



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
FEBRUARY 2022

"This is not a Democrat or a Republican issue, it's a Wisconsin issue... We can't sit on the sideline and be complacent about this. We've got to demand action." - State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski, addressing delays in clean water legislation



Transit Equity, a civil right in the transition to clean, renewable energy in La Crosse and Viroqua

On February 4, a network of transit rider unions, community organizations, environmental groups and labor unions celebrate **Transit Equity Day**—a national day of action to commemorate the birthday of Rosa Parks by declaring that public transit is a civil right. We make the connection to this act of resistance to highlight the rights of all people to high-quality public transportation run on clean/renewable energy.

The Wisconsin Sierra Club and other members of the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation will highlight the importance of strong state and local support for public transit, a powerful tool in the effort to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. The club's 2018 white paper, "Arrive Together: Transportation Access and Equity in Wisconsin," notes that state funding for public transportation has remained minimal and flat as money for large projects, like the billion-dollar I-94 expansion in Milwaukee, and debt service has risen. www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/arrive-together-transportation-access-and-equity-wisconsin

From January 31 through February 4 in La Crosse, the Coulee Region Sierra Club will join La Crosse Area Transit Advocates, the La Crosse MTU and others in hosting educational displays at the La Crosse Public Library and Grand River Transit Center, collecting transit riders' stories, hosting Ride with Your Rep ride-alongs, thanking essential transit workers, helping first-time riders, and more.

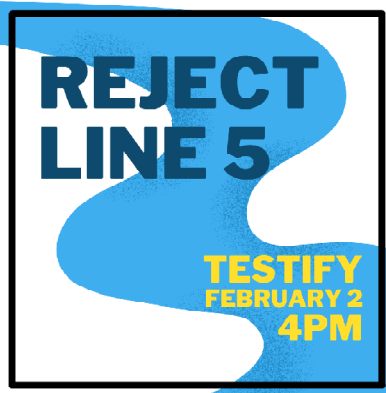
On February 4, Coulee Region Sierra Club members in the Viroqua area will celebrate Transit Equity Day with a display of support for public transit at Running, Inc., 318 West Decker St., which operates several transit services in smaller Wisconsin communities, including Viroqua Cab, a shared-ride taxi service. Running is also the operator of the Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) buses connecting Viroqua, Prairie du Chien, Tomah, La Crosse and other communities in the region.

Learn more about Transit Equity Day and events at www.labor4sustainability.org/transit-equity-2022

February 10 at 7 p.m.
Update on CAFO permits
Guests from Kewaunee Cares and
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Hosted by Fox Valley Group
Register: tinyurl.com/0210-CAFOUpdate

Learn the latest about the fight for clean water and the legal issues surrounding proposed expansion of Kinnard Farm in Kewaunee County. Learn about the recent Wisconsin Supreme Court decision about DNR permitting and monitoring of potential water polluters. Invited guests include Lynn Utesch of Kewaunee Cares and Adam Voskull, Midwest Environmental Advocates. This event is hosted by the Fox Valley Group.

February 2 - Line 5 Hearing



The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Enbridge Energy's controversial plan to construct a new segment of the Line 5 oil pipeline in northern Wisconsin. Under state law, the draft EIS must

contain information about how the project would impact people, natural resources, and the economy.

We know that if built, Line 5 could lead to catastrophic damage to local communities, lands, and waterways, including Lake Superior. Tar sands are also the dirtiest form of energy on the planet, and would wreak havoc on our climate at a time when we need to be transitioning away from the fossil fuel industry, not investing in it.

The DNR is taking comments on the draft EIS and will host a public hearing on February 2. This is a critical time period to demonstrate the broad range of concerns around the pipeline. This is your opportunity to tell the DNR that the Line 5 pipeline jeopardizes our waterways, undermines Bad River's decision not to allow Enbridge in the watershed, and threatens our climate.

You must RSVP with the DNR to get the Zoom link! RSVP here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_CzO_Cc1KSjGp0Sqijzt50A

Climate Action Plan program

Thank you to Ted Redmond of paleBLUEdot llc, the consultant working with the City of La Crosse on its climate action plan. Ted was guest speaker at the CRSC January 25 online program, "What IS a climate action plan?" He explained the process in general terms, shared tools and plans they use, and invited audience members to get involved. There is a "Meeting in a Box" tool available at the web page to empower community groups, businesses, or residents to host their own climate action plan listening session. Learn more and sign up at www.lacrosseclimateactionplan.org/about There is also a survey: www.lacrosseclimateactionplan.org/survey and anyone who lives in, visits, or does business in La Crosse may complete it.

The program was recorded and may be viewed at tinyurl.com/CRSCCAP0125

La Crosse School Board Primary

"Small" elections matter. There are eight candidates running for three seats on the La Crosse School Board. A February 15 primary will narrow the field to six. Absentee voting has started. It is very important to know who you are voting for and what their priorities are. The La Crosse Tribune has published candidate survey responses that can be found at their website. Club members and other environmentalists are encouraged to participate in the political process by learning about candidates and voting in every election.



Government and Environment

On January 20, Sierra Club members from across the state tuned in for an online discussion of government and the environment in Wisconsin with Sarah Godlewski and Tia Nelson. The two are connected by their service on the state's Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL). As State Treasurer, Sarah currently has a seat on the Board and has been its chair since 2019, while Tia served as the BCPL's Executive Secretary from 2004 through 2015. Tia resigned from her position shortly after the Commissioners banned employees from discussing climate change while working; Sarah's first action as Chair of the BCPL was to lift that ban.

The conversation, moderated by Coulee Region group chair Kathy Allen, ranged from clean energy and the importance of forests to clean water and environmental justice. Common themes were holding corporations responsible for their environmental impacts, the importance of local government action, and the value of public advocacy.

