



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
SEPTEMBER 2017

"We can only describe this as a gift from Wisconsin taxpayers to Foxconn shareholders." - Greg LeRoy, Good Jobs First

NEXT MEETING:

7 pm Sept. 26
Ho-Chunk House
8th & Main, LA CROSSE

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING with Coulee Region Ecoscapes, LLC

and rain gardens to classes and workshops, CRE has been a leader in educating about and promoting sustainable ways of working with the land.

Join us as we hear from Judson Steinback, co-owner of COULEE REGION ECOSCAPES, LLC about the work CRE has done in our community and why sustainable landscaping is important in this age of global warming. From the food forest at the YMCA in La Crosse to community gardens around the region, from prairies

We will also discuss next steps our club can take to support Mayor Tim Kabat of La Crosse who has signed on to the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 initiative.

Please come a bring a friend! You don't need to be a Sierra Club member! Light refreshments and coffee/tea will be served. For more information, please contact us at crsierraclub@gmail.com

The Board will meet at 6 p.m. before the general meeting.



October 24 - Water Quality Forum in La Crosse County

Our state's clean water resources are being threatened on many fronts. In La Crosse county, waste from a 4,000 pig CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) operated by Babcock Genetics has contaminated many wells in the Holmen area. Worse, the state DNR did not notify anyone affected until nearly three months after the County's formal request forced them to release six years' worth of well tests revealing the widespread contamination. And even worse, records show the DNR did not cite Babcock for these egregious violations.

Join the Coulee Region Sierra Club at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, October 24 at the Holland Town Hall (W7937 County Road MH, Holmen) to learn more about how lax regulation of CAFOs combined with budget and oversight cuts to the state's DNR have contributed to this situation and how we can fight against it. Our panel will include

- * **Jen Rombalski** from the La Crosse County Health & Human Services Department
- * **Mike Giese**, La Crosse County Board of Supervisors Representative for District 17
- * **Steve Doyle** who represents this district in the State Assembly
- * Also invited - a resident of the area whose well has been contaminated.

The DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment Program for private well users affected by fecal bacteria contamination from livestock may provide some clean water and/or well compensation grants (paid for by state taxpayers). But the DNR continues to not follow its own rules for enforcement and a recent audit found that "notices of violations were issued to polluters in just 33 of 558 instances serious enough for such citations under DNR policies." (tinyurl.com/laxh20regs)

Mark your calendar now so you can attend this important forum. It's free and open to everyone

Coulee Region Education Grants

In December, the Coulee Region Sierra Club award three \$200 grants to area organizations for environmental education projects. Here are reports from two recipients. (This year's application will be available in October).

Dear Coulee Region Sierra Club,

Thank you again for the \$200 grant award for Lincoln Middle 7th Grade this past school year.

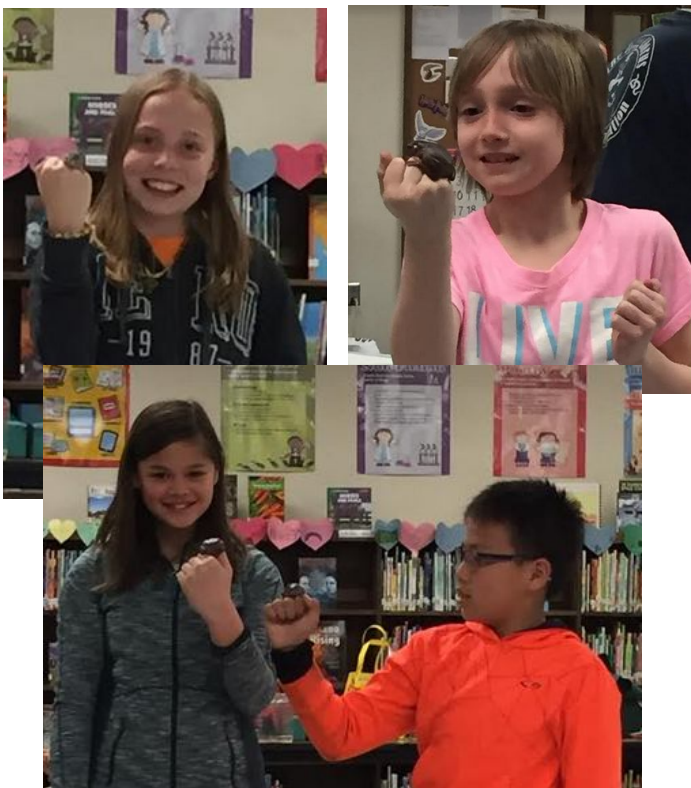
Your funds helped pay for bussing costs. Students were able to travel to Camp Salem near Black River Falls, WI for an overnight Outdoor Educational Experience that focused on Bird Banding, Water Monitoring, and Llamaology.

