first Indian Community School was founded by three Oneida mothers, who removed their children from the Milwaukee Public Schools system and taught them in one of their homes. After the Founding Mothers started the school, non-Native educators who believed in the cause also taught there. One of the Sierra Club members attending the Sept. 19 program taught at the school's third location, the Coast Guard Station on the Milwaukee lakefront, when she was a young teacher.

It was near sunset when Dropik took the group out on the grounds to visit the first of the school's three surrounding environments, the prairie, where students grow corn, beans and squash in the school garden. Kids are taught to see their environment as "food rich," Dropik said. They learn how to tap maple trees for syrup and show gratitude for what the land provides.

Hundreds of plant medicines grow on the grounds, Dropik said. Students are taught to see storms as something other

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Volunteer Leadership Council Contact List

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Nearby Nature restoration project begins

By David Thomas
Nearby Nature Milwaukee

“Anybody can love the mountains, but it takes a soul to love the prairie.”

– Prairie chronicler Willa Cather

Nearby Nature Milwaukee, an environmental justice and equity initiative, began seriously engaging in urban prairie restoration in Hopkins Hollow this past year with a half-acre project that involved three summer interns.

Hopkins Hollow is the name we’ve given to 18 acres along Lincoln Creek that the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District owns and maintains for flood control. It’s the same area that the Great Waters Group adopted in 2017 as part of Milwaukee Riverkeeper’s Adopt-A-River program.

During a September 2021 visit to the area with MMSD Director Kevin Shafer, we proposed a short “demonstration trail.” Kevin liked our ideas, and less than two months later we broke ground on the trail, which starts at N. Hopkins and W. Congress streets.

The short trail brings you to a wild area where you cannot imagine you are in the middle of Milwaukee. It is a beautiful inner-city wild space where deer roam and wildflowers bloom. Traffic sounds melt away, and the sound of birds, crickets and a gurgling waterfall greet the lucky visitor.

During Kevin’s visit, Martina Patterson, Nearby Nature’s land steward and youth educator, raised the topic of prairie restoration. As we finished the trail, we began discussion with MMSD about expanding our agreement to include prairie restoration.

On the winter solstice, a group traveled past Mukwonago to the Meyer

Holiday party will be outdoors

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Great Waters Group of the SC and sent no later than Nov. 26 to:
Jane Schneider
4115 N. 96th St.
Wauwatosa, WI 53222

If you are unable to attend but would like to support the GWG, you can donate at www.teamsierra.org/wisconsin/gwg.

Look for further details in our November e-letter and on our website and Facebook page.

If you have questions or want to help, email Jane Schneider at janes0502@gmail.com.

Winter 2022



Martina Patterson, Nearby Nature’s land steward and youth educator, checks out a tall Maximilian sunflower at Hopkins Hollow at N. Hopkins and W. Congress streets. Nearby Nature has begun a prairie restoration project there.

Nature Preserve at the invitation of Lamont Smith of The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Our purpose was to learn about prairies and begin to gather seeds for our Urban Prairie Restoration Project.

Besides TNC and Nearby Nature staff, the group included Danitra Jones from Northwest Side CDC, Urban Ecology Center land stewards and Milton Byers of Audubon’s Wild Indigo program. We collected buckets of yellow prairie coneflower, wild bergamot (bee balm) and prairie clover and will use several cultivation methods to introduce these seeds to Hopkins Hollow in the coming year.

This past summer brought lots of other activity to the area. Our youth interns sampled areas in the half-acre space and identified 30 plant species – a mix of natives and invasives. Many bushels of invasives were removed, mostly wormwood, teasel and wild parsnip.

Zachary Kron, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission rare plant specialist, surveyed a large section of the hollow and identified close to 100 plant varieties. At a fall volunteer workday, 15 helpers came out, dug teasel and planted some native plants.

Full prairie restoration can take several years, but with partnerships with GWG, MMSD, TNC and others, we hope this work will expand and flourish. Already this fall, school groups have visited to use the area as a living classroom and connect with nature.

More information can be found at www.nearbynaturemke.org.

