



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
SEPTEMBER 2019

Losing another fifth of Brazil's rain forest will trigger the release of a "doomsday bomb" of stored carbon. - Alexander Zaitchik, *The Intercept*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 at 7 p.m.

**CLIMATE CHANGE: Heading for Extinction
(and what to do about it) - an Extinction
Rebellion video and discussion**

**Ho-Chunk Three Rivers House
724 Main Street, La Crosse**

Our planet is in a state of crisis. Species are going extinct at an incredible rate. The Arctic is melting faster and the permafrost is thawing sooner than scientists predicted. Weather patterns are changing, bringing more violent storms, more floods, wildfires, tornadoes, and droughts, which all threaten our ability to grow food. Many cities, like LA and New York, along with countries like Scotland, Ireland, Britain, and Switzerland, have declared a climate emergency. It is critical that we act now.

Many groups, old and new, are pushing for immediate drastic action. One of the newest is Extinction Rebellion (XR) in the UK. They use nonviolent direct action to demand that the UK take action. In April 2019, XR hosted a forum in Oxford, facilitated by environmental and business journalist George Monbiot. We will watch an edited version of that program, which includes information and perspectives from adults and students, and then discuss what our Sierra Club and we as individuals, citizens, and environmentalists can do. You need not be a Sierra Club member to attend this event. Please attend, bring a friend, and share the event link: tinyurl.com/CRSCXR-924,

Global Climate Strike, 9/20-9/27



Fridays for Future, La Crosse Chapter (twitter.com/fri4futurelax) invites every person who cares about our planet to join them and supporting organizations (including Coulee Region Sierra Club) in taking climate action on and around Friday,

September 20. La Crosse area actions on September 20 will include visibility events, strikes and vigils, and an all-city demonstration, petition of government, and pledge for personal action at 5:30 p.m. in downtown La Crosse. More events are being added to the schedule. See updates at tinyurl.com/920strike-lax.

"This decade is our last chance to stop the destruction of our people and our planet," said Vic Barrett, a plaintiff in the *Juliana v. United States* case, a lawsuit brought by children, teens, and young adults against the United States government for failing to protect their futures from the climate effects of fossil fuel emissions.

"Our future was sold so that a small number of people could make unimaginable amounts of money."
- Greta Thunberg

Gov. Evers' Clean Energy Action

On August 16, Governor Evers signed Executive Order #38 to address the issue of clean energy in Wisconsin. The Order directs the Department of Administration to create an Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy and, in partnership with other state agencies and state utilities, achieve a goal of ensuring all energy consumed within the state is 100% carbon-free by 2050. The new office will promote the development and use of clean, renewable energy; innovate sustainability solutions; and diversify the state's energy resources.

La Crosse County Action

At its August 22 meeting, the Sustainable La Crosse Commission recommended a resolution pledging county-wide carbon zero and 100% renewable energy to the La Crosse County Board. The resolution will be revised and reviewed by the county and its committees and will, we hope, come for a vote before the end of the year. If you live in La Crosse county, please watch for updates and actions you can take at crsierra.blogspot.com.

Rep. Jill Billings' Plastic Bills

Rep. Jill Billings (95th District) is concerned about plastics and fossil fuels used to manufacture them. She notes that China's 2008 ban on plastic bags saved that country millions of barrels of oil. In an August interview for our newsletter, Rep. Billings talked about two plastics bills she co-authored and is co-sponsoring in the State Assembly.

AB 177 repeals the statute that prohibits local governments from regulating certain single use containers. Plastic bag and bottled water bans are effective but not allowed by individual communities under current Wisconsin law.

AB 226 prohibits food from being served in foam polystyrene packaging. The ban would exclude packages sealed outside the state and meat/poultry/seafood trays. And it would go into effect slowly allowing time for businesses to find substitutes.

Plastic manufacturers are planning to increase production so we must find ways to encourage plastic alternatives. Rep. Billings thinks things are slowly getting better as more people learn about and understand the issues, including pollution, harm to sea life, and fossil fuel use.

Black River Canoe Camping

Twenty-two of us, including nine kids, found the Black River to be the perfect place to beat the heat over the July 13-14 weekend. The weather and water levels were perfect. We hiked up Lost Falls on Roaring Creek, swam, played, rolled canoes, slept overnight on a sandbar, shared a camp fire, roasted marshmallows, sang, and played some more. The group also paddled about 23 miles! Special thanks to Pat and Bobbie Wilson, co-leaders! The last Coulee Region area trip of the year will be a September 15 day on the Kickapoo. See tinyurl.com/jmcwatertrips.



