

Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
DECEMBER 2019

"New Senate Climate Caucus is Filled with Climate Deniers and Climate 'Delayers'" - Sharon Zhang, Truthout



Tuesday, December 17 * 6:00 p.m.
N1965 Valley Rd, La Crosse
(Home of the Franks - phone 608-788-3914)

Bring some appetizers or snacks to share.
YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A CLUB MEMBER!

How to get there: 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. There will be a lighted sign! Carpool? If you'd like to seek or offer a ride, visit www.groupcarpool.com/t/gnfm0d. Email crsierraclub@gmail.com or call Pat: 608-788-8831 with questions. See you there!

THANK YOU, Kathy Allen, Veronica Bauer, Susan Colliton, Maureen Kinney, Wendy Stark, Dave & Donna Swanson, Cathy Van Maren and Pat Wilson for helping write, proofread, edit, copy, collate, staple, label, and mail our newsletter!

Local citizens will join the continuing worldwide climate strike on **Friday, Nov. 29** and **Friday, December 6**. Deep concern about the the climate crisis continues as new studies show countries must pledge even stronger, faster action to avert an unrecoverable catastrophe.

On Nov. 29, "Black Friday," the focus will be runaway consumerism and pledging personal action. Demonstrators will display signs to boycott excessive buying and support students' ongoing Fridays for Future campaign. Everyone concerned about climate change can pledge a personal action such as joining Buy Nothing Day, writing a letter for local fossil fuel divestment, or other suggested actions shown at the event page at tiny.cc/laxclimatestrike2.

On Friday, Dec. 6, residents will urge U.S. elected officials to pay attention to the climate crisis during the global climate summit in Madrid (COP25). Students will lead follow-up actions highlighting their petition to US Rep Ron Kind, delivered with more than 300 constituents' signatures on September 23. The petition urges Kind to support and co-sponsor five bills that take strong climate action.

For more information visit the Facebook page and the event page:

FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE: LA CROSSE

CLIMATE STRIKE

JOIN FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE ON 11/29 AT THEIR WEEKLY FRIDAY STRIKE

BOYCOTT BLACK FRIDAY CONSUMERISM AND STAND FOR CLIMATE ACTION WITH LOCAL ACTIVISTS. EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!

7:30-8:30AM: INTERSECTION OF LA CROSSE ST. AND LOSEY BLVD
12-2PM: WEST SIDE OF CITY HALL (ALONG THIRD STREET)

For more info, visit the website at: tiny.cc/laxclimatestrike2

LA CROSSE CLIMATE STRIKE

Scan the QR code for more information

DEC 06 2019 8am-5pm

REPRESENTATIVE RON KIND'S OFFICE
205 5th Avenue S
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

Environmental Education Grant Applications Due Soon!

Annual Coulee Region Sierra Club Environmental Education grant applications are due on January 5, 2020! These grants are provided to schools and programs working with children through middle school to start a new project or help maintain an ongoing program that helps children connect with, protect, and advocate for the natural world. Thanks to a grant our club receives from the Paul Stry Foundation, we are able to make this money available in the Coulee Region Group area: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. For more information and links to the application, please visit tinyurl.com/CRSCGrantInfo.

Board Candidates' Statements

Veronica Bauer I am a UW La Crosse student studying biology and environmental studies, projected to graduate in May 2020 with a Bachelor of Science. Through my environmental studies capstone, I have been working alongside a local activist on community and student awareness projects which include published articles in the Coulee Region Sierra Club newsletter and the creation of a student blog for living sustainably. I have also had the privilege of working for WisCorps as a Community Engagement AmeriCorps intern where I further developed valuable professional skills such as cultivation, irrigation, and harvesting techniques, community outreach, and educational program development. I am part of a UWL club called Students for Sustainability that aims to bring sustainability to campus and provide service for the La Crosse community. I am very passionate about reducing waste, conserving freshwater resources, keeping the community healthy and engaged, promotion of personal and community gardens, and addressing the impacts of corporate agribusiness. I believe I would make a great contribution to the board.

Ned Gatzke I was present for the first Earth Day in 1970. As a recent college graduate I had recognized that I had an environmental conscience that needed to be focused and incorporated into living action. To facilitate this objective I joined the Sierra Club in 1974. I have lived in rural Monroe County for 44 years, interacting with a small woodland and prairie landscape. During this time, I have recognized and support the work of other organizations in the region focused on environmental protection, in addition to standing up, when necessary, to advocate for constructive environmental considerations in local public policy decision making. I have also come to recognize that positive environmental policy is dependent on the larger public policy process that takes place in our local and state legislative bodies. In that context, the people we elect to represent us matters. Consequently, I have been an active participant with Wisconsin Conservation Voters/Voices and currently serve on the board of directors. My travels throughout North America have also provided a larger perspective of "how things work" and environmental issues for people living in other places.

