



# Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

FEBRUARY 2014

## FEBRUARY MEETING

**We apologize to anyone who didn't get our email cancellation of last month's meeting.**

**Tuesday,  
February 25**

7pm at the  
**HoChunk  
Three Rivers House  
at 8th & Main**

### **A FORK IN THE ROAD: Why Regional Transmission Could Be a Thing of the Past** • Speaker: Debra Severson

Due to the weather-related cancellation of our January meeting, our featured discussion on regional transmission expansion has been rescheduled to February. Substantive new information is expected between the writing of this update and the meeting.

CapX2020 transmission would stretch from the Dakotas into Wisconsin near La Crosse. The Wisconsin segment of CapX2020 was approved in May 2012 and has been the subject of ongoing debate. The most recent challenge is a January 9, 2014 request to reopen the docket filed with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC).

Citizens Energy Task Force (CETF) and SOUL filed the request citing substantive new information that would defer or negate the need for the line, and reduce the benefits and value to Wisconsin ratepayers. The Coulee Region Group Sierra Club submitted a letter of support and, by the time we meet, the PSC will have either agreed to reopen the decision or denied it.

The next segment of transmission, the proposed Badger Coulee line, would plug into CapX2020 in the La Crosse area and travel non-stop to Madison, where energy from the Dakotas could be transferred further south and east. The application for the Badger Coulee line has not yet been deemed complete by the PSC. Utilities are currently presenting the additional data. More information on the completeness of the application along with how citizens can be heard through the PSC "scoping" meeting process will be available at the meeting.

Debra Severson, who serves on the leadership of both CETF and SOUL, will facilitate a discussion on "The Fork in the Road." As an advocate for financially and environmentally sustainable energy policy, Deb will discuss alternatives to shipping centrally generated electricity around the country using regional transmission. According to Deb, in the same way our lives were changed by wireless telephone and internet technology, the opportunity exists to improve the reliability, resiliency and sustainability of our energy infrastructure. Deb can be reached at [deb@whisipirit.com](mailto:deb@whisipirit.com), or 608.269.6218

## **Coulee Region Sierra Club Environmental Grants**

**A**s we have done for a number of years, the Club has awarded two grants. The first is to Holmen Evergreen Elementary for \$200 for its environmental day. The program involves approximately 400 students, grades K-5, who participate school-wide on one day in different activities devoted to environmental issues like sustainability, endangered animals, recycling and the like. The children visit different stations and participate in different programs in order to raise awareness about the environment.

The second grant was to Mississippi Valley Conservancy, Inc., to be applied to the Link to the Land program. MVC's Link to the Land offers community members, families and children the opportunity to learn about and explore MVC's nature preserves on a guided hike. The hope is to help people familiarize themselves with the properties and increase outdoor recreation on these permanently protected reserves; \$195 was given to help offset the costs of these hikes.

## **Minnesota Marine Art Museum Show**

**A**rtist Sara Lubinski has been sketching and painting regional bluffs and will be having an exhibit of her work at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum in Winona. There is an opening reception on **Friday, March 7**. This outstanding landscape artist and botanist has hiked and explored on foot and by canoe and recorded her impressions of bluffs, bluffsides, and the Mississippi River. I plan to attend and invite anyone else interested in joining me to call 788-3914. Sara's work is breathtakingly beautiful and it should be a remarkable show.

**Barbara Frank, [bdfrank@centurytel.net](mailto:bdfrank@centurytel.net)**

**Go paperless! Email [alp@haleskemp.com](mailto:alp@haleskemp.com) for an electronic newsletter**



Coulee Region Sierra Club

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## Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) Raises Issues

This sweeping free trade agreement, worked on for over 5 years, has been cloaked in secrecy and raises many concerns. It will be the largest free trade pact by far and includes New Zealand, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam. There has been virtually no public input and the push is on to fast track the agreement, with no Congressional discussion or input beyond an up or down vote.

A leaked Wikipedia report on the environmental terms of the trade agreement are not encouraging. The potential for huge pushback on environmental safeguards is there, in effect wiping out or ignoring regulations, or waging exceedingly costly lawsuits by corporate entities who can claim economic harm to themselves and thereby wreak havoc for environmental protection.

In theory, world trade seems a good thing, but the devil is in the details, and the public good seems woefully under-served in these agreements. The track record to date is not great for job creation, for instance. That was one of the bonuses predicted for these trade agreements. The Economic Policy Institute issued a report in the Huffington Post contending that 700,000 jobs were lost under NAFTA. And the TPP is NAFTA on steroids. That group also estimates the loss or displacement of 2.3 million U.S. jobs after China's inclusion in the World Trade Organization in 2001.

President Obama is supporting TPP and urging job retraining, and even if that does pass—by

no means certain—there still need to be jobs for those trainees. With dubious benefits and likely severe risks to environment, labor, and agriculture, this could be a race to the bottom. There are strange bedfellows on both sides of this issue. Congressman Ron Kind is supporting it. Most Democrats in Congress oppose it. The big multinational corporations think it's a good deal and have poured large amounts of money and ideas into their lobbying efforts to pass it. These corporations include the National Assn. of Manufacturers,

the Business Roundtable, and the National Chamber of Commerce. They are likely to be major beneficiaries and have a poor history of sharing the largess.

The Sierra Club is opposed and cites strong environmental concerns.

Urge the President and Congressman Kind to oppose TPP. Leave a message at Cong. Kind's La Crosse Office: 608-782-2558

— Barbara Frank

Thanks to member Cathy Van Maren for creating our new Facebook page.

 "LIKE US" at Coulee Region Sierra Club!

It's now easier than ever to check for recent updates and upcoming events!

### RESCHEDULED DUE TO ICE STORM

## Winter Fun in the Kickapoo Valley

Saturday, March 1

10:30am to 4:30pm\*

Hosts/SC Trip Leaders: Kristi Rummel-King, Craig King and Elizabeth Thorson.

We'll try again! Enjoy some great exercise, company and sights! *\*Feel free to attend just the morning hike, lunch or afternoon car tour.*

**10:30 am – 1:00 pm: Snowshoeing/hiking** at Round Barn Ridge in Ontario, Wisconsin. All levels of snowshoers are welcome.

**Snowshoe Equipment:** Kristi has a few pairs of snowshoes to lend. Redfeather Snowshoes in LaCrosse, has offered a special discount for Sierra Club members at their warehouse in La Crosse (ORC Industries), contact Rose Jones at [rjones@orcind.com](mailto:rjones@orcind.com) or 1-800-525-0081.

**1:30 – 2:30 pm: Lunch** at Rivers End.

**2:30 – 4:30 pm: Amish Car Tour** between Ontario and Cashton (Kaufman's Bulk Foods and Natural Elixirs, Amish Wal-Mart, Bent and Dent and the final stop, Amish Cheese Factory in Cashton).

Contact Randy Hoehlen if you are interested in attending this invigorating event: **608-769-0736\* or rhoelzen@gmail.com.**