



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group  
AUGUST 2022

"This bill shows we still need a billion climate activists. We're heading toward the huge main battle, the battle of our lives, to rapidly do what must be done: End fossil fuels." - NASA climate scientist, Peter Kalmus, on Inflation Reduction Act of 2022

Primary elections for the November ballot will be held on **Tuesday, August 9**. In many municipalities, voters may cast absentee ballots in person at their clerk's office. Absentee ballot drop boxes are no longer allowed. If you vote absentee from home, please be sure to complete the envelope completely and have your witness sign and fill in their

## PLEASE VOTE

complete address. Mail your ballot by August 1 or return it in person. Learn more about your ballot and options at [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov). Learn about candidates at [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org), and watch a 3rd CD candidate forum hosted by Citizen Action of Wisconsin at [www.facebook.com/CitizenActionWI/videos/1139623576596120/](https://www.facebook.com/CitizenActionWI/videos/1139623576596120/)

The Coulee Region Sierra Club will table at the Bluff Bash, a celebration of the blufflands hosted by the City of La Crosse Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department on Wednesday, August 25 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Crawford Stewardship Project will host a Karst Exploration program on Friday, August 20 from 1 to 4:30 p.m. at the Landmark Center in Viroqua. The program includes an educational program and a field trip to see examples of karst sites. This is a family-friendly event. Please dress for the weather. Voluntary donations gladly accepted.

City of LaCrosse  
Parks, Recreation, & Forestry

**BLUFF BASH**

UPPER HIXON FOREST PARK  
City, FA, La Crosse, WI

JOIN US FOR A FREE FUN FILLED NIGHT

HIKING - BIKING  
MUSIC - S'MORES  
ACTIVITY BOOTHS- YARD GAMES  
FOOD TRUCKS  
GUIDED EDUCATIONAL WALKS

For more info, please call 608.789.7533

UPPER HIXON FOREST PUMP TRACK  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 6-9 PM

**August 20, 1-4:30pm**  
Landmark Center Theater: 500 E Jefferson St, Viroqua, WI

**KARST EXPLORATION**

1:00pm Professor Emeritus Kelvin Rodolfo will present half a billion years of geological history.

2:00-4:30pm Join us for a field trip north of Viroqua to visit the Three Chimneys, Crume Spring, sinkholes, and more fascinating karst sites, while learning what they have to teach us.

Free and family-friendly!  
Voluntary donations appreciated  
Light snacks and beverages provided

Please be conscious of the weather and dress appropriately.

There will be a few short walks over uneven terrain.

[crawfordstewardshipproject.org](http://crawfordstewardshipproject.org) @CrawfordStewardshipProject

## Plastic Free Juneteenth

Taking action to combat the plastic crisis takes many forms. Individuals may choose to use a metal water bottle or reusable shopping bag. We may join groups, like the Sierra Club, that advocate for change.

Shaundel Spivey, founder and current chair of Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge (B.L.A.C.K.) in La Crosse, found another way.



As one of the lead organizers for the annual La Crosse Juneteenth event, Shaundel heard planning committee members ask about reducing single-use plastic use. As discussions continued, it became clear that plastic, from processing to use and waste, is a

continuing environmental justice issue. Oil and plastic facilities are often located in communities of color where contamination of air and water affects the health and wealth of residents. Plastic wrapped food and beverages, often more expensive than other products, may be the only options for those living in food deserts. Plastic waste in our oceans threatens millions of coastal communities that rely on seafood. Studies show racial and ethnic disparities in endocrine disrupting chemicals found in plastics and women's reproductive health outcomes.

Shaundel noted that a lack of information about the impacts of plastic initially led to some divisiveness during the planning process. Plastic is so ubiquitous in our lives, it may be hard to imagine alternatives or understand why alternatives are needed. Plastic is so normal that its connection to our dire climate crisis is rarely discussed. Eventually, though, the group came together with government, non-profits, businesses, and donors joining in. "When you put the ask out to the community, folks show up," he reported.

