



It's Our Nature

Newsletter of the Fox Valley Group of the Sierra Club - Wisconsin Chapter Vol. 23 Issue 3

Fox Valley Group Meetings

December 14, 2023 - 6:30pm

Holiday Party

Girl Scout Building *(next to Bubolz Nature Preserve)*
4693 N. Lynddale Drive, Appleton

Please bring a dish to pass for a pot-luck, your place setting, drinks, any alcohol beverage, and a white elephant gift for the exchange. The party starts at 6:30 PM!! Please join us for good food, good conversation and a "mean" game of exchange. All in good fun. Enjoy the reactions as people select unopened gifts, or take prizes that are already opened. (About our white elephant gift exchange. Wrap up something you already own, but don't really care to keep for the "White Elephant Gift Exchange". It should be somewhat gift worthy, and can be funny or unusual.)

January 11, 2024 - 7:00pm

Rewilding with Beavers

**for Biodiversity, Connectivity, Climate Resilience and
Restoring the Hydrology of Lake Superior.**

ZOOM meeting - watch for link in an email,
facebook or our website - sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley

More meeting information on page 3

February 8, 2024 - 7:00pm

Residential Air to Air Heat Pumps

Girl Scout Building *(next to Bubolz Nature Preserve)*
4693 N. Lynddale Drive, Appleton

Presented by Jim Crawford, P.E, former WDNR Air Pollution Engineer.
He has installed a system on his property. An efficient way to heat and cool buildings.

March 14, 2024 - 7:00pm

Animals at Bay Beach

Bay Beach Wildlife Preserve
1660 East Shore Drive, Green Bay

Presented by Kim Diedrich, a naturalist at Bay Beach

April 11, 2024 - 7:00pm

Recycling & Solid Waste

Girl Scout Building *(next to Bubolz Nature Preserve)*
4693 N. Lynddale Drive, Appleton

Jordan Hiller, Recycling and Solid Waste Program Coordinator for Outagamie County. He is responsible for driving sustainability initiatives within our community by developing and implementing innovative recycling and waste reduction programs.

Details and subject can change
Follow us at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley
www.facebook.com/foxvalleysierra

From the Chair

November 2023

Hello Fox Valley Sierrans

I hope you've taken the time to enjoy the Autumn weather. I've seen some wonderful pictures online of people enjoying beautiful sunsets, gorgeous colors and spectacular views. I hope you are one of them.

As we move into winter and cabin fever sets in, your Fox Valley Sierra Group Executive Committee is busy planning activities to help you enjoy the new season. In the pages of our newsletter you'll find information about our annual Christmas party in December. We have many educational meeting topics scheduled that will offer a little something for everyone's interests. Importantly, our March meeting will be in GREEN BAY at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary. It will be great to have a meeting more convenient for our Green Bay members to attend and I am looking forward to the chance to meet all of you in person.

Another important piece of this newsletter has to do with finances. In talking with members, we began to realize that there are many misconceptions about where our local group gets its funds and how it spends them. Please be sure to check out that article. Reading it, you'll learn just how much we rely on fundraisers and donations to finance all the outings, educational programs, events and newsletters that you've come to enjoy. Thank you to those of you who purchased merchandise in our recent t-shirt, sweatshirt and mug sale. Another great opportunity to help us out is our second annual paint it forward fundraiser at Pinot's Palette in January. It will be a great opportunity to cure some cabin fever and remember, you don't need to be an artist OR a member of the Sierra Club to join in the fun. Help us spread the word.

I hope you and your families have a safe and relaxing holiday season and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Penny Paiser Wilson
Fox Valley Sierra Group Chair

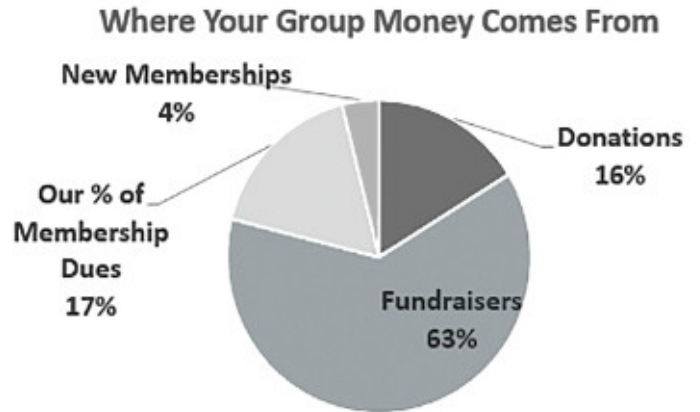
Fox Valley Sierra Group Finances

Did you ever wonder how the group spends money, or where the group's funding came from in the first place? We've heard this question a number of times and are going to help with some answers!