Highway Cleanup Report

By Pat Wilson Sam Skemp and Pat Wilson braved the cold rain for a while during the Coulee Region Group's October trash pickup on River Valley Drive, but ultimately postponed the completion of the effort to November. On November 9, Kathy Allen, Maureen Kinney, David Bange, and Pat and Bobbie Wilson completed the effort. We had to pick trash out of the early November snow,



and I'm sure we missed some. Now, we can rest until April when we host another cleaning of our adopted roadway. The photo shows one of the unusual items we found sticking out of the snow.

City of La Crosse R4100 Progress

A new solar siting ordinance in the City of La Crosse will pave the way for more and easier solar installations. And, thanks in part to citizen advocacy, the La Crosse City Council will begin updating its 2009 Sustainability Plan and assessing the city's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020, as they work to achieve their R4100 (Ready For 100) goal of zero carbon emissions and 100% renewable energy community-wide by 2050 or sooner.

SIERRA #1912

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group, John Muir Chapter of the Sierra Club is published four times per year.
Coulee Region Sierra Club, 620 23rd Street South,
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

Coulee Region Sierra Club Year in Review

By Pat Wilson The Coulee Region Sierra Club was active during 2019 both in environmental advocacy and providing opportunities for members to experience the outdoors. The Ready for 100 campaign was the major effort of 2019 and we made good progress. In 2020, we'll continue our efforts on Ready for 100, clean water, and public transit, while taking up November election advocacy as a new task. Along the way, we'll continue to seek ways to involve more members in activities and increase our effectiveness outside of La Crosse County.

Sustainability, Clean Energy, Ready for 100

January – The Coulee Region Group held a Community Climate Resolution Discussion in La Crosse to envision the climate future we want and discuss ways to make change happen. There was a follow-up meeting in February to work on next steps.

February – We sponsored an online Community Energy Survey to gauge the opinions of La Crosse County residents about renewable energy.

March – We participated in the Climate Action Festival, where we advocated for the Ready for 100 campaign. We also created an online petition for La Crosse city and county residents to request that passage of Ready for 100 resolutions in their community.

April – We held an “Imagining Carbon Free” public forum to discuss what carbon-free means for our community’s

infrastructure, planning, buildings, neighborhoods, and transportation.

April - We tabled and collected Ready for 100 signatures at La Crosse’s Earth Fair.

May - We co-sponsored a Green New Deal Town Hall in support of the Green New Deal Tour organized by the Sunrise Movement.

July - After the La Crosse Common Council passed a resolution committing the community of La Crosse to transitioning to 100% renewable energy and zero percent carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner, the Coulee Region Group held a press conference with Mayor Kabat and Council Member Barb Janssen on this milestone.

November - We delivered petitions to Dairyland Power opposing a new fracked gas power plant in Superior. *[Continued on next page.]*

Petitioners Want Clean Power

A group of community members delivered over 1,000 petitions to Dairyland Power Cooperative at their headquarters in La Crosse on November 20, calling on them to abandon plans for a fracked gas plant in Superior Wisconsin. Dairyland Power Co-op and Minnesota Power have applied for permission to build a new \$700 million fracked gas power plant in Superior, the Nemadji Trail Energy Center (NTEC). Environmentalists and climate activists have concerns about water usage, proximity to Lake Superior, the impact on the climate, and the cost.

“We’re delivering 1,130 petitions to Dairyland Power Coop asking them not to build a new fracked gas plant. We believe they should be investing in renewable energy, not more dirty fossil fuels. We’re in the middle of a climate crisis and that is not what we need,” said Avery Van Gaard, Coulee Region Sierra Club board member.

A recent analysis by the Sierra Club showed that the project would cost ratepayers more for electricity than comparable clean energy portfolios (CEP). The analysis showed that CEPs would provide the same energy, peak capacity, and ramping characteristics as the proposed gas plants, but at a lower cost, saving ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Evers Signs Trespass Bill

Despite strong opposition by a coalition of environmental, climate, and civil rights groups and advocates, Governor Evers has signed a bill to criminalize peaceful protests of fossil fuel infrastructure.

“Governor Evers had the opportunity to demonstrate leadership on climate change, and he opted not to. ... It's disappointing that the governor was unwilling to do so and instead supported this bill that helps the fossil fuel industry continue to lock us into a climate catastrophe,” Elizabeth Ward of Sierra Club-Wisconsin said.

This bill has its origins in the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and is being pushed around the country by the American Petroleum Institute. More than 20 states have passed similar legislation. South Dakota’s trespass law has been blocked by a federal judge, the result of a lawsuit brought by the SD ACLU.

