



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

**JANUARY 2021**

*"This moment is profound when we consider that a former secretary of the interior once proclaimed his goal was to, quote, 'civilize or exterminate us.'" - Representative Deb Haaland, US Secretary of Interior nominee*

**January 25, 27, 28 from 6 to 8 p.m.**

**Sierra Club Teams**

**Orientation and Planning**

**More details at [tiny.cc/wiscteams21](https://tiny.cc/wiscteams21)**

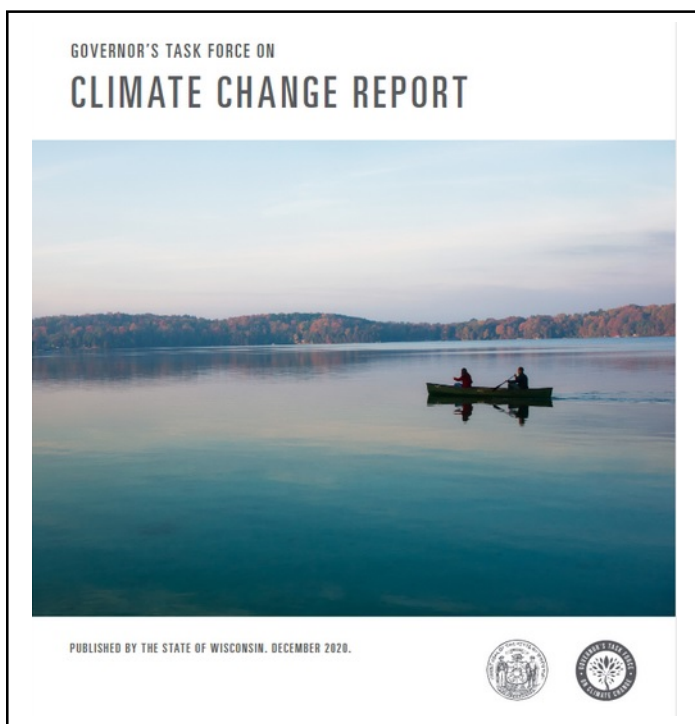
Beginning Monday, January 25, the Wisconsin Sierra Club will welcome new and old members to its important teams planning meetings. Teams are groups of member-volunteers who work with Sierra Club staff on important environmental issues from water quality to clean energy. For an overview, visit [www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/volunteer](http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/volunteer)

January 25 will include an orientation for new team members. On January 27, teams will review their current goals and resources, then plan campaigns for 2021. January 28 will be state budget planning for each team. This is a great opportunity for you to match your passion and experience with a campaign that can make a difference as the state works on its next two-year budget and responds to the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change.

In a December 22 blog post, the Wisconsin Sierra Club says, *"Monumental changes have been made this December by Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes and the Governor's Task Force to address climate change in Wisconsin. The Climate Change Report that was released December 9th, includes 55 policy recommendations for climate action in our state. Although this plan was clearly long overdue, we are far from where we were just two years ago under the Walker administration when the Wisconsin DNR wasn't even allowed to say the words 'climate change', let alone do anything to fix it. Over the past year, Wisconsinites from across the state have been involved in the Climate Task Force Process, making it clear that we urgently need ambitious action in the fight against climate*

*change and equitable distribution of the benefits that would come from the transition to clean energy. Throughout this process and going forward, Sierra Club has and will continue to work with the Climate Task Force, Governor Evers, Lieutenant Governor Barnes, the Wisconsin Legislature, and other policy-makers to ensure that climate action remains a priority for Wisconsin.*

*"The Sierra Club is committing to take immediate action, alongside the Task Force, on some of Wisconsin's most pressing issues such as environmental justice and racially sound climate solutions, deterring the prospective investment in the fossil fuel industry, conserving forests, and modernizing Wisconsin's utility rate design. In fact, the Climate Change Report refers to the advocacy carried out by the Sierra Club numerous times, mainly on the topics of environmental justice and sustainable/equitable transportation."* [Blog post: [www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/blog/2020/12/wisconsin-s-long-awaited-plan-address-climate-change](http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/blog/2020/12/wisconsin-s-long-awaited-plan-address-climate-change). Task Force report: [climatechange.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx](http://climatechange.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx)



## 2021 Board of Directors

Thanks to those of you who mailed ballots to vote for the 2021 Coulee Region Group board of directors.

Your 2021 board: Kathy Allen, Veronica Bauer, Ned Gatzke, Nancy Hartje, Dorothy Lenard, Avery Van Gaard, Cathy Van Maren, Pat Wilson.

The board and members thank retiring board member, Maureen Kinney, who has been a member and leader in the Coulee Region Group for many decades.