In addition, students were able to go on a "Waterfall Hike" in the Robinson Creek as part of the monitoring portion of the event.

Students gained a personal experience that connects them to the environment and has created a foundational learning base for all future environmental education and personal recreation in our wild places.

Sincere Thanks,

Tim Sprain and the entire teaching team at Lincoln Middle School and The 7th grade students of Lincoln



Hello Sierra Club Members!

We wanted to extend our sincere gratitude for the grant money that the Sierra Club gave Evergreen Elementary School. We used the money toward our school-wide Environmental Education day. Students were able to touch and hold animals, learn about forestry and survival in wildlife, and even skype with a Sea Turtle at an aquarium in North Carolina.

Students were engaged and learned several ways they can help do their part to keep our Earth healthy and strong. Your money helped us to secure the presenters and allowed them to have an incredible day of hands-on learning.

I'm attaching some photos of the day.

Thank you, again, so much!

Christy Wopat &
Evergreen Environmental Ed Committee

Hurricane Harvey

In addition to the unbelievable toll Hurricane Harvey has taken on the *people* of the Gulf Coast, the environmental disasters continue to mount. To help hurricane survivors, **the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club has set up a #HarveyHelp page (tinyurl.com/lonestarscharveyhelp).** One hundred percent of funds raised will go toward relief efforts for people and the environment.

Listen to an interview with Bryan Parras, organizer for the "Beyond Dirty Fuels" campaign with the Sierra Club in Houston, Texas and co-founder of the environmental justice group t.e.j.a.s. at www.democracynow.org/2017/8/28/as_catastrophic_flooding_hits_houston_fears

Preserve Mining Moratorium Law!

[from Muir Musings, August 21, 2017] Last week Sen. Tom Tiffany, R- Hazelhurst, introduced draft legislation designed to repeal the law and sweetened the deal for the mining industry by loading his bill with giveaways that further reduce protections that threaten public health and our environment.

Acid Mine Drainage is sulfuric acid and metal pollution produced when sulfide minerals in mines and mining wastes are exposed to air and water. AMD is toxic to fish and wildlife due to dissolved metals and contaminants such as mercury, lead, arsenic, cadmium, zinc, copper and many others that damage surface water and groundwater resources. The sulfide ores that companies are interested in mining in Wisconsin will produce AMD if developed into mines.

The Prove It First law is not a ban on mining, but has helped protect Wisconsin from unsafe metallic sulfide mining for many years. The Flambeau mine was permitted before the passage of the law, but the concerns about pollution from the mine were part of the reason the law was approved. Not surprisingly, the mine has been found to be violating the Clean Water Act by polluting a tributary of the Flambeau river at the mining site and groundwater is highly contaminated from mining wastes buried in the former open pit.

This law has been in place for years for our safety and our planet's safety. We must keep the Prove It First law in place for the good of everyone. It is common sense to choose



safety first. Show your support, sign this petition by the Sierra Club at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/issues/mining.



The Foxconn CON

As of this writing, the state senate is set to pass a version of a Foxconn incentive package worth more than \$3 billion, the largest ever granted in our state and one of the largest in the nation. Many analysts have warned that the state may never recoup the costs of the incentives, but Republicans are determined to pass it with little public comment or scrutiny.

