



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group  
MARCH 2024

"We're living in a world of eco-anxiety. ... How is one individual going to make a difference? ... Then you come to Knepp and you see what nature has done." - Isabella Tree, *Wilding: How to Bring Wildlife Back, an Illustrated Guide*

## Thursday, March 14, 7 p.m. Know your Co-op, OWN your Co-op

How Rural Electric Cooperative members can use their power to promote clean, sustainable energy

Register: [www.tinyurl.com/WISC-OwnYourREC](http://www.tinyurl.com/WISC-OwnYourREC)

Some still remember when electricity first came to rural areas. The Rural Electrification Act of 1936 put local folks at the helm of electrical transmission, putting up lines and creating member-owned co-ops. Rates were determined by those who used the power and income was reinvested in operations and returned to members.

Today, many modern-day rural electric co-ops have minimized the power of members and leave their interests and concerns unrepresented.

determining costs. Each new gas or coal power plant - and even abandoned plants - add additional costs. Cooperative members are often kept unaware and the cost analysis of transitioning to renewables is left undone. It's time to put members back in the driver's seat.

If you are a REC member, please join us for an educational webinar about rural energy, electric rates, and getting involved in your local Rural Electric Co-op. The event is co-sponsored by several area and state organizations including CRSC. Register for the link at [tinyurl.com/WISC-OwnYourREC](http://tinyurl.com/WISC-OwnYourREC) or call 608-315-2693 to learn how to attend by phone.

**KNOW YOUR CO-OP; OWN YOUR CO-OP**  
Thursday, March 14th from 7:00 to 8:00PM

JOIN THIS FREE EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR FOR ALL RURAL ELECTRIC CO-OPS

- Co-ops versus generative co-ops.
- Health impacts of natural gas, coal. Rising rates.
- Transitioning to renewables. How to get involved.

SCAN TO REGISTER

<https://bit.ly/3PqjT3x>

## Aldo Leopold Week

*"Perhaps such a shift of values can be achieved by reappraising things unnatural, tame, and confined in terms of things natural, wild and free."*

Celebrate Aldo Leopold with a week of events. In the La Crosse area, several events will highlight Leopold's work and legacy beginning with a March 2 day of events. From 9 to 11:30 a.m., the Nature Place at Myrick Park will host family activities, crafts, live animals, and more.

From noon to 4 p.m., the celebration will move to the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge on Brice Prairie which is celebrating its centennial. Talks, walks, plant give-aways, and more are among the Leopold events at the Refuge, N5727 County Road Z, Onalaska. Learn more at [gatheringwaters.org/event/wisconsin-leopold-days-celebration-in-la-crosse/](http://gatheringwaters.org/event/wisconsin-leopold-days-celebration-in-la-crosse/)

On March 5, a 7 p.m. online talk by entomologist, ecologist and conservationist Doug Tallamy will be hosted by the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership at [www.facebook.com/viterboethic](http://www.facebook.com/viterboethic)

Online, the Aldo Leopold Foundation in Madison offers a week of speakers who will explore the "natural, wild, and free" theme and suggest ways for us to more deeply connect to the land community.

Learn more and register at [www.aldoleopold.org/news-and-events/leopold-week](http://www.aldoleopold.org/news-and-events/leopold-week) Register once for access to all eight events. Replays of all events will be available to registrants.

THE ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION

**NATURAL WILD AND FREE**

LEOPOLD WEEK MARCH 1-10

Virtual Speaker Series

Speakers: Ed Yong, Diane Wilson, Lynda Haupt, Max Sorenson, Buddy Huffaker, First & Wildest, Karl Malcolm, 2023-24 Fellows

## Transit to Trails for All



On February 1 the Wisconsin Sierra Club hosted an online program about a new national club initiative, Transit to Trails for All, to increase accessibility to green spaces, recreation areas, and public parks via public transportation. If you missed the program, you can view it at the club's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubWI/videos/1823149808147267>

Guests included Jesse Piedfort, Deputy Director of the Sierra Club's Clean Transportation for All campaign; Gerry James, Deputy Director of the club's Outdoors for All campaign; Kim Biedermann, Principal Planner - Regional Bike/Ped Coordinator for the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission; and Cathy Van Maren of the Coulee Region Sierra Club.

