



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

FEBRUARY 2023

"Winter is not a season, it's a celebration." - Anamika Mishra

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Spring Primary Election

On the ballot: Supreme Court Justice primary, local school board and other local non-partisan primaries where necessary

MyVote.WI.Gov

Saving Wild Places

The mission of the Sierra Club includes, "To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth." The Wisconsin Chapter has several initiatives to protect sensitive areas and habitats. This is another critically important year for action. Here's how you can help.

WOLVES: The state's new draft Wolf Management Plan centers science, public input, and Tribal engagement—the core tenets of the best way to protect, conserve, and sustain natural resources. Comments on the plan are accepted through the end of February, and the club has other opportunities to engage and educate about this important issue. Please visit the web page to learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/WISC-WolfAction>

LAKE SUPERIOR: There are many reasons to oppose the Nemadji Trail Energy Center being planned by Minnesota Power and Dairyland Power Cooperative. One is the effect this new fossil gas plant would have on Lake Superior and the surrounding area. Construction would destroy surrounding wetlands and use millions of gallons of water. Learn more about the plant plans: <https://tinyurl.com/WISCNoNTEC>

LINE 5 Enbridge's proposal for a new Line 5 segment jeopardizes our water and wetlands, violates treaty rights, and contradicts the Task Force on Climate Change recommendation to avoid new fossil fuel infrastructure. Learn more about this issue and how you can make a difference: <https://tinyurl.com/wisc-noline5>

Education Grants Awarded!

The Coulee Region Sierra Club will award two projects with environmental education grants for the spring 2023 semester.

Alysa Remsburg, Josh Shively, and Mariah Bigelow, representing Solar on La Crosse Schools and Coulee Montessori in La Crosse will use their grant to print two large lobby banners with information about the solar panels installed there in 2022. The banners will help remind students, staff, and visitors about the project and will provide more educational information. In addition, the grant will help pay for worksheet handouts for each teacher to help them teach about solar power.

Jennifer Speckeen, a teacher at Hamilton Elementary School in La Crosse, will use a grant to document, with pictures and writing, students' experiences during a field trip to Hixon Forest. She will also print pictures of the field trip and post them in the school's common area to remind students about the experience and spur conversations about the environment.

Great Backyard Bird Count!

Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days, people spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and report them to organizers. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations. This year's dates are Feb. 17-20. Learn more at: www.birdcount.org



Seeking one or two people to help with the newsletter. Report on environmental events and initiatives in your community, help proofread, or be the backup publisher. Call or text 608-315-2693 or email CRSierraClub@gmail.com for details.

FINANCING YOUR TRANSITION

Those planning to start taking advantage of Inflation Reduction Act and other incentives to “go renewable,” may wonder how they will pay for it. Some banks and credit unions are marketing “green” or “energy smart” loans and other special financing for solar installations, weatherization, heat pumps, and EVs. Some areas offer “on-bill financing” through a utility - you finance your green update through the utility and pay it back over a long time on your utility bill, assuming that, in some cases, the energy savings will pay for the upgrades.

If you can't find such a program at a local institution and don't have the on-bill option, you may be interested in the Clean Energy Credit Union, a small, online only credit union solely focused on providing loans that help people afford clean energy products and services.

Greenpenny, is another online only institution whose mission is, “a form of crowdfunding for the advancement of clean and renewable energy,” Greenpenny's parent

bank is Decorah Bank and Trust, headquartered in Decorah, Iowa, and with its own history of prioritizing clean energy.



NerdWallet rated both institutions among the “9 Best Socially Responsible Banks” in April 2022. Both get good reviews, too, from sources as diverse as Business Insider and the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

There are Coulee Region movements to push for more options. A new group in the Vernon Electric Co-op territory is working to strengthen member control. One priority is on-bill financing for member renewable installations. Some individuals are also pressing their financial institution to create special loan programs to support increasing efficiency and the transition to non-fossil heating, cooking, and transportation.

La Crosse Climate Action Plan

The City of La Crosse Common Council passed an ambitious climate action plan unanimously at its Jan. 12 meeting. This is the result of a years' long process in which the Coulee Region Sierra Club played a major role.

Under the guidance of Lewis Kuhlman, the city's sustainability planner, and with the help of consulting firm, paleBLUEDot, llc., a team of 50 community residents from broadly varied backgrounds worked for about a year on the plan. Extensive public input and outreach sessions ensured a variety of voice and ideas were included.

The plan will help the city fulfill its 2019 pledge to reduce carbon emissions to zero, community-wide, by 2050. To do this, the plan suggests dozens of action steps in nine broad categories: Transportation and Mobility; Land Use and Housing; Buildings and Energy; Waste Management; Water and Wastewater; Local Food and Agriculture; Green Space, Trees, and Ecosystems; Health and Safety; and Economy.

Read more about the plan and process, and download a copy at www.lacrosseclimateactionplan.org.

Seeking EV owners (car/bike) for two April EV events in the Coulee Region. If you'd like to help others learn about electric vehicles, please email cvmaren@mwt.net or call 608-315-2693.

More February Events

2/ 4: Black River State Forest Candlelight Ski/Hike from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. <https://tinyurl.com/brf24hike>

2/ 4: Full Moon Ice Hike at Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) 5:30 p.m. <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Calendar>

2/ 7, 8, 14, 15: Volunteer for the Wild with Mississippi Valley Conservancy at Sugar Creek Bluff at 10 a.m. each day. www.tinyurl.com/MVC-SCBFeb

2/ 8: Wisconsin Sierra Club Virtual Volunteer Night ONLINE at 6:30 p.m. www.tinyurl.com/WISC-VolNite0223

2/ 9: Wisconsin's Conservation Congress from a member's view ONLINE at 7 p.m. www.tinyurl.com/WISC-ConsCon

2/11: MVC Valentine Snowshoe Hike, 1 to 3 p.m. at the La Crosse River Conservancy in Onalaska. www.tinyurl.com/mvc21123

2/11: Adult (21+) Ice Hike at KVR at 1 p.m. <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Calendar>

2/12: Family Ice Exploration at KVR from 12:30-3:30. <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Calendar>

2/17-19: Winter Wonderland Triple Snowshoe Challenge at Skyline Golf Course in Black River Falls. www.jacksoninaction.org/winterwonderland

2/22: Plants in Space - Driftless Dialog at KVR Visitors Center at 5:30 p.m. <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Calendar>