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La Crosse, WI 54601

She suggests that Sierra Club members can be effective supporters and advocates by being aware of legislators' issues and voting records and candidates' promises. Support those who push our environmental agenda forward. Communicate with them by emailing or visiting, and be prepared with a broad range of reasons to support our causes. "Legislators come at issues with different priorities and values. It's smart to have a multi-prong approach when talking with legislators. Some are concerned about how laws will affect our children. Some are more concerned with economic impacts."

Also, make sure to hold "feet to the fire." Ask, "Will you support this bill?" If they haven't yet decided, it's a chance to provide information that supports your issues.

Rep. Billings says the best way to contact legislators is by email. Often, staff will respond, but that's good because they are the ones who do the research and help legislators understand details. Personal visits to legislators' Madison offices are also effective. Take a one-page summary about each bill and why you support it. Highlight reasons, resources, and sources and include contact information.

Read more about AB 177 and AB 226 at the State Legislature's web page: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/>

Environmental Education Grants

Only one program received an environmental education grant in January 2019.



Here is a report from Teresa Lakowske, a teacher at Innovations STEM Academy in Sparta about what was accomplished. Applications for 2020 grants will be available in November.

Water Stories and Experiments Project: *Students from Sparta's Innovations STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Academy, grades six through eight, do monthly water testing throughout the school year. Students wanted to share some of their water-related topics with elementary students to introduce and engage them in some STEM learning and thinking. STEM students taught elementary students lessons in water density, the water cycle, watershed, and buoyancy. The elementary students got to experience hands-on learning and were able to ask the older students questions as they went. All the students enjoyed the experience!*

Selling Our Soul by Sterling Holbrook

Reprinted with permission from Traditional Bowhunter magazine, Aug/Sep 2019

I admit to a sense of despondency while writing this column. It appears that parts of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are going to be opened to drilling for oil and gas. How important is ANWR? To any hunter or outdoors enthusiast it should be very important, for it represents the last true wilderness in our country—19 million acres of the last pristine land in the United States.

Within the million acres of wilderness in the western part of the Lower-48, the greatest distance from a road is 28 miles. In the East, it's just 17 miles, in the Florida Everglades. Wilderness areas in the Lower-48 are best described as small islands of undeveloped land.

Alaska Biological Research found that the greatest distance in Alaska, including established winter trails over tundra, is 85 miles from a road or village. That spot, the most remote in America, lies in ANWR. It represents the wilderness that is gone in the Lower-48, the wilderness that I dreamed of as a young hunter. It was pristine then and still is now, thanks to protections put in place by President Eisenhower, a Republican, in 1960 and changed from Range to Refuge by Congress in 1980.

Bordered on the north by the Arctic Ocean, this area is the calving ground of the Porcupine caribou herd of 200,000 animals. The herd is dwarfed by the numbers of geese, ducks, songbirds, and raptors that return to ANWR from all over the world to nest. This area is home to polar bears and musk ox. I can quickly count 21 rivers flowing north into the Arctic Ocean through ANWR. To the east lies the Canadian border, to the south the Yukon Flats. In between the eastern Brooks Range rises, famous for Dall sheep and a refuge for caribou trying to escape the biting bugs that inhabit the coastal plain in summer.

From the snow fields and crags of the Brooks Range spring the southern flowing Coleen, Sheenjok, and Chandalar river systems with their numerous tributaries. This is winter range for the Porcupine herd along with the packs of wolves that follow them. Arctic grizzlies range over the entire Refuge.

The western border of ANWR follows closely the corridor of the Dalton Highway and the Alaska pipeline. This is the rough supply link to Prudhoe Bay and its massive oil infrastructure. Prudhoe produced one-fifth of U.S. oil consumption in the last 25 years, but fracking has changed the dynamics of oil extraction in the rest of the country and greatly increased domestic output elsewhere.

Sitting in Fairbanks, my GPS shows 317 miles as the raven flies to the remote spot described earlier, which I have visited several times. It's not easy to get to even with an airplane. I can assure you that it's a wild and beautiful place. Ask Don Thomas, Dick and Yote Robertson, or Doug Borland, who have packed numerous impressive rams out of there.

