



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group

MAY 2021

“For Native Americans, there can be no better remedy for the theft of land than land. And for us, no lands are as spiritually significant as the national parks. They should be returned to us.” - David Treuer

May 20 at 7 p.m. online film RIGHT TO HARM

Hosted by Wisconsin Sierra Club and Citizen
Action of Wisconsin Driftless Co-op. FREE

Register at tinyurl.com/RightToHarm052021



The Sierra Club Wisconsin and the Driftless Co-op of Citizen Action of Wisconsin are co-hosting a screening of the documentary Right to Harm, an exposé on the public health impact of factory farming across the United States. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations -- or CAFOs -- are a significant source of nitrate contamination in Wisconsin that must be addressed. Join us at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 20th to learn more and take action! Register for the screening link at tinyurl.com/RightToHarm052021

May 11: Sierra Club Fundraiser

Celebrate the Wisconsin Sierra Club’s important grassroots environmental work with delicious local Wisconsin food and drink. This interactive event will feature fun recipes, trivia and more. Special guests Kirk Bangstad of Minocqua Brewing and Chef Joel Carlson and David Payne of Potter’s Crackers.

Opportunities to donate to the important work of the Club will be offered throughout the evening, but attendance is free of charge. Register for the access link at: tinyurl.com/SCLocallyGrown



Farms, Factories, and the Future

Crawford Stewardship Project, Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network, Socially Responsible Ag Project, Coulee Region Sierra Club, and many more allies will co-sponsor a virtual public forum on the direction of agriculture, Farms, Factories, and the Future. The event will be online on June 5 from 1 to 5 p.m. Learn more about the event at www.crawfordstewardship.org/join-us-for-a-farming-discussion

Planning is still underway, but there will be a session on CAFOs, including information about Crawford County’s experience with a proposed expansion, regulations, and lessons learned. In addition, a panel of sustainable and regenerative farmers and experts will talk about resilient pathways forward for agriculture. There will also be opportunities to network and strategize with a panel of community organizers from across the Midwest

Recent settlements won by Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul with state CAFOs, including Rolling Hills Dairy Farm, LLC; K and D Manure Handling; and Wild Rose Dairy, LLC have finally brought some consequences to those who pollute Wisconsin’s waters.

Protect Wisconsin Wolves!

The Wisconsin DNR is accepting public comments in a survey on their plans for a November wolf hunt and a wolf management plan update.

It's important that Wisconsin's wolf management plan is based on public input, up-to-date science, tribal consultation, and broad stakeholder engagement. This survey will help with the first step, so it's important to let your voice be heard.

We must avoid a replay of the disastrous February 2021 wolf hunt which was widely condemned for allowing throngs of unlicensed hunters to join the thousands of licensed hunters with their own packs of dogs, snowmobiles, GPS technology, and infrared-sensitive devices. Wolves stood no chance, enduring hours of pursuit and torment. Taking place

**COMMENT BY MAY 15 on the
Wisconsin DNR's plans
for a November wolf hunt!
Learn more at
tinyurl.com/WIWolfComments**

during the breeding season, the hunt allowed the killing of pregnant females and alpha males, disrupting family packs at a time-critical to pup survival.

Wisconsin's DNR lacks the critical biological data needed to assess the impact of the February hunt on Wisconsin's remaining wolves. Yet, compelled by a misguided law (Act 169) DNR is already looking ahead to another hunt in November, which places our wolf population in jeopardy and forces our DNR to violate its higher public trust obligations to manage our state's precious wildlife in keeping with sound science and socially acceptable practices. Wisconsin's wolf management plan will set the guidelines for a wolf hunt in 2022 and beyond, making public participation in the process, like filling out the survey critical.

Learn more about the issue at tinyurl.com/WIWolfComments and plan to participate in the survey by the May 15 deadline.



Conservation Congress

This year's Wisconsin Conservation Congress spring hearings were held online which allowed more people to participate. Issues identified as priorities by the Wisconsin Sierra Club passed with wide margins.

Ninety-two percent of participants approved the Every Kid Outdoors Pass for Wisconsin's state parks and 85% approved stricter PFAS regulations. Eighty-nine percent supported environmental impact considerations for high-capacity well permits and a majority supported DNR opposition to rebuilding the Enbridge Line 5 oil pipeline and voted to oppose permitting such a pipeline.

NEW NAME - Same dedication!

