



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
NOVEMBER 2019

"The climate crisis has increased the risk of unnaturally large and more dangerous fires. The long-term safety of our communities demands action on climate. We cannot afford delay." - Sierra Club Statement on Fires in Northern and Southern California

Action Alert: Felony Trespass Bill

By Al Gedicks The Felony Trespass Bill (AB426/SB386) has already passed the Wisconsin Assembly on a voice vote and is on a fast track headed for the Wisconsin Senate. The bill would make it a felony, punishable by up to six years in prison and a \$10,000 fine, to trespass on property owned, leased, or operated by fossil fuel companies. Some Wisconsin legislators who otherwise vote in favor of the environment and freedom of expression have bought the argument of the American Petroleum Institute that the bill is necessary to protect energy workers.

Threatening energy workers is already against the law. These heightened penalties are designed to suppress protests against the construction of oil and gas pipelines by those concerned about pipelines' harm to the environment, indigenous land, and landowner rights.

I have asked Senator Shilling (D-La Crosse) to demand a roll call vote when the bill comes before the Senate next week. Her legislative assistant told me this morning (Oct. 29) that the Senator has not yet decided if she will call for a roll call vote. Without a roll call vote, there is no



accountability for legislators who choose to give energy companies the power to stifle peaceful, non-violent protests through threats of felony convictions.

Please call or email Senator Shilling and tell her that she needs to demand a roll call vote on the felony trespass bill (SB386) so voters know who is willing to suppress freedom of speech and peaceful assembly for the energy industry. Senator Shilling's office: 608-266-5490 or 800-385-3385. Email: Sen.Shilling@legis.wisconsin.gov.

Al Gedicks is executive secretary of the Wisconsin Resources Protection Council. Read the letter to the State senators from a coalition of state groups including the John Muir Chapter Sierra Club at tinyurl.com/SB386-letter.

Local Energy Efficiency Initiative

By Kathy Allen In early October, several Coulee Region Sierra Club members attended a launch event to learn more about Citizen Action of Wisconsin's new Driftless Region Organizing Cooperative. Citizen Action has worked on progressive issues around the state including health care, fair elections, CAFO moratoriums, and a living wage. They are now forming a co-op in the Coulee Region, and the first issue the co-op will tackle is climate change.



According to a 2017 report by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), one of the best ways to reduce green house

gas emissions is improving home energy efficiency. Because of this, Citizen Action will focus on making energy efficiency improvements more affordable and accessible for all southwest Wisconsin residents. The co-op will also work with banks, utilities, and elected officials to make residential solar more affordable. Such efforts could help La Crosse and other communities meet the "Ready for 100" goals of transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2050 or sooner.

To learn more about the new co-op, visit www.citizenactionwifund.org/energy or contact Ben Wilson, the southwest Wisconsin co-op organizer, at ben.wilson@citizenactionwi.org or 608-386-2847.

Kathy Allen is a member of the Coulee Region Sierra Club board. She leads the local Ready for 100 team.

Cold Weather Produce: Local Resources

By Veronica Bauer It is difficult to know exactly where our food comes from and how it is cared for, especially when it is so important in keeping communities healthy and safe. I don't know about you, but I am often very concerned about whether the produce I buy is contaminated by foodborne pathogens, fertilizers, pesticides, or other harmful contaminants. I want to know with confidence that my food is grown, maintained, and distributed in a safe and sustainable way. To avoid stress when it comes to acquiring fresh food, a great solution is to grow your own. Sometimes though, we do not have direct access to a home garden or cannot grow because of the winter months. I can relate to this because I am a student living in an off-campus apartment where I do not have direct access to a garden. That is why I turn to my three favorite food resources for assistance in learning about growing food and acquiring fresh produce.

The Myrick Park Community Garden, found next to the Myrick Park Center along the La Crosse River Marsh, is very near and dear to me and I did not know it existed before this past summer. I was one of three Community Enrichment AmeriCorps interns at the garden for the summer. The garden is a demonstration garden, so it is

smaller than typical community gardens. Throughout the summer, we planted, maintained, and harvested the garden. We grew many vegetables and fruits including tomatoes, potatoes, sweet peppers, corn, broccoli, radishes, kale, squash, carrots, various herbs, strawberries, and much more. My internship lasted from May to the end of August, but I still visit through late October and early November because some sweet peppers, radishes, eggplants, brussel sprouts, and kale are still growing. While I was working at the garden this summer, I was disappointed to see that not as many people as I thought came to the garden to harvest. Don't get me wrong, I liked having a lot of fresh produce to myself, but I would have much rather shared what I had grown with community members. Next summer if you happen to find yourself in front of the Myrick Park Community Garden, please feel free to harvest some vegetables, as long as you only take what you need (leave some food for others) and you respect the garden and the people working in it. During the winter months, the garden is not up and running.
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November 9 - Highway Cleanup

Weather dampened our planned cleanup in October so we've rescheduled for **Saturday, November 9 at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the municipal water pumping station just northwest of the intersection of River Valley Drive and Gillette Street (County B). Gloves, safety vests, and bags provided. We usually spend 1.5 to 2 hours working in teams. The more the merrier! If you have questions, please contact Pat at 608-788-8831.