National goals include establishing at least ten new public transit routes and T2T projects. Learn more about the T2T initiative at <https://www.sierraclub.org/outdoors-all/transit-trails>

If you are interested in connecting to help plan a few CRSC T2T events, please email

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## Outings Leader Training

Sierra Club outings are a critical aspect to connecting people to the outdoors and the places we're working so hard to protect. There will be Outings Training this year to get more leaders certified to lead outings and to host paddles with the River Touring Section. If you're tentatively interested in taking the training, please fill out this survey here: <https://forms.gle/NChj1giU8Lf5CKDy7>

## Book Club

The next Sierra Club Book Club will be from 7 to 8 p.m. online on March 5, and the book is *Divining: A Memoir in Trees* by Maureen Dunphy. In sixteen essays, each named after a species of tree, Dunphy explores the nature of human-arboreal relationships right outside our windows. Learn more and register for the link at [tinyurl.com/WISC-0324Book](https://tinyurl.com/WISC-0324Book)

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## High School Award

CRSC offers an annual award of \$300 for a high school junior or senior who demonstrates leadership, action, and environmental stewardship, and who understands the importance of civic engagement in protecting our environment.

This award is available to students who will graduate from high school in 2024 or 2025 and who reside in the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. Applicants do NOT have to be Sierra Club members!

This award is available to any eligible student no matter their postsecondary plans. Apply by July 1, 2024. Learn more at [sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/education](https://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/education) or call 608-315-2693.

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## Get Involved!

Bright Action is an online tool lets you sign up and choose carbon-reducing actions from food to energy use to transportation. Part of the City of La Crosse's Climate Action Plan, the site is available for anyone wishing to learn more about reducing their carbon emissions.

CRSC has a team at the Bright Action site. If you are a City of La Crosse resident, please join our team at <https://brightaction.app/link/join/nojs/community-group/9659> and if you live outside the city, you may join the action at <https://www.brightaction.com/>



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## Earth Fair Tablers Needed!

CRSC will table at the La Crosse Earth Fair on Sunday, April 28 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This fair is a great place to talk about our issues and efforts and spread the word about events and programs.

We are looking for a few people to help table for one or two hours. You don't need special knowledge or skills! We will set up the table and give you the information

and materials needed to reach out to the community at this important and well-attended event!

If you can help us, please email [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com) OR call or text 608-315-2693 with the times of your availability. We'll get back to you with a schedule and more information well before April 28. If you have questions, please ask!

# UWL Parking Ramp Convergence

This article is written by Cassi Gersbach, a senior at UW-La Crosse who will graduate this spring with a degree in Philosophy and Environmental Studies and Sustainability. This spring, she is doing a service learning project with the Coulee Region Sierra Club and will be contributing some articles for our newsletter as well as working on some of our spring initiatives. Welcome, Cassi!

The University of Wisconsin – La Crosse plans to build a new parking ramp at 221 16th Street North in La Crosse. This three-story expansion across from the Lowe Center of the Arts facility will provide 550 new parking stalls aiming to satisfy the university's parking demands and decrease congestion of surrounding street parking.

This new addition is being sustainably proposed to the committee as a parking taxation on students who drive to the university and bring additional carbon emissions with them. It also aims to relieve residents who lose convenient parking due to student demands. This new parking addition will be the 18th lot on the University campus strictly dedicated to parking.

By prioritizing convenience over sustainability, the installation of a new parking ramp encourages the housing of more vehicles to meet profit demands, selling parking passes to residents for \$250 per year and commuters/employees for \$200 per year). Profit gains are prioritized over promotions of using alternate

forms of transportation, disincentivizing off-campus residents to walk or bike.

