



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group  
DECEMBER 2021

*"Have good stuff (not too much), mostly reclaimed. Care for it. Pass it on."*

- Sandra Goldmark, director of Campus Sustainability and Climate Action at Barnard College  
in *How Buying Stuff Drives Climate Change*, Columbia Climate School, State of the Planet, Dec. 16, 2020

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 1 at 1p.m.**

**PFAS in drinking water**

Preparation for 12/01 and 12/10 public input

**ONLINE**

Register: [tinyurl.com/WISCPFAS](https://tinyurl.com/WISCPFAS)

PFAS chemicals (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), also called "forever chemicals," are found in everyday objects like cookware, water resistant clothing, food packaging, and firefighting foam. They have vast effects on both humans and aquatic species. PFAS don't break down easily and remain in the environment for long periods of time, making their way into Wisconsin waterways and affecting both ground and drinking water.

PFAS contamination has been associated with developmental defects in infants, increased risks of certain cancers, raised cholesterol levels, and lower reproductive success rates. Strong PFAS regulations, including chemical cleanup and testing, ensure that the water we drink is safe, the fish we eat are safe, and that the effects of forever chemicals are diminished. Another important step is ensuring that there are safe limits established for PFAS in water. Right now, the Department of Natural Resources is updating surface and drinking water PFAS regulations, and they're accepting public comments on this work. Sign up to testify at a virtual public hearing to advocate for health, safety, and clean water!

Midwest Environmental Advocates held an online public information session on November 29 about public input in this process. A recording of that session may be viewed at <https://youtu.be/DJHRrEQdFNw>

If a link doesn't work, copy and paste it into your browser then remove any extra spaces.

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 15, 2 to 8 p.m.**

**Hearing on proposed gas plants**

Public Service Commission public hearings

**ONLINE**

Register: [tinyurl.com/WISCPSCGas](https://tinyurl.com/WISCPSCGas)

WEC Energy Group (owner of We Energies and WPS) has proposed building mini gas plants, known as Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) units in Rothschild and Kronenwetter in central Wisconsin. Tell the PSC that they should be building batteries and clean energy, not more fossil fuel infrastructure. There will be two options for hearings: 2:00 and 6:00 p.m. RSVP for more information and talking points.



## **Support Our Teams!**

Sierra Club teams do vital grassroots work. You can support these volunteer efforts by donating any amount through the end of the year at [tinyurl.com/WISCTeamFunds](https://tinyurl.com/WISCTeamFunds)

- \* Coal to Clean Energy
- \* Lands
- \* Tar Sands
- \* Transportation
- \* Water
- \* Wildlife

November 15, 2021

Kathy, Cathy, Nancy, Veronica, Avery, Pat, Ned, Dorothy and other CRG leaders -

*Thank you for your work on our Summer of Collective Action for August Recess (and beyond)! We named this effort "Change Powered by People" because grassroots power is central to our theory of change. The Coulee Region Group was a beautiful example of this. One of the main goals of this project was to build grassroots power through base-building, leadership development, and partnerships. You worked with partners across your region, hosted events and art-making action, and developed and trusted new emerging volunteer leaders -- great work using this national opportunity in a way that worked for y'all, brought new people in, and strengthened and grew existing relationships. Y'all developed a local organizing arc that brings people into your local campaigns, and rooted it in hope and climate solutions. It's our hope that volunteers engaged in this program will go on this journey with us and continue to do work with the Wisconsin Sierra Club.*

*We believe that, because elected officials are ultimately accountable to their constituents, building and wielding grassroots power locally is essential to getting them to pass the legislation we need. You've done hugely important work educating your community and local decision-makers about the need for this crucial legislation and the benefits infrastructure work like energy efficiency projects and solar on schools will bring to Wisconsinites. Thank you!!*

*Laura Comer, National Distributed Organizer, Sierra Club Ready for 100 initiative*



## Climate Action - La Crosse School District

As Wisconsin cities and counties continue pledging to be part of the climate solution by planning to eliminate carbon emissions and transition to 100% clean, renewable energy, parents, students, teachers, and community members are turning their focus on schools.