Ron Mann Butterfly Garden replanted

Thanks go out to the volunteers from Sierra Club Great Waters Group and Urban Ecology Center who, in a few short hours on a Friday in September, transformed a barren area into a renewed Ron Mann Butterfly Garden at Riverside Park.



This newly revised Butterfly Garden contains all native plants, including little bluestem, coreopsis lanceolata and meadow blazing star, and it is intended to be self-sustaining.

GWG and community members planted the original garden in 2002 with funds raised in memory of Mann, who loved butterflies and had been active in the Sierra Club at the local, state and national levels. His mother, son, wife and friends have sat at that peaceful place many times.

Ron Mann

But 20 years and one pandemic later, the garden, which featured many annual flowers, was overtaken by thistles and other undesirables, with just a few milkweeds and one columbine surviving. Friends wanted to see it revived in a sustainable way that wouldn't require UEC to water the site, which is across the park from the building.

Two GWG members met with UEC naturalist Caitlin Reinartz, who came up with the plan that features colorful, butterfly-friendly plants and also meets the requirements of Milwaukee County Parks.



Mike Mann and his son, Logan, help plant native species in September to renew the Ron Mann Butterfly Garden planted in memory of Mike's father in Riverside Park near the Urban Ecology Center.

Donations to help cover the \$3,000 cost of the plants and walkway are still being accepted at <https://urbanecologycenter.org> under Donate. Write "Butterfly Garden" in the Notes section near the bottom of the page to ensure the money goes to the garden. These donations honor the memory of Ron Mann and butterflies everywhere. Thank you!

Winter Programs

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state initiatives on environmental justice. Panelists include: Lamont Smith of the Nature Conservancy, Milton Byers III of Audubon Great Lakes – Wild Indigo and Deneine Powell, Fusecorp Executive Fellow at City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office.

Midwest Environmental Advocates: Recent Victories and the Road Ahead

Monday, Jan. 16, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. On Zoom

Tony Wilkin Gibart, executive director of Midwest Environmental Advocates, will give an update on recent victories for Midwest Environmental Advocates, a nonprofit law center, and a look at what's ahead regarding PFAS "forever chemicals," concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), pipelines and more.

Fourth Annual African American Environmental Pioneer Awards

February date and location to be determined

People of color have been involved in the movement for environmental justice for many years but are often not recognized for that work. This annual celebration of local activists seeks to change that. For updates follow Nearby Nature Milwaukee at www.facebook.com/nearbynaturemke.

Rights of Nature and Indigenous Activism

Monday, March 20, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. On Zoom

Presenters will be White Earth tribal attorney Frank Bibeau and Thomas Linzey, senior legal counsel for the Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights.

In 2018, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe recognized the rights of manoomin (wild rice), the first law to recognize the legal rights of a plant species. In 2021, manoomin and the White Earth Band sued the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in White Earth Tribal Court to enforce the rights of wild rice, the first rights of nature enforcement case to be brought in a tribal court. Learn about the Rights of Nature movement, how it aligns with the traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous people, and how it provides a tool for enforcing ecological health as a priority.

Make Your Home More Sustainable Using Community Resources

Monday, May 15, 2023

Time and location to be announced

Presenters include Elizabeth Hittman of Illinois Solar for All, Jay Feiker of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and Mike Arney of Citizens' Climate Lobby. Homeowners will learn about different community resources to help them make their homes more sustainable by improving energy efficiency, storm drainage, etc.



Administrator Jason Dropik leads Sierra Club attendees on a tour of the Milwaukee Indian Community School grounds in Franklin during the September program.

GWG visits Indian Community School

(Continued from page 2)

than an emergency that must be dealt with. “Thunder brings messaging and protection for Ojibwe people,” Dropik said, while watching some massing clouds.

The wetlands, which are linked to a tributary of the Root River, have piers and boardwalks. In interacting with the different environments, the children are taught to practice a skill set that emphasizes sustainability. “We’re learning,” Dropik admits. Rolling lawns surround the school, and

an oak savannah creates a forest environment leading to a field where students play lacrosse and other Indigenous games that were played long before white settlers arrived.

After sunset, the group of about 35 entered the Drum, which is a circular-shaped theater, to learn more about the school, including a video narrated by second graders, who first got engaged with picking up litter that had blown onto the 178-acre grounds and then graduated to helping plant the garden in spring.