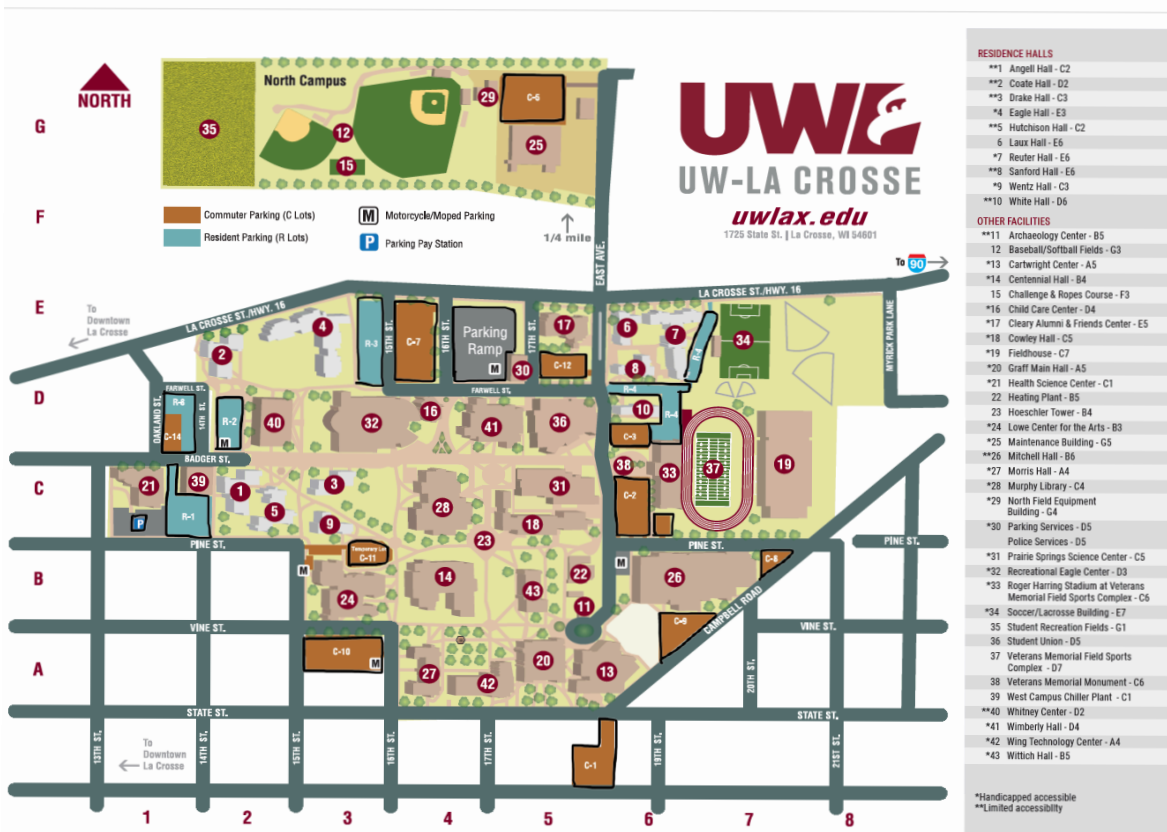
A new cement construction project will require resources and emit greenhouse gases to produce a facility to house sleeping cars. As students struggle to afford University access and resources, this new 18th additional parking lot, and second multi-story parking structure is a prime example of putting profit before the health of people. Elected officials responsible for the community should rethink priorities to come up with better solutions in an evolving world.

To build the ramp, UWL needs a zoning variance. The request initially came up in February but was referred for thirty days. It will come up again on March 5 at the Judiciary & Administration Committee

who will vote to recommend the change or not. Then, it will go to the La Crosse City Council.