The benefits of renewable energy for school districts is clear--schools save money when they install renewable energy systems, from energy efficiency upgrades to LED lights to solar panels. But there are many other benefits as highlighted in a 2019 study from Stanford University ([news.stanford.edu/2019/05/02/happens-schools-go-solar/](https://news.stanford.edu/2019/05/02/happens-schools-go-solar/)).

At least five Wisconsin school districts have formalized their intentions to look out for the health and safety of students' futures by adopting clean energy, climate action or climate justice resolutions. Commitments range from moving to solar installations to considering how school operations, including food systems and transportation planning, impacts the districts' carbon footprints.

The Coulee Region Sierra Club has partnered with Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Citizen Action of Wisconsin Driftless Co-op, and Solar on La Crosse Schools to urge the La Crosse School District to make its own strong commitment to addressing the climate crisis institutionally. As a regional leader, La Crosse has an opportunity to make a major impact.

**If you are a resident in or have children enrolled in the La Crosse School District**, please join us in asking La Crosse public schools to move to 100% renewable energy and to make a climate action plan to help them prepare for the future.

Sign the petition at [tinyurl.com/CleanSDLC-Petition](https://www.tinyurl.com/CleanSDLC-Petition) and then follow the link to write your own letter to district leaders. If you can help contact others, speak at a school board meeting or participate in any other way, please email [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com)

### **The climate crisis is a child rights crisis.**

Climate change poses a major threat to children and young people's health, nutrition, education, development, survival and future potential. Compared to adults, children require more food and water per unit of their body weight, are less able to survive extreme weather events, and are more susceptible to toxic chemicals, temperature changes and diseases, among other factors.

Critically, current and future generations of children will have to navigate an uncertain future where the current model of growth that links economic development to environmental exploitation is no longer viable.

- from [FACT SHEET: COP26 - Children and Climate Change](#), November 1, 2021, UNICEF

## Deadline near for Environmental Education Grants!

CRSC is offering grants of up to \$200 each for **environmental education projects to schools or community organizations involving young people at the elementary and middle school level** within the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties.

Applications may be completed online, emailed or mailed. **The deadline has been extended to January 5, 2022.** For more information, visit [sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education](http://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education) or [tinyurl.com/CRSC-Students](http://tinyurl.com/CRSC-Students)



New for 2021-2022, CRSC will recognize the achievements of and **award \$150 to a high school senior** who demonstrates leadership, action, and environmental stewardship, and who understands the importance of civic engagement in protecting our environment. Eligible students are those graduating from high school in 2022 who reside in the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. The application includes essays and submission of a portfolio. The deadline for applications is March 15, 2022 with the award to be given by the end of April, 2022. For more information, visit [sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education](http://sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education) or [tinyurl.com/CRSC-Students](http://tinyurl.com/CRSC-Students)

Funding for these environmental grants and awards is possible thanks to an annual grant from the Paul E. Stry Foundation, shared dues from Sierra Club memberships, and donations made by community members. Email us to learn more: [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com).

### Christmas Bird Count

Join more than a century of community science--the 122nd annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, December 14, 2021 through January 5, 2022. Learn more at [www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count)



## December Events

**December 1:** Monroe County Climate Task Force listening sessions. 1 p.m. Bank of Cashton, 6 p.m. American Legion Hall, Sparta. [www.co.monroe.wi.us/Home/Components/News/News/152/15](http://www.co.monroe.wi.us/Home/Components/News/News/152/15)

**December 1:** FILM: The Ants and the Grasshopper sponsored by Edible Madison ONLINE at 7 p.m. More info at [ediblemadison.com/antsandgrasshopper](http://ediblemadison.com/antsandgrasshopper)

**December 2 - 4:** Building a Socially Responsible Food Future hosted by the Socially Responsible Agriculture Project ONLINE. [tinyurl.com/SRAP-FoodFuture](http://tinyurl.com/SRAP-FoodFuture)

**December 3 & 4:** La Crosse White Privilege Symposium hosted by La Crosse Waking Up White Collaborative ONLINE and at the La Crosse Center. Register at [www.laxwakingupwhite.com/white-privilege-symposium.html](http://www.laxwakingupwhite.com/white-privilege-symposium.html)