Community members take part in a rally against We Energies’ proposed rate increase in October.

GWG joins fight vs. We Energies rate boost

The Great Waters Group and the Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter have joined with other Wisconsin organizations to fight against We Energies’ proposed rate increase. The utility has asked the state Public Service Commission for permission to raise electricity rates for residential customers by 13% and fossil gas rates by 10.7%. (You may be accustomed to the fuel source being called “natural gas,” but this obscures the fact that methane is
(Continued on page 8)



A bike outing on July 30 followed Lake Michigan from South Shore Park to the beginning of Seven Bridges trail in Grant Park and back.

Watch for word of more outings

Thank you to all who have joined us during our summer and fall outings. We've enjoyed some great hikes, bike rides, tree tours and, most of all, meeting new friendly faces.

Please keep an eye out for new outings that will be shared via e-letters, at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters and at www.facebook.com/SierraClubGWG.

Don't forget to vote to protect environment

A lot is at stake for the environment in this election on Nov. 8, and for democracy itself. Polls show some of these races are neck and neck, so *every vote is vital*.

The Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter has endorsed Gov. Tony Evers in his re-election bid and Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes for US Senate.

In Milwaukee-area races for the US House, the club has endorsed Rep. Gwen Moore (4th District) and Mike Van Someren (5th District).

To see the Legislative Scorecard showing how your state senator and representative voted in the 2021-22 session and the full list of endorsements in state Senate and Assembly races, go to www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/lobbying-elections/political.

"These candidates are committed to protecting Wisconsin families' health, air and water and to building a clean energy economy that works for Wisconsin," said Elizabeth Ward, chapter director.

Four candidates seeking seats on Committee

It's time to vote for the next group of people to join the Great Waters Group Executive Committee. They will help shape the work of the Group over the next two years. We have four open spots and four candidates, so when you vote, please be sure to vote to fill all four slots.



Linda Frank

This year, once again, you have the option of filling out and mailing back the paper ballot included with this newsletter, or you can vote electronically using the link sent to you by email. You'll need to have your member number handy. You can find that by going to <https://myaccount.sierraclub.org>.



Tim Karaskiewicz

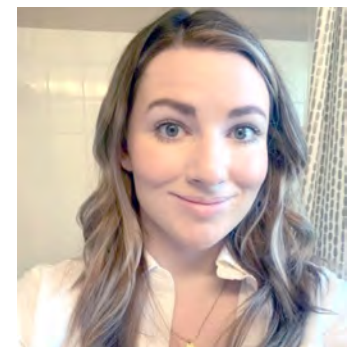
Before voting, please read the statements from our candidates. The deadline to return your ballot is Dec. 16.

Linda Frank

In my first term on the Executive Committee, it was wonderful to work together with many talented and impassioned champions of nature and fairness. I look forward to continuing in this volunteer role. As the Great Waters Group delegate to the Wisconsin Chapter Executive Committee, I have reported on chapter news of interest to our local group. In addition, I served on last year's Nominations Committee, recruiting candidates for the ExCom and ensuring that the



Kerstin Larson



Emily O'Neil

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Four candidates seeking seats

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election process has been carried out in accordance with our bylaws and proper procedure. With me on the committee, the ExCom has had access to the inside scoop on the Milwaukee Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity and is privy to details on the coalition now being formed to support the new Milwaukee Climate & Equity Plan.

The values of the Sierra Club and GWG are also aligned with my work as president of the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy, which ensures the preservation and restoration of precious natural landscapes acquired through fee title or conservation easement. I look forward to a mutual sharing of perspectives and enjoyment of our common respect and appreciation of nature, which is also our future.

Tim Karaskiewicz

I have been a Sierra Club member for more than 25 years. I've worked, hiked and paddled with people who share common values including a fundamental respect for the environment, a desire to preserve native habitat, environmental justice, access to clean water, and the conservation of natural resources. Most of all, I have found a shared sense of respect for the environment in the Sierra activities in which I have participated or led.