As the La Crosse Juneteenth committee moved forward with planning a low or no-plastic event, the scope of the challenges became apparent. But, community support, including from the city, volunteers, vendors, and even the waste management company, helped make a model for future events. The main components of the 2022 plastic-aware Juneteenth event in La Crosse included:

- The program featured a speaker, Dr. Adam Driscoll, Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice, to educate about plastic and environmental racism;
- Did not sell bottled water in plastic bottles;
- Asked participants to bring their own beverage containers;
- Sold metal water bottles at cost;
- Asked tablers to set up water stations and have water, some donated by Culligan, available in bulk containers around the event grounds;
- Sold beverages in recyclable aluminum cans or from bulk containers;
- Had paper cups available by all beverage stations;
- Asked food vendors to use paper containers rather than plastic and foam foodware;
- Used event-procured compostable wood utensils;
- Placed dedicated recycling and compost containers;
- Displayed printed educational information around the event grounds.

The Juneteenth event also included other sustainable features from a staffed bike parking corral to encouragement for participants to ride the city bus.

While there was not a formal evaluation, Shaundel feels that the event went well and was a good learning opportunity. There is not a good source of information finding and procuring suitable substitutes. Some paper and compostable foodware has other problems, including contamination issues (see the Center for Environmental Health's database at [ceh.org/?s=Foodware](http://ceh.org/?s=Foodware)) And, almost everything comes wrapped in plastic!

Shaundel and the Juneteenth committee planted the seed in the community and there's a possibility that the city will further develop resources and guidance for other groups wishing to reduce single-use plastic at their events. For more information about La Crosse Juneteenth, planning a plastic-free event, or B.L.A.C.K., contact him through their website: [www.blacklax.org](http://www.blacklax.org) and to learn more about the issue in general, visit [CR-Sierra.blogspot.com/p/plastic-facts.html](http://CR-Sierra.blogspot.com/p/plastic-facts.html).

As for Juneteenth 2023, be sure to bring your reusable water bottle!



## Plastic Free July program

CRSC hosted a virtual film screening of The Story of Plastic to recognize Plastic Free July and an online discussion on Tuesday, July 19 with guests Annika Mersmann, a founder of Viroqua Plastic Free, and Brett Nadrich, U.S. Communications Officer for the international group, Break Free From Plastic. View the program on our CRSC Facebook page: [facebook.com/CRSierraClub](https://facebook.com/CRSierraClub). Learn more about how to take action on plastic problems at [cr-sierra.blogspot.com/p/plastic-facts.html](https://cr-sierra.blogspot.com/p/plastic-facts.html).

### Plastic and Racism

In her November 2021 Sierra Club article, "The Deep Injustice of Plastic Pollution," Sierra Club Senior Campaigner Hillary Larson, writes, "Across the nation, corporate polluters are building the majority of these polluting [petrochemical manufacturing] facilities in low-income communities and communities of color, ... residents who live in proximity to chemical manufacturing are burdened with a high level of exposure to toxic chemicals in their air, water, and soil. These chemicals include cancer-causing benzene, ethylene dibromide, and formaldehyde." [[www.sierraclub.org/articles/2021/11/deep-injustice-plastic-pollution](https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2021/11/deep-injustice-plastic-pollution)]

In his June 2020 article for Sierra magazine, "Racism is Killing the Planet," Hop Hopkins, Sierra Club Director of Organizational Transformation, notes, "You can't have climate change without sacrifice zones, and you can't have sacrifice zones without disposable people, and you can't have disposable people without racism." [[www.sierraclub.org/sierra/racism-killing-planet](https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/racism-killing-planet)]

Per PlasticOceans.org, "In a conclusive environmental justice report, published in late March, the [UN Environment Program \(UNEP\)](https://www.unep.org/) has declared that plastic pollution affects marginalized groups to a much more significant extent than it does other populations.

"By analyzing plastic pollution as well as various processes inherent to plastic production, such as deforestation and fracking, [the study](#) – titled *Neglected: Environmental Justice Impacts of Plastic Pollution* – found that 'the impacts of plastics on marginalized populations are severe.' Moreover, it exhibited that, 'these impacts exist at all stages of the production cycle, from extracting raw materials and manufacturing, through to consumption and disposal.'"