The ACLU of Wisconsin voiced concerns that the bill’s vague and ambiguous language would have a chilling effect on expressive activity and lead to self-censorship among climate activists fearful of criminal penalties.

Read more at: nofelonytrespassbill.org

Year in Review *continued from previous page*

Transportation

February – Members of the Coulee Region Group met with State Senator Jennifer Shilling to advocate for alternative transportation and local road maintenance funding in the proposed transportation budget.

June – We had a booth at the Open Streets Initiative in La Crosse, advocating for better pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit infrastructure.

July – We partnered with La Crosse Area Transit Advocates and the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation to host a *Love Our Transit* open house at the Transit Center in La Crosse.

April, July, November – We did a highway cleanup on our adopted highway, River Valley Drive in La Crosse.

Water Quality

March – The Coulee Region Group participated in the DNR's public hearing on water discharge permitting for Babcock Genetics in La Crosse county. It was a small victory that the DNR actually held the hearing, after it was requested by the Coulee Region Group and others. Unfortunately, the DNR ultimately issued the permit.

June – CRSC members spoke at the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality hearing in La Crosse, supporting the need for stricter regulations to protect Wisconsin's water.

September – Our members spoke at the ATCP-51 CAFO/livestock siting rule updates public hearing in La Crosse

Politics

March - Members of the Coulee Region Group Board went to Madison to participate in Conservation Lobby Day

November – Members lobbied state government to stop the Criminal Trespass law.

Environmental Education

January - We continued our environmental grant program, awarding a grant to Innovations STEM Academy in Sparta, grades six through eight, to do monthly water testing and share some of their results with elementary students.

February – We hosted a public program, “The Greener Life: Learn to Live More Sustainably,” with Chandra (CS) Sherin, the La Crosse author of “Recipe for a Greener Life.” We also tabled at the Progresstival in La Crosse.

March – We tabled at La Crosse's Climate Action Fair.

April – We provided information about our club and its initiatives including clean water, transportation equity, and the problem with plastic at the La Crosse Earth Fair.

May – We had a booth at the Driftless Outdoors Show.

June - We tabled at the Open Streets Block Party.

August – We sponsored a tour of La Crosse County Sustainability Coordinator Nick Nichols' home to see how he lives the sustainable life 24/7.

September – We presented a program about CLIMATE CHANGE: Heading for Extinction (and what to do about it) - an Extinction Rebellion video and discussion in La Crosse

Green Spaces and Outdoor Recreation

March – The Coulee Region Group hosted local hikers, Sue Knopf and David Bange who talked about hiking areas in Southwestern Wisconsin

May – CRSC board chair, Pat Wilson, led a Wisconsin LOVES Parks hike at Wyalusing State Park, to advocate for restoration of funding for our state parks.

July – The Coulee Region Group co-sponsored a family-oriented canoe/kayak camping trip on the Black River.

Advocacy and Government Relations

The Coulee Region Group board chair Pat Wilson sits on the La Crosse Park Department Environmental Leadership Forum. CRSC Board member Cathy Van Maren is an appointed member of the Sustainable La Crosse Commission, the City of La Crosse MTU Board, and the La Crosse Area Planning Commission's advisory Committee on Transit and Active Transportation.

Looking Forward

Local and global environmental challenges will continue into 2020. We will continue to work on Ready for 100, transportation system improvements, groundwater protection, environmental education, and getting people outdoors. Please let us know if you want to work on any of these issues!

Coming in 2020! Mark your calendar for

January 28, the date of our next program (to be announced). year, we're rolling out a monthly Coulee Region Sierra Club online book group, too. And we plan to drastically reduce the number of mailed newsletters which cost money, resources, and time. If you haven't yet, tell us to stop mailing you paper newsletters (crsierraclub@gmail.com) and read them at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee.

'Tis the Season: Wallet-friendly Gifts & Eco-friendly Wrapping

By Veronica Bauer Oh, it's the most wonderful time of the year once again. The season of holiday gift giving and festivities has descended upon us. I know from experience that there will be many holiday sales and specials coming our way to tempt us, yet how can we enjoy the season and time spent with loved ones while our wallets suffer and landfills feast? I know that the allure of giving extravagant gifts and using decorative wrapping is difficult to resist, but there are ways around it that are both eco-friendly and wallet-friendly. I will provide you with alternative options that will benefit both you and the environment.

The Chamber of Commerce says that last year, U.S. households spent an average of \$1,536 during the holidays. Overall holiday retail sales surpassed \$1 trillion in 2018. Sadly, 14.2% of Americans say they have had to sell some of their possessions to pay for gifts.