Environmental Education Grants

The Coulee Region Sierra Club offers grants of up to \$200 for environmental education projects for elementary and middle school age children or community organizations in Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties.

Projects must:

- * Provide hands-on experience for students to learn about and explore our environment.
- * Do something to promote a world that allows all life forms to live and prosper.
- * Show students that they can make a difference in their environment, urban or rural.
- * Be completed within the 2019-2020 school year.
- * Provide a written report of outcomes.

Projects may:

- * Consist of environmental displays or creative works.
- * Benefit land, water, air, plants, animals, and/or birds.
- * Be a new project or ongoing activity.

Applications are DUE BY January 5. See tinyurl.com/CRSCPrintApp for a print-and-mail application or apply online at tinyurl.com/CRSC-GrantApp. Email Maureen, maureen@johnsflaherty.com, with questions.

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The Cameron Park Winter Farmer's Market at the Myrick Park Center is open on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., starting on November 3rd and ending December 22nd. This time of the year is perfect for stocking up on storage vegetables such as squash, carrots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, and garlic. Be sure not to miss out on this great opportunity!

Another favorite place when it comes to produce is the La Crosse YMCA Food Forest. It contains roughly 100 different species native to the region, establishing a high level of biodiversity. Jarad Barkheim from Coulee Region Ecoscapes, who helped to establish, design, and care for the Food Forest, said that hundreds of pounds of local, nutrient-rich produce are harvested from the Food Forest each growing season. This produce is available for community members to harvest, as long as you know what you are harvesting, you do not harm the plants, and you leave something for others to harvest. Currently, there are still some things available at the Food Forest including popcorn, rose hips, wild onions, and medicinal herbs such as echinacea, purple coneflower roots, and horseradish. During the colder months activity at the Food Forest becomes pretty chill, no pun intended. However there are free classes offered to the community during the winter.

Stephanie Shaw, the YMCA Nutrition Educator Coordinator gave me the following list of free, community-open events/classes coming in the colder months:

- November 14 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the YMCA: *Making and Preserving Bone Broth*
- November 17 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Myrick Park Center: *Making Thanksgiving Side Dishes*
- December 1 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Myrick Park Center: *Making Lefse*
- December 14 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the YMCA: *Making Lefse*
- January 8 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the YMCA: *Mediterranean Diet class*
- January 15 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the YMCA: *Low-Carb Diet class*
- January 29 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the YMCA: *Plant-Based Diet class*
- March 7 (time TBD): *Food Forest 101 class*

If you want to find out more event information, you can also search the Community Food Forest at the Y on Facebook.

Another place I would recommend checking out is the Kane Street Garden. It has been operating for 21 years alongside the Hunger Task Force. It is an "all together"

community garden where anyone can volunteer and take home produce. During the summer, 30,000 pounds of organic produce is grown each year and in addition to growing food, workshops for all ages are available so everyone has an opportunity to learn how to maintain an organic garden. They are always accepting volunteers to help with the garden, so if you are able to, volunteer for an hour or more. During the colder months, garden coordinator Todd Huffman said that they will plant and harvest spinach in November, December, and up until mid-January. Picking times will be posted on the Kane Street Garden Facebook page within the next couple weeks.

One last option I would like to mention are Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. After my internship ended in August and the produce in the Myrick Park Garden began to dwindle, a friend and I decided to split a CSA share through Small Family Farm (www.smallfamilycsa.com) based in La Farge, from when school started to mid-October. I have recently purchased a Fall share that I will receive on October 30th and November 13th which will include a large package of storage vegetables such as onions, garlic, winter squash, beets, carrots, etc. The only later share they have after the Fall Share is the Thanksgiving Box which will be delivered to you two days before Thanksgiving. That box include pie pumpkins, winter squashes, potatoes, onions, garlic, carrots and more. A couple of other CSAs that deliver to La Crosse are Driftless Organics (www.driftlessorganics.com) in Soldier's Grove and Harmony Valley Farm (harmonyvalleyfarm.com) in Viroqua. Both CSAs have shares that deliver through December and the boxes also contain storage crops.