**December 7:** How to Run for Office training offered by the Wisconsin Farmers Union ONLINE from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Register at [tinyurl.com/WFURun4Office](http://tinyurl.com/WFURun4Office)

**December 7:** Accelerating the Clean Energy Transition - Reasons to be Hopeful presented by the Rocky Mountain Institute ONLINE at NOON. [tinyurl.com/RMI-Hopeful](http://tinyurl.com/RMI-Hopeful)

**December 9:** Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change - the legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery sponsored by the Franciscan Spirituality Center ONLINE at 6 p.m. [tinyurl.com/FSC-Roots-Seeds](http://tinyurl.com/FSC-Roots-Seeds)

**December 10:** A Bold Vision for Wisconsin Rail Travel hosted by the High Speed Rail Alliance ONLINE at noon [facebook.com/events/1078970969574677/](https://facebook.com/events/1078970969574677/)

**December 13:** Rally for Climate Justice at the UWL Clocktower. 11 a.m. [tinyurl.com/Rally4Climate-UWL](http://tinyurl.com/Rally4Climate-UWL)

**December 18:** Advanced Candidate Training sponsored by Wisconsin Progress. In person (location TBD) More info at [actionnetwork.org/events/la-crosse-advanced-local-training/](http://actionnetwork.org/events/la-crosse-advanced-local-training/)

**December 30:** Understanding Resistance to Change - A Workshop for Environmentalists presented by Joanna Moore ONLINE at 11 a.m. [joannamoore.com/events](http://joannamoore.com/events)

# Climate Change - Three Students' Views

By: Adrian Cuff

*Adrian Cuff is a senior at UW-La Crosse majoring in microbiology with a minor in environmental science. As part of his coursework for the Capstone for Environmental Science class, Adrian is submitting articles about local environmental issues for our newsletter.*

As we all know, the world we live in today is a part of a major climate crisis. Many people know about the crisis, but many do not know about it. I set out to learn whether young adults (UWL students) knew about the crisis and how they felt about the whole situation. I ended up choosing three random students at UWL, and they were different ages along with having differing views. Here's what they had to say:

Student 1: "Yes, I am aware of the climate crisis. I am worried about our future on our beautiful planet that we are taking for granted and using up her resources way too quickly. It does suck that we are in a global pandemic, and the focus on the environment was pushed to the side. I know everyone says that one person can't change the world, but if we work together, we can fix the issues that are harming the environment. I do my best to help save the environment from bringing my own bags into grocery stores, to using a water bottle, and many other things. I do as much as I can to be green, and hopefully my efforts will create a better future for the next generations."

Student 2: "The climate crisis is very important, and I just don't understand why it is not talked about more. I think most people would see the new bill that Biden passed that pushes for my green energy in the United States, but besides that it's been swept under the rug. It makes me sick that huge corporations don't want to fix their emissions and make the right decisions to save the planet because it would cost them money. Everyone is so greedy anymore, I guess they forget they need clean air, and clean water to live. Money won't allow you to live. I do think it's tough to be green as a person, and I do not think I'll be making any changes because no one else is from what I've seen."

Student 3: "The climate crisis is important, but I do not know how we will be able to fix our mistakes in time. All the major fossil fuel corporations lobby extremely hard to the politicians that run this country and will always make right decisions for the best interest of these corporations. It just makes me sick. I try to help the environment when I can, but it's hard since I live on campus. I use an Ozzie container, which I know saves a lot of waste from hitting the landfills and use a water bottle as well. I know I definitely can try harder to be green, but UWL should also look at trying to be greener as well."

Overall, it is good to see these students know about the climate crisis, and that it is still very important to figure out for humanity's future. UWL deserves a lot of credit for hosting many events, speakers, and even having clubs like Students for Sustainability that spread the information about the environment throughout the campus and beyond. A cleaner and greener future doesn't look too far on the horizon, and I cannot wait to see what this younger generation can achieve in the future

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## Sierra Student Coalition

The Sierra Student Coalition is a network of young people ages 14-35 organizing for climate, racial and economic justice. The group offers training programs, popular education, leadership development opportunities, campaigns, resources, and a community of support for youth across the country.