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## Jan. 11 - Microplastics Film

The Wisconsin Sierra Club Great Waters Group will host a screening of the award-winning movie MICROPLASTIC MADNESS (76 minutes). Be inspired by Brooklyn youth to take plastic-free action! This virtual screening will be followed by a Q&A with movie co-director Debby Lee Cohen. A Zoom link will be sent to you after registration. Learn more at [tiny.cc/wiscmicroplastic](https://tiny.cc/wiscmicroplastic)

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## Wisconsin 2021-2023 Budget and the Environment

In November and December, the Governor's budget team hosted a series of online town halls linking big Wisconsin issues to the coming budget. Sessions on Healthcare, Environment/Infrastructure/Economy, Criminal Justice Reform, and Education drew hundreds of participants. While these sessions are over, there is still the opportunity for citizens to submit comments: [appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/governor/voice-an-opinion](https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/governor/voice-an-opinion)

As noted in their December 11 blog post ([www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/blog/2020/12/speak-for-environmentally-just-state-budget](https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/blog/2020/12/speak-for-environmentally-just-state-budget)), the Wisconsin Sierra Club wants to see Governor Evers prioritize clean air, clean water, public transportation, and public lands by making these some of the top issues to receive funding.

- + Funding for transit walking and biking. Clean, reliable transportation is essential to the well-being of Wisconsinites and our environment.
- + Funding for the DNR and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. These initiatives allow for more access to Wisconsin's public lands and prioritize resilience against climate change.
- + Funding for Focus on Energy. This will help reduce energy use while increasing that of clean, renewable energy.
- + Funding for clean water. Many communities in Wisconsin are still struggling with threats from factory farm pollution, PFAS, lead pipes, and more. This has to change.

In addition, the club urges the Governor to remove funding for the I-94 expansion project. This is a plan we strongly oppose. We hope to see this money spent repairing existing infrastructure instead.

Based on past years' timelines, the budget will be drafted in December and January and made available for public comment in March. The Joint Finance Committee (JFC), a committee of mostly Republican state Senators and Assembly Representatives will draft their budget in late spring and vote on it in the summer. The governor will then approve or veto, partially or in full, the budget.

If you are able to submit comments now, please use the link noted above. If you would like to join the Sierra Club's Budget Team, please sign up at [tiny.cc/wiscbudgetteam](https://tiny.cc/wiscbudgetteam)

## CAFOs

In December 2019, the Crawford County Board voted for a one-year moratorium on CAFOs. Because of COVID-19 restrictions on meetings and investigation, many hoped that the moratorium would be extended for another year. But on December 15, the board tabled the motion to extend and the moratorium expired on December 31. County residents are urged to sign a petition demanding that the DNR require an environmental impact statement for CAFOs. Sign here: [www.crawfordstewardship.org/eis-petition/](https://www.crawfordstewardship.org/eis-petition/)

In Vernon County, the DNR, despite overwhelming public testimony against, reissued the permit for Wild Rose Dairy, LLC. on December 30. Read the final determination at [tiny.cc/RepermitWildRose](https://tiny.cc/RepermitWildRose).

Vernon and Monroe counties will collaborate on updating decades-old manure storage rules in cooperation with the Wisconsin DNR. Read more: [www.swnews4u.com/local/public-safety/counties-collaborate-update-manure-storage-ordinance/](https://www.swnews4u.com/local/public-safety/counties-collaborate-update-manure-storage-ordinance/)

## 2020 Year in Review

2020 was a crazy year, and COVID-19 impacted our Sierra Club activities here in the Coulee Region. We had to cancel some events, while others were moved online. Here are a few highlights from our past year:

January - We awarded four environmental education grants, totaling \$661, and hosted a program with Karl Green from the La Crosse County Extension on water quality in the Coulee Region. Several CRSC members attended Clean Water Lobby Day in Madison.

February - The Coulee Region Group hosted our first ever local volunteer night at Myrick Park and tabled at the "Progresstival" in La Crosse

March - Our last in-person act for the year was a press conference held at La Crosse's City Hall on March 10 to help roll out the new Wisconsin Clean Energy Toolkit.

April - We celebrated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day with a virtual fundraiser, raising \$402 for our group and \$402 for the Wisconsin Chapter

June - Our group hosted its first virtual meeting, discussing local Ready for 100 campaign efforts, as well

as other events and opportunities to stay involved from home.

July - We hosted a screening of the documentary "The Story of Plastic" and an online discussion of the film.

August - After lobbying from our members and supporters, the La Crosse County Board approved a resolution setting goals of carbon neutrality and 100% renewable energy by 2050.

September - Our group hosted a virtual program, "The Latest on Electric Vehicles" program, and members completed an on-your-own roadside clean-up of River Valley Drive

October - We hosted a program, "Aquatic Invasive Species" with Ellen Voss from River Alliance of Wisconsin

November - Sierra Club-endorsed candidates Joe Biden and Kamala Harris at the national level and Brad Pfaff at the state level were elected in close races. Thank you to everyone who voted and volunteered!