The YMCA Food Forest, the Kane Street Garden, the Myrick Park Community Garden and Center, and your local CSAs are just a few great examples of ways you can receive locally grown produce. If these locations do not work for you or you do not live in the La Crosse area, you can search for places within your community. Enhance the health of yourself, your family, and your community by supporting your local produce resources.

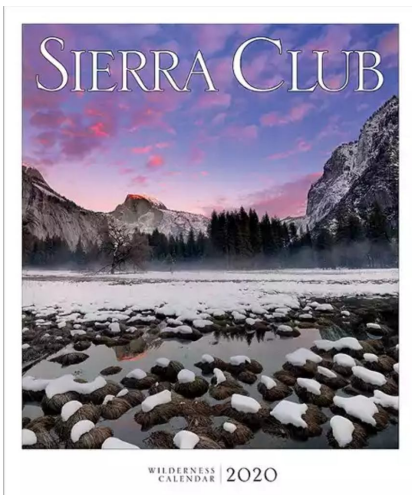
Veronica Bauer is a Biology Major and Environmental Studies minor at UW-La Crosse. This semester, Veronica is working on educating about sustainability issues online and through the Sierra Club newsletter.

Growing your own or buying local food - mostly fruits and vegetables - in season, from a local source with minimal chemical inputs, food miles, processing, cold storage, and packaging helps reduce your carbon footprint. Organic soils store more carbon than soils on conventional farms (see tinyurl.com/CInOgSoil).

Coulee Region Group Board Elections

We are seeking candidates to run for the Coulee Region Group board of directors! Board members will try to attend monthly meetings - in person or by phone or computer - and work to forward the goals of our club in the community. It would be fantastic if we could add some board members from counties outside La Crosse. Each area in our group has important issues and concerns (and potential programs and outings) and we would like to make sure all important matters are included in our program and event planning.

We will put a ballot in the December newsletter. If you are interested in serving on the board, **please complete the online form at tinyurl.com/crsboardform or call Pat at 608-788-8831** with your name, contact info, county of residence, and a brief description of your experience and interests demonstrating why you would like to serve on the board. Please complete your nomination form by November 25.

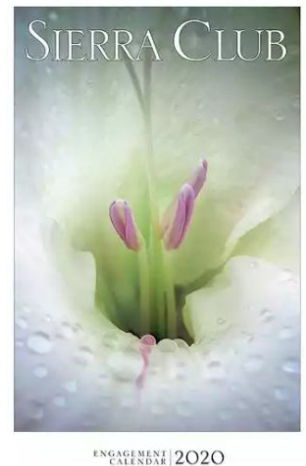


Sierra Club 2020 Calendars!

Again this year, your purchase of **Sierra Club calendars** will benefit our club and environmental programs and protection activities. The calendars cost \$14.95 for the wall calendar and \$15.95 for the engagement book.

Get your calendar at our December gathering or order from Maureen Kinney: 608-784-9324/608-784-5678 or email maureen@johnsflaherty.com.

SIERRA CLUB NOTE AND HOLIDAY CARDS are available at store.sierraclub.org/calendars-cards-c28.aspx



Sustainability Institute

On November 5, the Sustainability Institute at Western Technical College in La Crosse will host a Community Resiliency Symposium - Stories and Successes of our Local Watersheds. The program includes breakfast, a keynote address, stories of success, and a panel discussion. Learn more and get a link to the registration form at their site: sustaininstitute.com/education

Sustain La Crosse is a cohort-based program offered through the Sustainability Institute at Western Technical College designed to provide participant businesses and other enterprises in the 7 Rivers Region support in implementing sustainable initiatives. Module blocks start in spring 2020. The program is now accepting applications available at their site: sustaininstitute.com/sustain.

New Climate Podcast

By Kathy Allen It seems like the climate crisis may finally be a key issue in the 2020 elections largely thanks to pressure from young people across the country. A new weekly podcast called "Climate 2020" is keeping voters informed and up to date on climate issues and what the candidates are saying about climate.

The first five episodes have covered topics such as the September climate strikes, Trump's connections to fossil fuels, a



campaign to get banks to divest from fossil fuel companies, and the lack of climate questions in the most recent debate. Each episode is about 30 minutes.

The podcast is hosted by *Years of Living Dangerously* award-winning documentary producer David Gelber and ClimateNexus Founding Director Jeff Nesbit.

Find more information and a link to episodes at climate2020podcast.com.

Battling Plastic

By Veronica Bauer If you look around at the streets you drive on or the sidewalks you walk on, you will probably see some sort of plastic lying on the ground. If you look in the waterways of your community, you will most likely see plastic floating on the surface. Some of the plastics you may not even be able to see because they have been broken down into microplastics. Unfortunately, I see this almost every day in La Crosse, whether I am walking to classes at the University or biking downtown. La Crosse is not the only guilty city; I see it in every city and every highway I pass through. The plastic crisis is only getting worse, and we all need to do something about it.