## More August Events

8/ 5-7: 38th Annual Heroes Ride for The High Ground [thehighgroundheroesride.com/join-the-ride/](https://thehighgroundheroesride.com/join-the-ride/)

8/ 6: INaturalist at Wildcat Mountain State Park. 10 a.m. [dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/59126](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/59126)

8/10: Firebreak construction at Tunnelville Cliffs. 9 a.m. [tinyurl.com/TunnelvilleFirebreak](https://tinyurl.com/TunnelvilleFirebreak)

8/13 & 27: Friends of the Black River paddling events [tinyurl.com/FOBR-Aug-Paddling](https://tinyurl.com/FOBR-Aug-Paddling)

8/10: Firebreak construction at Tunnelville Cliffs. 9 a.m. [tinyurl.com/TunnelvilleFirebreak](https://tinyurl.com/TunnelvilleFirebreak)

8/14: Pollinator Plants at Myrick Park 12:30 to 2 p.m. [strive2thrivecr.org/event/pollinator-plants](https://strive2thrivecr.org/event/pollinator-plants)

8/18: Firebreak construction at Boscobel Bluffs. 10 a.m. [tinyurl.com/BoscobelFirebreak](https://tinyurl.com/BoscobelFirebreak)

8/20: Stargazing at Wildcat Mountain State Park. 8 p.m. [dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/57766](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/57766)

8/28: Mississippi Valley Conservancy 25th Anniversary Party at Myrick Park in La Crosse. 1-5 p.m. [tinyurl.com/MVC25THParty](https://tinyurl.com/MVC25THParty)

8/27: Pollinator Prairie Hike at Wildcat Mountain State Park. 6 p.m. [dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/57791](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/57791)

Find events at Kickapoo Valley Reserve at [kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Calendar](https://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Calendar)

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## Highway Cleanup

Oops! We forgot to schedule a highway clean up in July!

Please join us on Tuesday, August 23 at 6 p.m. to help clean up our adopted road - River Valley Drive. We'll meet at the pumping station just northwest of the intersection of Gillette Street and River Valley Drive. There, you will get gloves, bags, and vests. We'll pick up trash along the roadway and then, meet up at Rudy's Drive-In on La Crosse Street for some post cleanup refreshments!

If you have questions, please call Pat at 608-788-8831



## Black River Canoe Trip



The July 16-17 annual Black River family canoe camping trip was a great success. We covered 21 miles on the river with a night spent camping on a sandbar and days spent swimming, exploring, and playing in the sand. The weather and water levels were ideal this year. The eight kids on the trip ranged from 18 months to 13 years old, two of them paddling their own kay-

aks. This is an ideal way to introduce folks from around the state to the water resources and recreational opportunities in our area. Among the fascinating participants were a woman from Russia whose job is preservation of Siberian Tigers in the wild and a woman who is the project manager of Trout Unlimited's Driftless Area Restoration Project. Thank you to Justin and Beth Piggush for leading the trip.

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## Roth Feeder Pig Update

More than 70 people spoke or wrote against issuing a siting permit to the Roth Feeder Pig II CAFO before the Crawford County Board on July 24, according to [SWNews4U.com](http://SWNews4U.com). One person, the owner of the facility, spoke in favor. Read the article about the meeting at [tinyurl.com/SWNews-RothFP2](http://tinyurl.com/SWNews-RothFP2)

Now that the Wisconsin DNR has approved the permit, it is up to the Crawford County Land Conservation Committee and Land Conservation Department to approve or not approve a siting permit. The deadline for comments is August 4. Find more information at [www.crawfordcountywi.org/land-conservation-home.html](http://www.crawfordcountywi.org/land-conservation-home.html)

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## Support School Climate Action

Local climate activists are pressing the La Crosse School District to create a climate action plan and commit to using 100% clean renewable energy by 2050 or sooner. Other schools in Wisconsin have taken these steps. It will ensure district plans do not increase carbon emissions or work against the city's goals of reducing community emissions.



If you live in the School District of La Crosse and have not yet signed the petition, please do so now at [tinyurl.com/LaXSchools-ActOnClimate](http://tinyurl.com/LaXSchools-ActOnClimate).

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## Drive/Ride Electric Events

National Drive Electric Week is coming. From September 23 through October 2, there will be dozens of electric vehicle events around the country to help people learn about electric vehicle ownership from their friends and neighbors. The event is sponsored by Plug-In America, the Electric Vehicle Association, Sierra Club, and EV Hybrid Noire. There will be at least three NDEW events in the Coulee Region. See [ndew.org](http://ndew.org) for details.

**Need a back up newsletter editor for occasional help when the editor is not available. Email [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com)**