Former state representative Spencer Black, current vice president of the National Sierra Club, notes that there are serious environmental give aways in the Foxconn bill. In his August 15 Cap Times column, Black notes, *"The plant will locate close to Lake Michigan and will be a very heavy water user. Foxconn has a very bad record of pollution at its other manufacturing plants. In China, Foxconn has been reported to have polluted nearby rivers with high levels of heavy metals. There have been major complaints about air pollution as well from Foxconn plants."* An even bigger concern is the precedent this will set.

Other special environmental exemptions for Foxconn, according to a July 28 Wisconsin Public Radio report, include being able to change the course of a stream, discharge dredge materials, or fill wetlands without a permit; not having to create new wetlands to replace filled wetlands; being able to build on a lake or stream bed with no permit, not needing pre-construction environmental impact statements; and allowing public utility projects for Foxconn to go ahead without Public Service Commission approval.

And the bill would borrow hundreds of millions of dollars to expand the southeast Wisconsin interstate.

With federal protection agencies now in the hands of climate change deniers and regulation opponents, we cannot hope that we will be saved by the feds. The state legislators who support waiving environmental regulations for favored businesses no matter how many pollutants are discharged, wells contaminated, or habitats destroyed, must be challenged and replaced.

We are the only ones who can save or not save. We are the ones who can act or not act. We can run for office, email and visit elected representatives (over and over if needed), write letters to the editor, talk to neighbors and community groups, and work and vote for candidates who believe in environmental protections.





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DATES TO REMEMBER!

- Sept. 1-4: **La Crosse Area Bike Fest** (www.explorelacrosse.com/bikefest/)
- Sept. 3: **Open Streets La Crosse** (www.facebook.com/events/1937856956496160/)
- Sept. 6: **Public meeting about adding second Chicago-Mpls Amtrak train** (tinyurl.com/lax2ndamtrak)
- Sept. 9-10: **Midwest Renewable Energy Association Energy Fair**, St Paul, MN (www.theenergyfair.org)
- Sept. 11: **Coulee Partners for Sustainability Harvest Dinner** (tinyurl.com/cp4sdinner)
- Sept. 23: **Grow La Crosse Fall Fest on the Farm** (growlacrosse.org/fall-festival/)
- Sept. 26: **CR Sierra Club Board (6 pm) & General Mbrshp (7 pm) meetings** Ho-Chunk House (8th & Main)
- Sept. 30: **Sierra Club Kickapoo River Canoe Trip** (tinyurl.com/wisccanoe)
- Oct. 3: **CR Sierra Club Highway Clean Up** (tinyurl.com/crschwclean)

Highway Clean Up

The fall highway cleanup on the Coulee Group's adopted highway – River Valley Drive in the La Crosse River marsh – will be on **Tuesday, October 3 starting at 5:30 p.m.** (Contact Pat to confirm if weather conditions are iffy). Meet at the city water well building at the intersection of County Highway B (Gillette Street) and River Valley Drive. Wear old clothes and bring work gloves. Safety vests and bags are provided. For more info, contact Pat or Bobbie at 608 788-8831 or pbwilson@centurytel.net.

We will hold **board elections in December**. If you are interested in helping guide our club next year, please nominate yourself by emailing us with a short paragraph description of your experience and interest at crsierraclub-at-gmail-dot-com.

We're still looking for CR Sierra Club members around the region to email with news of events and issues in their communities so we can get more people involved. Email crsierraclub-at-gmail-dot-com.

Open Streets - People > Cars

On Sunday, September 3, several streets in downtown La Crosse will be closed to motor vehicle traffic and open to walkers, dancers, vendors, hopscotchers, hula hoopers, musicians, eaters, bicyclists, yogis, chalk artists, rain barrel painters, shoppers, and more. It's the first annual (we hope) Open Streets La Crosse where participants can appreciate all the space normally taken up by cars and now available to people. Included in the event is a sample woonerf (shared street) and a Protected Bike Lane demonstration. Many businesses, organizations, and community groups will hand out information and host events and activities. If you can, attend. If you have a food truck or organization and want to get a spot along the route, see the event Facebook site: www.facebook.com/events/1937856956496160

Sierra #1709

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