We'd like to also thank UWL students Marc Carstens and Carly Rundle-Borchert for contributing to our newsletters and blog as part of their ENV496 senior learning project. - Kathy Allen

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## Jan. 8 - Wild & Scenic Film Fest



One benefit of a move to life online is the ability to virtually attend programs from anywhere. On January 8, the Idaho Sierra Club will kick off its 17th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Fest. "Presented

by the Idaho Chapter Sierra Club, the films combine beautiful cinematography and first rate storytelling to inform and ignite solutions to ensure the conservation of wild and scenic places we all love. You'll also have a chance to learn about the Idaho Chapter's campaign work including northwestern salmon recovery, clean energy initiatives and alternative transportation options." The live stream will begin at 8 p.m Central Time on Friday, January 8, but the films will be available to view January 9-13. To learn more and purchase tickets visit the program website: [www.sierraclub.org/idaho/blog/2020/11/wild-and-scenic-film-festival-2021](http://www.sierraclub.org/idaho/blog/2020/11/wild-and-scenic-film-festival-2021)

## January 23 - Wolves

On January 23 at 10 a.m., the Mississippi Valley Conservancy will host wolf biologist Dick Thiel who will talk about the wolves of Wisconsin's Central Forest Region. He will focus on the biological facts regarding the gray wolf. Following a description of Wisconsin's Central Forest, the talk will focus on the DNR's monitoring program since wolves began recolonizing this region in the mid-1990's, and the types of management implemented to address conflicts that arise on this landscape, shared by both wolves and humans. A question and answer session will follow the presentation.



Learn more and register for the program at [www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/wolves-wisconsins-central-forest](http://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/wolves-wisconsins-central-forest)



## Coulee Region people

This year we're going to highlight some members, environmental activists, hikers, water protectors, and others who can help connect us in our love for nature and our desire to protect and respect our natural world.

We start with La Crosse Attorney **Maureen Kinney** who is leaving the Coulee Region Sierra Club board after several decades of service on the board and in the club.

**What got you interested in the environment?**

*Growing up in northern Wisconsin, quite a bit before Earth Day, the environmental movement did not exist (at least not in its current form). We didn't think about threats to the environment, but I liked to be active which meant being outdoors. I spent my first 12 years along the Apple River in Amery, Wisconsin, playing with polliwogs and falling in and doing a bit of fishing. Then we moved to Superior and grew up along Lake Superior. That is big water!*

**When did you get involved with the Sierra Club?**

*I joined the Sierra Club in La Crosse in 1976 and at that time I thought of it as an outings group. One of my very first outings was driving to Bayfield with the Franks and group camping at Stockton Island. Also, toward the end of college, I started camping; I went to the Boundary Waters for a week. I loved doing rugged stuff, even if at times I wimped out if it was cold and rainy. I took a trip after law school out west to many national parks camping and backpacking.*

**What got you interested in environmental issues?**

*I started reading the Sierra Club magazine that talked about mining in national parks and since I had been to many of the parks I was not happy about that. Mining is terribly destructive of land, water and air all at one time.*

**When did you decide that you needed to get more involved in organizing and encouraging others to learn more about the issues?**

*About 35 years ago, I was asked to give a talk at UW-La Crosse for its history program and the topic for the event was the Environmental Movement – The Wisconsin Connection. So I talked about John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Sigurd Olson, Gaylord Nelson, and me (to bring things down to the personal level). I read a biography of all of the people and found the Wisconsin connection very interesting. Our state has had a large impact upon the history of the environmental movement.*

*I also gave a talk to a freshman class at West Salem about environmental issues on Earth Day many years ago. I talked about thinking globally/acting locally and about the United States being just five percent of the population and using 25 percent of the natural resources. I got a huge amount of push back from about five boys about criticizing the US and how that was wrong. "Love it or leave it," they said. I told them I had heard that saying before, during the Vietnam war protests. I said we all had a responsibility to protect the environment. I'm not sure I had any impact on them.*

*Fast forward about six years and I was tabling at Western Technical College for the Sierra Club, again about Earth Day, and this young man came up to me and said he had been one of the boys in the freshman class that had given me a hard time. However, now, in part because of what I'd said, he was in an environmental program at UW-L and I had influenced him on the issues. So we never know what kind of a seed we may plant and when it will sprout.*

**What are your favorite outdoor activities?**

*Biking, canoeing, cross country skiing, running.*

**Do you plan to continue your involvement with environmental issues?**

*Certainly! I have long been involved in political issues also and a candidate's environmental stance is important to me. There are many important environmental groups on both a national and local level. It is more fun to be active in a cause so that both the cause and social activities can coincide.*

**How can and why should people get involved?**

*I think if people make a personal connection to a cause, both being in a group and having fun, one is more likely to stay with the group and help out. I am a fairly social person. My biggest contribution to environmental causes is probably my work with Mississippi Valley Conservancy, which has been for over 20 years. As a lawyer I can give a service to the organization by working on its real estate legal work that not that many people can do.*

*Sometimes I would rather pull invasive plants, but that is not quite as helpful as donating legal work to help finish up a conservation easement or purchase land. The Conservancy's work of protecting land will hopefully last forever, in perpetuity we say. All of us can contribute to groups or activities in our own way that is very helpful and impactful. I am not good at leading a hike since I can't point out plants and flowers or birds, but I can do other things. I can bring up the tail of the hike to make sure no one gets lost! There is something we can all do.*