



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
JULY 2019

"Arctic permafrost thawing 70 years sooner than predicted." - article published in Geophysical Research Letters, June 10, 2019

Next Events

Because of schedule conflicts, **the next Coulee Region Sierra Club highway cleanup has been rescheduled to Tuesday, July 16.** We will meet at 6 p.m. at the water pumping station just northwest of the intersection of Gillette Street and River Valley Drive in La Crosse. Bags, gloves, and reflective vests will be provided. It would be great if we could get a dozen people or more. For more info, contact Pat or Bobbie at 608-788-8831 or pbwilson@centurytel.net.



Ready for 100 update: On Tuesday, July 2, the City of La Crosse Judiciary and Administration (J&A) Committee will vote on Resolution #19-0471: Resolution adopting sustainability goals transitioning to carbon neutrality and 100% renewable energy by 2050. This resolution has been recommended by the Sustainable La Crosse Commission and supported by the Coulee Region Sierra Club Ready for 100 team. The full city council will vote on the resolution at its Thursday, July 11 meeting.

Sierra Club members and other climate advocates are invited to attend the **July 2 and/or the July 11 meetings** to register in support of the resolution. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO SPEAK. Both meetings will be held in the council chambers, main floor, City Hall, 400 La Crosse Street. Both begin at 6 p.m.** You must register **BEFORE 6 p.m.** in order to have your opinion counted. CRSC members will be in the lobby to help you register. We hope to be a respectful, supportive, positive presence.

#Change the Debate

Sierra Club, 350.org, Sunrise Movement, Climate Hawks Vote, and others have been pressing the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to make one of the twelve planned presidential candidate debates strictly about the climate crisis. A recent Sierra Club sponsored national survey of "climate voters" concludes that 85% want a debate focused on climate and 68% of likely Democratic primary voters agree.

So far, DNC chair, Tom Perez, has said no, mischaracterizing the climate crisis as a single issue. As author/activist Naomi Klein points out, the climate crisis, "is not an 'issue'--it's the backdrop for all other issues. It's the fabric of life on Earth and it is unraveling."

More than 50 DNC members and state party chairs have signed a letter requesting a climate debate and the DNC will vote on their resolution at an August 23 meeting. Sunrise Movement is recruiting activists to lobby for the resolution and young leaders to push to make Climate Crisis the top debate topic. They will offer training in Detroit in July before and during the next round of candidate debates. Register for the July 2 update call at tinyurl.com/Sunrise72Call.

In the meantime, we can learn more about candidates' past actions and current climate plans and priorities online:

- [Inside Climate News](#) has in-depth analysis of, "the most prominent candidates and those with the most detailed climate proposals," at tinyurl.com/2020DemsOnClimate-ICN.
- [NRDC Action Fund](#) has a compilation of candidates' plans with links and analysis at tinyurl.com/2020DemsOnClimate-NRDC.
- [NPR's Science Friday](#) program of June 14 included a discussion on major candidates' plans and how they differed with Mother Jones magazine reporter, Rebecca Leber. Listen at tinyurl.com/2020DemsOnClimate-SciFri.

Seeking Coulee Region Sierra Club members

to submit items for our newsletter and blog site! Email crsierraclub@gmail.com for details!

June Picnic

Thanks to those who attended our June 26 potluck picnic at Onalaska's Rowe Park. The weather was delightful and we enjoyed great food and conversation. Cathy has someone's Tupperware cake server! (Email crsierraclub@gmail.com.)

Public Regulators Fall Short

The **Babcock Genetics, Inc.** water discharge re-permit has been approved by the DNR. After dozens of citizens testified and sent written comments pointing out that terms of the previous permit have been repeatedly violated, that the old permit grandfathered in dangerous and out of date standards and practices, and that this is supposed to be the "year of clean water" under a new governor and new DNR, the permit was issued on May 28. A timeline of the process including a description of the March public hearing and DNR responses can be found at tinyurl.com/Permit2Pollute.

On June 8, a La Crosse county **manure spill** resulted in the deaths of at least 1,000 trout in Bostwick Creek, a class 2 trout stream. The name of the offender has not been released. The DNR is said to be investigating.

A lawsuit filed in 2016 by three **Jackson county** families claiming a **planned frac sand mine** would limit their right to peacefully live on their property is still open though the mine operator, OmniTRAX, says it will not develop the mine, processing plant and loading facility as planned. OmniTRAX still holds and refuses to relinquish a DNR permit to fill 4 acres of wetlands, good through at least mid-2021. The families fear if they voluntarily dismiss the suit, the site could be sold to a new mining company. There will be a July 29 hearing before Judge Scott Horne.

A June 27 public hearing on the proposed **Cardinal-Hickory Creek high voltage power line** held in Dodgeville was packed. People from Madison (where the Dane County board voted 33-0 to oppose the project) to Cassville (and south into Iowa) have organized to oppose the project. Power line builders, guaranteed a return on investment of at least 10%, continue to push forward with these projects despite widespread opposition. At a June 17 Public Service Commission hearing, the lead planner admitted they had not considered battery storage options. The US Department of Energy reports solar plus battery storage can be cost effective utility scale options.