I do not believe we should spend a lot of our money — or sell our belongings — for gifts that friends and family may not even like. So, what can we do to change that? I don't know about you, but I think that personal, handmade, and/or thrifted items are the way to go. These types of gifts say, "I love you. I care about you," without ripping a hole in our budgets. Here are some ideas:

- Plants such as aloe, spider plants, succulents that sprout more plants. You can propagate them in thrifted or reused containers, add a ribbon with an attached note, and viola! You have your gift!
- Herbs are also a great gift for those who enjoy cooking!
- Paintings/drawings
- Homemade snow globes
- Thrifted clothing outfits
- A favorite food dish: What could be better than getting your favorite food as a gift?
- "Coupons": Specified favors on decorated cards that the gift receiver can use whenever they want for however many times you specify. Examples: doing the dishes, getting a massage, going for a walk or doing another fun activity together, making dinner, etc.
- DIY Chunky Knit Blanket (see www.lilyardor.com/diy-chunky-knit-blanket)
- DIY Baskets/Kits/Sets: Themes that are based on what your loved one enjoys such as food, drinks, bath/beauty, movies, crafts, etc.
- Pictures with painted, decorated, or custom frames/holders

There are many other DIY possibilities. Your loved ones will love any of these gifts because they will appreciate

the time and effort that you have put in to making it for them.

The other topic to address is gift wrapping. Gift wrapping is a huge part of the holiday culture and is also a huge contributor to waste in landfills. Americans spend an estimated \$2.6 billion on wrapping paper every year at an average of \$4.99 per roll which leads to nearly four million tons of waste gift wrapping and shopping bags each holiday season.



What can we do about it? There are many alternatives that are more practical and eco-friendly. Here is a list of gift wrapping ideas that will help you transition away from standard wrapping paper:

- Use fabric or cloth.
- Make t-shirts into tote bags that they can reuse (see youtu.be/_O33Wq_uz6Y).
- Wrap a gift using thrifted or gently-used scarves, blankets, thin towels, or washcloths.
- Repurpose paper bags, newspapers, magazines, cardboard boxes (i.e. used cereal boxes you can decorate).
- Use yarn or string with a custom note to add a finishing touch.
- Use a bigger gift to enclose a smaller gift.
- For smaller gifts, you can use an empty toilet paper or paper towel roll and fold in the two ends.

If you absolutely need to use wrapping paper, be sure to look for a sustainable brand that uses recycled paper without containing any dyes or lamination which make it difficult to recycle.

The overall message I have for you during this holiday season is use what you already have, repurpose as much as possible, and buy sensibly. I hope this information has helped you to expand on your ideas. Happy gifting!

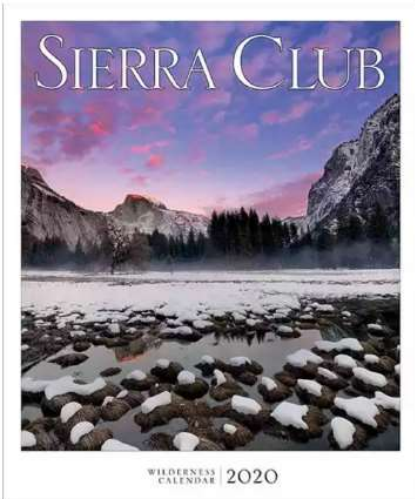
Veronica Bauer is a Biology major and Environmental Studies minor at UW-La Crosse. This semester, she is working with CRSC to educate about sustainability issues online and through our newsletter.

Veronica will give a capstone presentation on her Environmental Service Learning experience to the public on Tuesday, Dec. 3 at 3:10 p.m. in room 3201 Centennial Hall on the UW-La Crosse campus. Other Environmental Studies students will present between 2:15 and 4:00 p.m. on Dec. 3, 5, and 10 in 3201 Centennial.



Coulee Region Sierra Club
 Maureen Kinney
 620 South 23rd Street
 La Crosse, WI 54601

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Sierra Club 2020 Calendars!

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

Get your calendar at our December 17 party or order from Maureen Kinney: 608-784-9324/608-784-5678 or email maureen@johnsflaherty.com.

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



Vote for your 2020 Board!

We would like to thank board members George Nygaard and Jake Schnepfer for their service to our club. Three other board members' terms are expiring: Kathy Allen, Cathy Van Maren, and Pat Wilson. Please vote for up to FIVE board members for 2020. Complete this ballot and either bring it to the December 17 party OR mail it to Coulee Region Sierra Club, 620 23rd Street South, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601 postmarked by Dec. 17, 2019.

Please email crsierraclub@gmail.com or call Pat at 608-788-8831 with questions. **VOTE FOR UP TO FIVE.**

___ Kathy Allen

___ Cathy Van Maren

___ Veronica Bauer

___ Pat Wilson

___ Ned Gatzke

___ Write in: _____