Sarah shared the work that the BCPL has done to protect the state's forests and, more recently, to help municipalities transition to clean energy. Tia talked about how things have changed (or stayed the same) within the environmental movement. With regards to equity and justice, she feels the environmental movement "has taken too long to address issues of disparity in how pollution has affected poorer communities in this country, but I'm heartened by the resonance and strength of that movement today." Both speakers are hopeful that government can make progress in improving environmental quality - to hear what gives them hope, watch the recording at www.youtube.com/c/SierraClubWisconsin/featured.

February Events

February 2: "Climate Disruption Locked In - The Next Moves Will Be Crucial" at 7 p.m. online. Hosted by the Chippewa Valley Group tinyurl.com/CVSCClimate0202

February 3: Virtual Volunteer Fair online from 6:30 p.m. How do your passions and skills fit with Sierra Club needs? <https://tinyurl.com/WISCVolFair0203>

February 4: 9th Annual Perennial Farm Gathering online 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. www.savannainstitute.org/perennial-farm-gathering/

February 5: Black River Forest Candlelight Ski/Hike/Snowshoe 5:30 p.m. Smrekar Parking Lot, four miles east of Millston off County Road O. dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/51421

February 9: Wisconsin Sierra Club Virtual Volunteer Night at 6:30 p.m. tinyurl.com/WISCVolNite0209

February 9: "Millston Cranberry Research Center" hosted by Friends of the Black River at 6:30 p.m. at The Hub, Lunda Community Center, 405 State Highway 54, Black River Falls www.blackrivercountry.net/event/friends-of-the-black-river-meeting/

February 12: Valentine's Snowshoe Hike at 10 a.m. Trailhead kiosk next to Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center, 3060 S. Kinney Coulee Rd, Onalaska. *****REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 9***** at this website: mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/valentines-snowshoe-hike-1

February 12: Wyalusing State Park Candlelight Hike 5:30 p.m. Start at Wyalusing Observatory. dnr.wisconsin.gov/events/51581

February 17: Wisconsin Farmers Union Virtual Farm and Rural Lobby Day tinyurl.com/WFULobbyDay22

February 21: African American Environmental Pioneer Awards at 6:30 p.m. tinyurl.com/AAEPA0221

Great Backyard Bird Count

Each February, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over four days, people spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find. Their observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations. This year's Great Backyard Bird Count will take place from February 18 through 21. Learn more at www.birdcount.org



Climate Interviews

By Adrian Cuff

I have interviewed several people with differing opinions and ages. In this final interview, I will be interviewing myself, and wrapping this interview series up.

What is your opinion on the climate crisis, and what is the best thing that can be done to fix the crisis?

I am a complete believer in climate change and the terrible crisis that everyone is living with every day. Even before I came to UWL and started my minor in Environmental Studies, I had a strong belief in climate change. Now at the end of my minor, I have realized so much more, and why humans need to make changes fast before it is too late. It is depressing sometimes seeing the bad things happening in the news, and realizing how bad the mess is, but I do have faith that we will turn this around. Everyday new technology is being invented and being produced that will make an impact on our future.

One thing that really stands out to me is the creation of the internet. No one would ever imagine in a million years that the internet would exist and would be this popular when it came out. That is a perfect example of something new that came into our lives out of nowhere and has changed the world forever. Now we can't just rely on a savior of technology to show up tomorrow. Humans need to start making changes to lower our carbon footprint and lower our resource consumption. Another thing that is a necessary change is power production. The U.S. is already on the right path in this category and has shut down over half the country's coal power plants. Power production is one of the biggest polluters in the U.S., and the only move is to switch to clean energy. I wish I had all the answers to fix this problem that has been ignored for many years, but I do not. I will still be doing my part in trying to keep my carbon footprint low and will pass on the message to others about the crisis. The only way to beat this issue is to work together. It will not be easy, but if we all work together, anything is possible.

Overall, the goal of the interviews was to show the readers that even though it seems like the crisis is not being heard and no one cares, there is hope, and people, of varying ages and backgrounds, do know about the crisis. Were there some radical ideas? Yes. But, not everyone is going to have the same opinions/ideas and that is the beauty of humans - that we are all different and think differently.

High School Environmental Stewardship Award

The Coulee Region Sierra Club seeks to promote environmental stewardship through enduring, fair, and equitable action. Protection of air, water, land, wildlife habitats, and the climate is a primary goal. CRSC believes that all people of all ages can help protect the natural environment for present and future generations through active engagement. New for 2021-2022, CRSC will recognize the achievements of and award \$150 to a high school senior who demonstrates leadership, action, and environmental stewardship, and who understands the importance of civic engagement in protecting our environment.

Eligible students are those graduating from high school in 2022 who reside in the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. The application includes essays and submission of a portfolio. **The deadline for applications is March 15, 2022** with the award to be given by the end of April, 2022.

For more information and an application form, visit www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/education

Funding for these environmental grants and awards is possible thanks to an annual grant from the Paul E. Stry Foundation, shared dues from Sierra Club memberships, and donations made by community members. To learn more about donating, please email CRSierraClub@gmail.com.



March 15 Program on Clean Water Now

The Coulee Region Sierra Club will host an online program on clean water issues and the move to pass clean water resolutions in many Wisconsin counties at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15. Guests will be Johnson Bridgewater, an organizer with River Alliance of Wisconsin, who has been working on the "Clean Water Now" referendum campaign and Jamie O'Neill who is helping to organize a water symposium at Viterbo University and who serves on the La Crosse County Board.

This program is earlier in the month than our normal meeting time. More details, including registration link and information about speakers, will be published in our March newsletter.