If it were only as simple as politicians and media pundits—who seem to have a knack for brainwashing intelligent citizens—make it out to be. After all, the Refuge is 19 million acres and they only want 1.5 million for drilling, but they want their foot in the door as always. What you never hear is that they already have almost the entire Western Arctic Plain—over 23-million acres—in the Naval Petroleum Reserve, set aside for oil exploration. While the oil companies have politicians that will give to them, they want ANWR.

We need the oil, right? I hear that constantly from politicians. Alaska sure needs all the oil it can get to end the financial crisis here in a state whose budget is totally dependant on oil. So far, the state has lacked politicians with the courage to address this petroleum addiction even though Alaska sinks deeper into debt every year.

By Department of Energy estimates, there are 7.7 billion barrels of oil in the proposed drilling area in ANWR. American consumption for 2017 was 7.28 billion barrels. Do the math! Are we really going to industrialize—it's not just wells, but the whole gauntlet of roads, pads, and infrastructure—one of the last true wild and fragile places on the planet for one year's worth of oil? Unbelievable!

The old argument is that we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. That died when we became the world's largest oil exporter. The reason for the attack on ANWR is pure greed by people who don't care about wildness or caribou. Hunters should care even if they will never see ANWR. We used to be the conservationists who actually saved what meager wildness remains. You have that option. Study for yourself and think. Don't let politics or talking heads get in the way of reason.

I would like to leave my granddaughter at least part of the Earth still wild.

A CRSC member brought this article to our June potluck and asked if we could share it in the newsletter. We received permission to reprint from the magazine, Traditional Bowhunter, and from the author, Sterling Holbrook, who wrote, "We aren't rolling over up here on the issue nor do we all support drilling. Thank you for keeping up the pressure on them to protect the area." Read the article online at tradbow.com/campfire-philosopher-selling-our-soul.



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Fall Highway Cleanup

Tuesday, October 1 is the date of our River Valley Drive highway cleanup. Meet at **5:30 p.m.** at the Gillette Street pumping station. Gloves, bags, and vests provided. Many hands make light work! Join us!

Sept. 4 - CAFO Siting Hearing

The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will hold a public hearing September 4 on ATCP-51 CAFO/livestock siting rule updates. The rules have not been revised since 2006. The hearing will be at Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center, 3060 South Kinney Coulee Road, Onalaska, from 1 to 4 and 5 to 8 p.m. You may also comment online, by email, and by mail. Read more about the hearing at tinyurl.com/CAFOSiting

September 4 Climate Forums

On September 4, the La Crosse Area League of Women Voters will host a live broadcast of the first program of a four-part 2019-2020 Climate Crisis Series developed by the LWV of Dane County. The La Crosse Area League is hosting a viewing in the basement auditorium of the La Crosse County Administration Building, 212 6th St. N. The free program starts at 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. For details visit <https://tinyurl.com/daneLWVClimate1>.

Also on September 4, ten Democratic presidential candidates will participate in a CNN climate forum. A second climate forum, hosted by MSNBC, is set for September 19 and 20. Democratic National Committee leaders recently voted against holding an official Democratic candidate climate debate.

September 11 EV Workshop

Electric Vehicles: trends, planning considerations, and funding resources is the title of a workshop for sustainability managers, fleet managers, EV enthusiasts, and those wishing to learn more about local, state, and regional EV initiatives. On Wednesday, September 11 at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., industry experts from Argonne National Laboratory, Wisconsin Clean Cities, and RENEW Wisconsin will discuss EV trends, resources, policy issues, and more. Continental breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon EV ride and drive event are included in the \$39 registration fee. Find info and registration details at tinyurl.com/EVChargingDay.

Sept. 26 - Water Quality Update

Mark Borchardt, Ph.D., Research Microbiologist, USDA - Agricultural Research Service, will present results and analysis from testing done as part of the Southwest Wisconsin Geology and Groundwater Study (SWIGG) on Thursday, September 26 at 6:00 p.m. at the Platteville Public Library. The most recent test identified fecal sources from 35 private homeowners' wells. These wells were randomly selected from those previously found during the study to be contaminated with coliform bacteria or high nitrate. The study is being conducted in Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette counties. The presentation is sponsored by Grant County Rural Stewardship and is free and open to the public. More information and details about the meeting: <https://facebook.com/events/671883016619870>.

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