The Judiciary & Administration Committee will meet on March 5 at 6 p.m. at the Council Chambers in City Hall, 400 La Crosse Street. To voice concerns or comment, attend the meeting (arrive 10 minutes early to register) or email [cityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:cityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org) to have your comments become part of the public record. Reference File #24-0068. Learn more at [tinyurl.com/UWLRampZoning](http://tinyurl.com/UWLRampZoning)

“PARKING SERVICES SUPPORTS SUSTAINABILITY AND RECOGNIZES THAT THE UNIVERSITY HAS A LIMITED NUMBER OF PARKING SPACES AVAILABLE. ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES PARKED ON CAMPUS” (UWL PARKING SERVICE WEBPAGE)





## More March Events

3/ 2: Total Eclipse Experience 1 p.m. UWL Planetarium. \$ <http://uwlax.edu/planetarium>

3/ 3: Coming Home - The World of Adventure with Doug Ellingson 2 p.m. La Crosse Community Theater. <https://explorelacrosse.com/event/explore-the-world-of-adventure-with-david-ellingson/>

3/ 4: Public Hearing on Xcel plans to expand gas facilities at Wheaton Plant. Virtual (see below)

3/ 6: Leave No Trace Program. 7 p.m. The Nature Place, La Crosse. [natureplacelacrosse.org/calendar/enviro-wednesdays-3-2024-03-06/](http://natureplacelacrosse.org/calendar/enviro-wednesdays-3-2024-03-06/)

3/ 6: Sustainability Chats - Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations. Online 1 p.m. <https://www.westerntc.edu/event/sustainability-institute-chat-dynamic-lifecycle-innovations>

3/ 8: Candlelight Hike at Norskedalen. <https://www.norskedalen.org/events/candlelight-snowshoe-hike/>

3/13: Driftless Dialog: US Fish & Wildlife Service - La Crosse Research Station. 6:30 p.m. Kickapoo Valley Reserve. <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Lecture-Series/>

3/13: Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program. 6:30 p.m. at Lunda Community Center, Black River Falls. <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/wisconsin-master-naturalist-program-presented-by-friends-of-the-black-river/>

3/19: Call of the Frog. 3:45 p.m. McIntosh Memorial Library, Viroqua. <https://mcintoshmemoriallibrary.org/children-programs/>

3/19: UWL Archaeology in Serbia and Wisconsin. 7 p.m. at Room 1400 Centennial Hall, UWL. <https://www.uwlax.edu/calendar/?e=29838>

3/30: Ho-Chunk Nation Founders Day Powwow. La Crosse Center. <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/ho-chunk-nation-founders-day-powwow/>



The Prairie Springs Distinguished Lecture Series presents:

# LAND, LOVE, LANGUAGE

HEALING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, is coming to UW-La Crosse!

**Thursday, March 21**

DROP-IN RECEPTION & BOOK SIGNING  
9:30-11:30 a.m. | Lowe Center for the Arts Lobby

KEYNOTE ADDRESS & BOOK SIGNING  
7 p.m. | Bluffs Ballroom, UWL Student Union

Visit [uwlax.edu/gel/sweetgrass](http://uwlax.edu/gel/sweetgrass) to reserve a free ticket for the keynote address.

Sponsored by many campus partners - see our website to learn more!

### Public hearing on the air permit

**Date:** 03/04/2024

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

**Location:** Virtual/online

- [Join this meeting by Zoom.](#)
- Join by phone: 312-626-6799;  
Meeting ID: 871 4732 7273

Written comments are due February 28, 2024 to Jordan Munson,

[Jordan.Munson@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Jordan.Munson@wisconsin.gov).

## Defending Wisconsin's Sacred Waters from Dangerous Mine Proposals

**Monday, March 18 \* 6 to 8 p.m. \* Online**

New plans for exploratory drilling for copper and gold deposits northwest of Medford mark the beginning of yet another round in the fight to protect Wisconsin's waters. Meanwhile, Back 40 Mine opponents remain vigilant. Presenter Dr. Al Gedicks has been instrumental in uniting Wisconsin's tribes with grassroots rural mine opponents to form winning coalitions. Call 608-315-2693 for phone-in instructions or register for link at [tinyurl.com/gwsc-031824](http://tinyurl.com/gwsc-031824)