I have practiced law for more than 35 years – at a large law firm, as a civil rights attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice, and as general counsel at Mitchell Airport where, among other things, I became familiar with and addressed environmental issues. I have chaired two national airport lawyer organizations and served on several boards of public organizations and nonprofits.

We are witnessing an era of unparalleled environmental threats from human activity. And, in the last 40 years there has been a steady decline in the environment and attitudes about protecting it. Although the courts have provided some relief, a renewed emphasis on political change is necessary. The Sierra Club must rise to this new challenge and seek novel solutions to protect the environment.

Don't forget to vote for the Wisconsin Chapter Executive Committee as well! Members should have received an email with instructions from Chapter Director Elizabeth Ward. That voting closes Nov. 11.

Official Ballot: 2022: GWG Executive Committee Election

Mark an X on the line next to your selections. Each member may vote for up to 4 candidates. (The second member in a household may cast votes as Voter #2.)

Voter #1	Voter #2
<input type="checkbox"/> Linda Frank	<input type="checkbox"/> Linda Frank
<input type="checkbox"/> Tim Karaskiewicz	<input type="checkbox"/> Tim Karaskiewicz
<input type="checkbox"/> Kerstin Larson	<input type="checkbox"/> Kerstin Larson
<input type="checkbox"/> Emily O'Neil	<input type="checkbox"/> Emily O'Neil

Sierra Club member number: _____
Mail completed ballot to:
S.C. Great Waters Group Election Committee
PO Box 26798, Wauwatosa, WI 53226, postmarked by Dec. 16

Kerstin Larson

As a Midwest native, it is obvious to me that this land must be protected and we must invest in the resources to do so. After moving to Milwaukee in 2016, I immediately loved the community here and have been so glad that my work with the Milwaukee Film Festival is able to grow that community. I would be honored to use my skills in event planning and community engagement to support the Great Waters Group's mission.

I have spent my adult life focused on individual efforts to increase sustainability, be it frequenting local businesses/farmers markets, growing native landscaping, or pursuing a waste-free lifestyle. But it is apparent that individual changes can only go so far, and I am excited to find ways to have a greater impact combating climate change, protecting our environment and shaping a better future for people in southeastern Wisconsin.

Emily O'Neil

I am a Milwaukee local and lover of our great state of Wisconsin. I have been volunteering with the Wisconsin Sierra Club for over a year and half now and I can't imagine not spending my free time working on climate initiatives. I have worked on the Transportation Equity committee and served on the Executive Committee for the Wisconsin chapter.

This Earth means the world to me, and I am endlessly thankful for Mother Nature. I know how much of an impact we can make when we work together and provide education and outreach to our local communities. There is so much that can be done right here in Milwaukee, and I am proud to work alongside the community here to fight climate change.



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GWG joins fight against rate increase

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a fossil fuel with 30 times the warming power of carbon dioxide, so let's call it what it is!)

We Energies is claiming that this increase is needed because it is building more clean energy, but it comes just a few months after it announced significant delays in closing its Milwaukee County coal-burning plant. Last year it also announced plans to build new fossil gas infrastructure, even though implementing energy efficiency programs instead would have worked just as well and saved ratepayers money. They are also asking for a *much* smaller rate increase of 6.4% for large industrial customers.

The Wisconsin Environmental Justice & Infrastructure Initiative is calling on We Energies to create a Community Agreement including:

1) Funding to help energy-burdened, low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) ratepayers lower and pay their energy bills.

- 2) Solutions created *with* the most vulnerable ratepayers.
- 3) A broad stakeholder group to oversee these goals and funding.

On Oct. 15, our coalition came together for a rally in Zeidler Union Square across from We Energies' downtown headquarters to tell the utility, the media and the rest of the Milwaukee area that we deserve better. More than 40 people attended.

Five speakers, including state Rep. Supreme Moore Omokunde of Milwaukee and Great Waters Group Conservation Chair Victoria Gillet, spoke about the individual, health and community harms of high energy burden. The energy burden (the amount of income spent on utilities) of households in predominantly Black and Hispanic/Latinx neighborhoods is roughly double that of households in predominantly white neighborhoods. The people in these neighborhoods will suffer the most.

Written comments can be submitted on the PSC website until Nov. 7, under docket 5-UR-110.