Plastic never goes away: it piles up in the environment and spoils our groundwater, poisons the food chain, contributes to carbon emissions, increases oil consumption, threatens wildlife, affects human health, and costs billions of dollars to abate. Yet, according to UN Environment, today “we produce about 300 million tons of plastic waste every year. That’s nearly equivalent to the weight of the entire human population.” (www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/)

So, what can we do? Recycling is a great idea for combatting plastic waste and pollution, however it not very effective. A video by Greenpeace International called “Three lies big brands are selling you about plastic,” talks about how recycling is not a solution to our plastic waste problem. (youtu.be/RxDz-HFXs28) According to National Geographic, less than one-fifth of all plastic is recycled globally, even though overall plastic production rates are increasing. (www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2018/05/plastics-facts-infographics-ocean-pollution/)

We need more recycling awareness and mindfulness. Some options that governments can provide to their citizens would be to run public awareness campaigns, offer recycling incentives, introduce plastic tax levies, or ban certain plastic products. The source(s) of plastic production should be the target for legislative change and should be held responsible for the plastic crisis and its consequences. However, the unfortunate reality is that the pressure has been placed on the consumer.

Consumers have the potential to make change happen. Even though you may think you are one person doing one action, these actions can add up. You can influence others to adopt a plastic-free way of life. Your action will have a domino effect. When everyone makes the transition, everything else follows. What consumers demand, companies will want to provide. If we want less plastic, we can get less plastic. Make your voice heard.

The main focus at the individual level is reuse and refill. Instead of using plastic and paper bags offered at various stores, bring your own cloth bag. You can purchase one or make your own. There are many video tutorials online. Instead of using plastic straws and plastic utensils, choose/purchase reusable options.

I personally have started reducing my individual waste. To start, I got myself an Aspero retractable metal straw and a bamboo spork with a cork case that I got from an eco-friendly store in downtown La Crosse called Full Circle Supply. I can attach both to my keychain so I can take them with me anywhere. Reduce plastic food packaging by buying in bulk and using your own reusable containers. I bring all of my jars to the People’s Food Co-op in La Crosse and fill them up with grains, beans, herbs, teas, oils, etc. Instead of using single-use coffee cups, bring your own reusable coffee container, whether it be a coffee mug, ceramic cup, or jar. Instead of buying beverages in plastic bottles, bring your own refillable bottle. Instead of continuously buying new shampoo, conditioner, bath soap, or any other toiletry bottles, take your own containers to fill from bulk containers. Full Circle Supply in downtown La Crosse is where I refill my bottles.

These are just a few important ways that you can reduce your plastic impact. If you want more specific ways to help reduce your plastic use, there are many websites that will tell you how to reach your goals. There are also a couple of community organizations that you can join that focus on combating plastic. One is the Plastic Initiative and another is called Viroqua Plastic Free.

I talked with Annika Mersmann from Viroqua Plastic Free about the purpose of this relatively new organization. The group plans to raise awareness of plastic pollution, plastic health issues, and solutions to the plastic crisis, offer education on the scope of plastic use and available alternatives, offer education on the local interface with the global plastic situation, offer guidance on plastic-free living, and work with local businesses, schools, and community groups for cooperative solutions. To join their cause or learn more about them and the steps they are taking, visit www.viroquaplasticfree.org or their Facebook page. Ms. Mersmann suggested these videos: “The Story of Stuff” (youtu.be/urFZ5o0az_4) and the trailer for an upcoming movie, The Story of Plastic (www.storyofplastic.org), both of which are very enlightening regarding the growing concerns of plastic pollution.

There are many ways that we can combat plastic, on the individual, manufacturer or legislative level. Combining our efforts and passing on the message can help to improve the lives of everyone and everything on the planet.



Join us for great food and interesting conversation!

COULÉE REGION SIERRA CLUB HOLIDAY GATHERING

Tuesday, December 17 * 6:00 p.m.

N1965 Valley Rd, La Crosse

(Home of Barb & Don Frank - phone 608-788-3914)

Bring some appetizers or snacks to share. Main dish provided!

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A CLUB MEMBER!

From State Road & Losey, go east on Highway 33 for about one mile.

At the stop lights, turn left (north) onto Wedgewood Drive West in Wedgewood Valley.

Stay on Wedgewood Drive West to Valley Drive.

The house is at the intersection of Wedgewood Drive West & Valley Drive.

Watch for the lighted sign!

Carpool? Visit www.groupcarpool.com/t/gnfm0d to add your car or find a ride.