The statewide branch of the Sierra Club changed its name in March to Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter. "The Sierra Club has broadened its perspective and become more diverse in many ways. We recognize how important it is to be inclusive and respect all voices, and we welcome everyone to the table as we work to limit the dire effects of climate change. Our new name reflects the fact that we represent everyone in Wisconsin." The name change was approved by 83% of voters in the Chapter's annual election. Read more at tinyurl.com/SCNameChange



Meet the Sierra Club

In case you missed it, a recording of MEET THE SIERRA CLUB: More than a century of environmental advocacy is now available at our Facebook page: facebook.com/crsierraclub for viewing and sharing! On Tuesday, April 20, CRSC hosted an online presentation about our club as part of the 2021 La Crosse virtual Earth Week.

Thank you, Wisconsin Sierra Club Senior Campaign Manager Cassie Steiner, for giving an overview of the club's history and priorities. CRSC board member Pat Wilson, who has decades of experience leading Sierra Club water outings, talked about the great trips, including kid-friendly family outings, offered through the club. Nancy Hartje, a Sierra Club board member, described our club's environmental education grants with highlights and pictures from past grant recipients. And Kathy Allen, CRSC board president, talked about the club's advocacy work, including clean water and renewable energy education and action.

We also thank Sierra Club volunteer, Steve Ringwood, who took our Zoom recording, worked video magic, and turned it into a smooth presentation! If you have special skills--from video editing to marketing--consider volunteering on a Sierra Club team.

If you want a refresher about the important work the Sierra Club is doing or have a friend who's considering joining us, please view and share!

Monroe County Climate Change

The Monroe County Climate Change Task Force was established by the Monroe County Board in September 2019 as a project of the Monroe County Land Conservation Department who provide organizational leadership. The creation of the CCTF was a recognition of, and a response to, the extreme flooding impacts of climate change in watersheds of Monroe County. Objectives and goals of the CCTF are:

Flooding

1. Establish real time stream monitoring and weather stations to serve as flood warning systems that are coordinated with the county emergency management office and the National Weather Service. First phase monitoring installation will be focused on Little La Crosse and Kickapoo watersheds.
2. Floodplain management: Remove structures that have a history or vulnerability to flooding. Evaluate road crossings in floodway that impact flooding.
3. Complete flood impact study to identify 100 year flood level based on current rainfall and land use data.

Land Use

1. Zoning: Promote and enforce land use decisions that will encourage sustainable land use practices and contribute to mitigation of climate change impacts. Improve enforcement of Shoreland Zoning ordinance.
2. Promote sustainable land use practices that contribute to mitigation of water runoff from the landscape.
3. Develop and implement water infiltration and retention practice that address rainfall and runoff.

Climate Mitigation

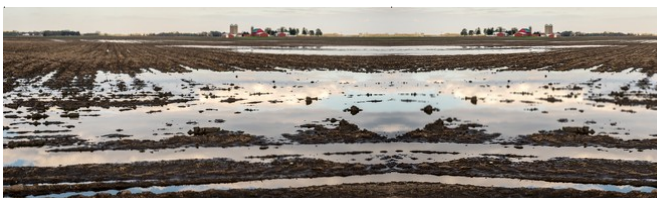
1. Identify contributions and sources
2. Establish standards for sustainable living
3. Implement mitigation programs, including tree planting and forest conservation, mass transit, landscaping to control water runoff, and carbon sequestration.

Information and Education

1. Monthly meetings have featured program topics related to objectives and are available for viewing at: www.co.monroe.wi.us/?navid=244

Fundraising

1. Seek funding sources to implement CCTF recommendations and goals



Coulee Region EV Events

Events in Viroqua and La Crosse helped spread the word about the benefits of electric vehicles. On Saturday, April 24, Drive Electric Earth Day, hosted by Plug In America and the Electric Auto Association, gathered more than 20 electric cars with their owners at the Viroqua Food Co-op. The event ended with an EV parade to Kickapoo Creekside in Readstown where Vernon County's first DC fast charger is installed. See more about the event at: driveelectricearthday.org/event?eventid=2663

In La Crosse, a neighbor-to-neighbor Ask Me Anything About My EV event, was held at the La Crosse City Hall parking lot, where a dozen electric cars and six electric bicycles were shown by their owners. Learn more and find research and information about EVs at <http://tiny.cc/AMAEV-LaCrosse>



Both Earth Week events provided opportunities for community members to get real facts and hear about real EV experiences from owners and dealers. A 2020 update to a 2018 study by the Union of Concerned Scientists confirmed that EVs really are better for the climate, and they're getting better and cleaner every year. *"Based on where EVs have been sold, driving the average EV produces global warming pollution equal to a gasoline vehicle that gets 88 miles per gallon fuel economy. ... And our estimate for EV emissions is almost ten percent lower than our previous estimate two years ago."* - tinyurl.com/USCEVsBetter