SPROG is the Sierra Student Coalition's longest running training program, and is typically an intensive one-week leadership training program that teaches tools for environmental and social justice activism to young people across the country. To learn more and apply for training programs, visit [www.sierraclub.org/youth](http://www.sierraclub.org/youth)

## Juliana v. United States

In 2015, 21 youth sued the United States government for failure to protect their future by not acting to combat climate change. The suit, called Juliana v. United States, was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon in 2015.

The complaint asserts that, through the government's affirmative actions that cause climate change, it has violated the youngest generation's constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, as well as failed to protect essential public trust resources.

Read about the case at [www.youthvgov.org/our-case](http://www.youthvgov.org/our-case)

# Coulee Region Sierra Club Board Elections Information and Ballot

Thank you for participating in the democratic process of electing your local Sierra Club representatives! Just enter your member number and then vote for up to four candidates, to begin two-year terms in January 2022. The candidate bios are below. Please complete one ballot per member (both members in a Joint membership may cast ballots). You will receive a link to the online ballot and your member number in an email OR via postcard. Your member number is required so your membership can be verified by the Election Committee. Please vote either with the online ballot OR by printing, completing, and mailing the ballot show below.

**\*\* All ballots must be received by midnight December 28, 2021. \*\***

**If you choose to print and mail the ballot shown below, please mail it by December 21 to:  
1815 Cameron Ave. La Crosse, WI 54601**

**Kathy Allen** - Kathy lives in La Crosse and was elected to the Coulee Region board in 2018. She has served as the group's president since January 2020. Kathy was a member of the "Ready for 100" team that worked with the city and county of La Crosse to pass 100% renewable energy transition resolutions. She is currently serving on the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. In her free time, she enjoys cycling on the Driftless Region's roads and trails.

**Ned Gatzke** - Ned has lived in rural Monroe County for 45+ years, interacting with a small woodland and prairie landscape. He first joined the Sierra Club in 1974. He is on the board of Wisconsin Conservation Voters/Voices, has been on the board of The Prairie Enthusiasts (Coulee Region Chapter), and is a citizen participant on the Monroe County Climate Change Task Force. Ned was present for the first Earth Day in 1970, and his travels throughout North America since then have provided him a larger perspective on environmental issues for people living in other places.

**Cathy Van Maren** - Cathy is retired and lives in La Crosse but also spends time in Vernon County. She has been the newsletter editor for several years and is active on the CRSC "Ready for 100" team and the state Sierra Club Transit Equity team. She's an "active transportation" (public transit, walking, bicycling) advocate, working with local and state transit advocacy groups and, locally, to push for better transportation/commuter cycling infrastructure, but she also owns an electric car and has worked on several EV education and outreach programs. She's on the city of La Crosse Climate Action Plan Steering Committee and volunteers at city Community Victory Gardens.

**Pat Wilson** - Pat is enjoying retirement in La Crosse, WI. He joined the Sierra Club in 1976 because he appreciated the hiking trails the Sierra Club had cleared on Nature Conservancy properties in the Baraboo Hills. He's a past president of the Coulee Region Group and the Sierra Club's Wisconsin River Touring Section. Currently he's on the Wisconsin Water Team and the Coulee Region representative to the Sierra Club's Wisconsin Chapter board. He's also active in the Friends of the Blufflands and the Bluffland Coalition, protecting regional bluffland habitat and recreational opportunities.



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Please vote (X) for up to four people to serve on the Coulee Region Sierra Club board in 2022 and 2023. Please mail your ballot by December 21 to ensure it is delivered by December 28. If you vote online, please do not use the mail-in ballot. If you have any questions, please email [CRSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:CRSierraClub@gmail.com) OR call 608-315-2693.

Member number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Kathy Allen

\_\_\_\_\_ write in

\_\_\_\_\_ Ned Gatzke

\_\_\_\_\_ write in

\_\_\_\_\_ Cathy Van Maren

\_\_\_\_\_ write in

\_\_\_\_\_ Pat Wilson

\_\_\_\_\_ write in