Family-Friendly Black River Canoe Camping Trip July 13-14

This kid-friendly trip is offered to encourage young families, adults with kids and the young-at-heart to join us on the water. We'll stop to play and explore, cook out and sleep in tents on a sandbar. There is NO



CHARGE for the trip, but you must provide your own boat, gear, food, and transportation. Sign up by contacting co-leaders Kevin and Carol Olson: 608-356-8992 or 608-963-2678 or olsonfam44@centurytel.net, or Pat and Bobbie Wilson at pbwilson@centurytel.net or 608-788-8831. Online details at tinyurl.com/wiscwater

July 7-12: Public Transit Week

The John Muir Chapter is partnering with the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation and others for a week of action to support public transportation which will include public forums, ride-alongs with elected officials, sharing transit stories, and learning how we can work together to improve public transportation in our state. La Crosse Area Transit Advocates (lacrosseata.blogspot.com) will post updates for La Crosse area actions. CRSC members interested in hosting events in their communities may email Cassie Steiner (cassandra.steiner@sierraclub.org)

August 10 - Forest Bathing

The Mississippi Valley Conservancy will offer a *shinrin-yoku* (forest bathing) experience during an August 10 hike on the La Crosse Blufflands - South. Silence will be observed during the hike during which participants will draw upon mindful meditation techniques. Read more and register (by August 7) at tinyurl.com/MVCMedHike.

Study: Nitrates and Cancer

A new study estimates up to 12,000 cancer cases nationwide may be linked to nitrates in drinking water. In addition, nitrate contamination may be responsible for thousands of infants born with very low birth weights. The study shows the current "safe" standard of 10 ppm needs to be updated. Read more at tinyurl.com/nitratestudy.

Connect with us online at tinyurl.com/crsierra, cr-sierra.blogspot.com, or crsierraclub@gmail.com

Plastic Free July

Every July, more than a million people around the world participate in Plastic Free July, a challenge to refuse single-use plastics for one whole month.

The event is fun but deadly serious. Every year, millions of birds, fish, and mammals are killed or maimed by plastic waste. Very little plastic is actually recycled with most ending up in landfills, incinerators, or one of the vast ocean plastic garbage patches. Microplastics are found in every crevice and creature on Earth, from the tiniest arrow worms to the deepest ocean trenches, and in the food and water we consume. No one knows what effects a plastic diet will have on human health. Most plastics are made from fossil fuels.

Learn more about the problems, sign up for the challenge, and learn more at plasticfreejuly.org.

Green Your Event

As we move into the season of picnics and weddings, parties, festivals, and banquets, think about how to reduce single use plastic, minimize garbage and food waste, and help inform others about how bad habits contaminate the Earth and contribute to global heating.

The 2008 Green Festivals and Events Guide from the Icarus Foundation walks planners and organizers through every aspect of a green event from reducing paper and printing to considering transportation needs and food considerations (ecoclub.com/library/epapes.15.pdf).

Some ideas to get you started:

- Reduce paper/printing - use online communications when possible. If you must print invitations or maps, format your pages to print back to back or two or four documents per page. Use recycled paper.
- Transportation is important! Make sure your event is accessible by walking, bicycling, and public transportation. Help your guests share rides. Minimize the distance between lodging and venue.
- Location - where will you hold your event? Is it an energy hog or a green building? We can “vote” with our dollars by preferring venues that are working to be sustainable and environmentally responsible.
- Supplies should be necessary and sustainable. Consider washable tableware instead of single use plastic and reusable or repurposed or dual use favors and prizes. Where will all the stuff you use end up? In the landfill or repurposed and reused?
- Event - make your sustainable expectations known to everyone who will help or perform at your event. Use green energy when possible. Help ensure presentations and programs don't waste resources. Place recycle bins.



- Food and Drink - food waste is not only expensive but rotting food contributes to climate change. A 2018 study claims if food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Use an accurate count when ordering or preparing food. Use locally available and in-season food. Tell guests and participants about your sustainable food policies. Arrange in advance to donate or compost excess food.

If you are a *participant* in an event, especially a community event using community resources, make sure the organizers know you expect them to be aware of their event's environmental impact from traffic and transportation congestion it may cause to energy use. (Most Wisconsin electricity is still mostly coal-generated unless organizers are purchasing green energy). Ask if they monitor food waste, require green food service, and restrict unsustainable items like plastic trinkets that may be for sale or given away.

The climate crisis, the plastics crisis, and the waste crisis will not be solved if we don't change our habits, our norms, and our expectations. We can be agents for change in our communities by offering different examples, helping to organize, and finding better resources. We can make changes by getting involved in community planning, talking with elected leaders, working to pass green legislation, and voting with our dollars and with our votes.

Set up a green event resource in your community! Consider making available plates, utensils, cups and glasses, cloth tablecloths and napkins that can be "checked out" for local events. Agree that a small fee will pay for damaged or lost items when returned.