WDRT hosts Sierra Club Talk

An hour-long program about the Sierra Club and the importance of a clean, accessible environment for our health will be heard on WDRT Radio, 91.9 FM on Tuesday morning, May 4 from 9 to 10 a.m. and available for streaming at wdrt.org/show/heart-of-wellness for a week after that. Drs. Paul and Paula Grenier, Viroqua-area chiropractors and hosts of the weekly program, Heart of Wellness, welcome Wisconsin Sierra Club Senior Campaign Manager Cassie Steiner and CRSC board member, Cathy Van Maren for a wide-ranging discussion about the physical and mental health benefits of nature and the role the Sierra Club has played and continues to play in advocating for access to and protection of our precious natural areas, wildlife, and resources.

CRSC Highway Cleanup

Four of us got out to pick up trash on River Valley Drive on April 24, as part of the Earth Day marsh cleanup. Thank you to John Papenfuss, Maureen Kinney, and David Bange for helping out. A lot of trash had accumulated over the winter, and we were able to clean up along half of the road. We'd like to get the job completed in May, with volunteers picking up trash on their own schedule. If you are willing to spend some time picking up trash to beautify the marsh, let Pat Wilson know (608 788 8831, pbwilson@centurytel.net) so he can assign a segment for you to work on, and provide trash bags and safety vests if you're interested.

La Crosse River Marsh Cleanup

Another cleanup in the marsh, the 28th annual hosted by River Clean Up La Crosse, will take place on Saturday, May 8, on and near the area's rivers between 8 a.m. and noon. To learn more, register to volunteer, or become a partner, visit www.rivercleanuplacrosse.com

La Crosse Area Birding in May

The Coulee Region Audubon Society hosts early morning bird walks in May. Upcoming events include Myrick Park Center walks on May 4 and 11, Hixon Forest walks on May 6 and 13, and a Wyalusing State Park walk on May 15. Masks and distancing are required. For details, see couleeaudubon.org/html/events.html.

La Crosse Victory Gardens

Volunteer-led Community Victory Gardens, started in 2020 by the City of La Crosse to provide more fresh food and healthy exercise, are returning for the 2021 season. The gardens provide free fresh produce grown by neighbors for neighbors. For more information about the project or to learn how to help plant, weed, and harvest, go to <http://tiny.cc/LaCrosseVG>.

MTU Director Talks Transit

Adam Lorentz, the director of the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility, will be the main speaker at a May 18 "Transit Talk" hosted online by the La Crosse Area Transit Advocates. La Crosse's new mayor, Mitch Reynolds, has also been invited. To learn more about and register for the event, visit LaCrosseTransitAdvocates.org or call 608-315-2693 (leave message for call back).

Fishing Season

General inland fishing season, along with the season for many specific species, started on May 1 in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin DNR offers information on regulations, licensing, best places to take kids fishing, and more at its website: dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/. Most anglers age 16 and older must purchase a fishing license. Reduced-price first-timers licenses are available as are one day licenses. This year's Free Fishing Weekend will be June 5 and 6.



Water Outings

While Sierra Club outings are on hold until at least July 4, there is some hope that trips will be possible later in 2021. A January notice to Wisconsin River Outings leaders reported that, "As part of the restarting process, simple pilot trips will be run to test our COVID protocols across a range of daytrips in a variety of locations and contexts. . . . Once complete, we can pilot more complex trips, start running short, simple trips on a limited basis as conditions allow, and build up to full operations through 2021."

One highlight for Coulee Region paddlers has been the annual summer family trip on the Black River. During his presentation for the online "Meet the Sierra Club" program, trip leader Pat Wilson described how many children and families had enjoyed canoeing and kayaking on that friendly river for at least four decades! (View his presentation at facebook.com/crsierraclub.)

Until these popular activities are able to start up again, here's a link to a nine-minute video created by Wisconsin Sierra Club member John Roberts with the Wisconsin River Alliance about Breakwater Falls, Wisconsin's sixth-highest waterfall. www.facebook.com/riveralliance/videos/300228341129794/

The quote on page 1 is from John Treuer's article, "Return the National Parks to the Tribes," in the May 2021 issue of The Atlantic. It is part of a new series called "Who Owns America's Wilderness?" Treuer is the author of The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America From 1890 to the Present. See: www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/05/return-the-national-parks-to-the-tribes/618395/