HOW ARE WE FUNDED? Almost 80% of our funding comes from group fundraisers or donations, mainly from group members. The rest of our funding comes from existing memberships (we receive 18.4 cents per membership every year), and from any new membership dues where our group has been tagged. As you can see, we rely heavily on fundraisers such as calendar sales and on donations to continue providing the group with programs and newsletters!

HOW IS OUR GROUP MONEY SPENT? Many members ask for printed newsletters, so we publish them three times/year. As paper and postage rates continue to rise, these costs make up over 60% of our funding. Program room rental and occasional speaker fees account for another 20%. Luckily many of our educational and conservation events are funded through the 501(c)3 money as noted to the right.

Currently, we may not have enough in the budget to produce 3 newsletters next year. The costs have been around \$1300 for each issue. ***Any donations to the Fox Valley Group directly would really help.*** You can donate to the State and National Sierra Club, which is good, but little comes back to the local groups



NOTE: Percentages come from a two year period and exclude 501(c)3 charitable money, which is kept in a separate account at National. We do use these 501(c)3 funds for some newsletter production costs (already taken out of the pie chart values), and educational/conversation projects (example – Earth Day Walk). Any remaining funds are used to support local partner conservation groups.

Support your Fox Valley Sierra Group

Help us Explore, Enjoy and Protect through monthly meetings, outings, service projects, education, social media and published newsletters.

Consider a Donation <http://teamsierrawi.rallybound.org/FoxValleyGroup>

Or mail to
Fox Valley Group of the Sierra Club, 567 Oak St., Neenah, WI 54956

We would like to get your input as to the direction we head this year. We always welcome emails and informal feedback at meetings, but this year, we're asking you to take a few minutes of your time to fill in a survey for us. We have questions about outings, fundraisers, Earth Day events, educational opportunities, etc.

FVSG Survey

<https://forms.gle/xY4Ca92PZXrHtNKn8>



PAINTING FUNDRAISER

We all experience cabin fever during Wisconsin's cold, snowy winter. Why not get out with friends and help your Fox Valley Sierra Group raise some badly needed funds on Wednesday, January 17th at 7:00pm at Pinot's Palette in Appleton. We had a painting party last year and it was fun and successful. Arrive 15-20 minutes early for setup. We will be painting "Winter's Song."

Cost per painter is \$39 which covers your canvas and supplies. Please pass the word to friends and family. Even if they aren't a Sierra member, they can join the fun and as part of Pinot's Paint it Forward program, each chair filled is another \$10 donation to our group.

→ Sign up at <https://www.pinotpalette.com/appleton/event/728881>

Guests are welcome to bring snacks and appetizers into the studio to enjoy during class. Beer, wine, and an assortment of non-alcoholic beverages are available for purchase from the studio's full-service bar. BYOB not allowed..



Superior Bio-Conservancy: A Healthcare Plan for the Great Lakes Region

by Karen Van Offeren

The Superior Bio-Conservancy's mission is to protect and restore the biological integrity and hydrology of the Great Lakes Region and the Laurentian Forest Province throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.

Its goal is to restore and support biodiversity, genetic exchange, ecosystem services and evolutionary processes for future generations.

Two critical aspects of this plan are the protection of 1) the Lake Superior watershed and 2) the Laurentian Forest Province bioregion of the Western Great Lakes.

The Superior Bio-Conservancy plan advocates for the creation of protected wildlife corridors that will connect large tracts of public forest lands to avoid fragmentation and restore biodiversity.

While all species play a unique role in maintaining an intact wildlife structure, the priority lies with keystone species recovery. Wolves and beavers are two keystone species critical to maintaining the biodiversity of the Great Lakes Region.

The wolf population has a direct impact on controlling the deer population. When wolves are present, the feeding behavior of deer changes. As a result, species richness in forests recovers. And stronger, healthier forests with increased capacity to store carbon are critical with the current impacts of climate change.

Beavers are ecosystem engineers. They create wetlands that support biodiversity and restore the hydrology of rivers. This improves water quality and stabilizes watersheds. Healthy watersheds boost the productivity of

insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, birds and mammals.

Before the Western Great Lakes region was settled in the 1600's, beaver colonies dominated rivers and streams. These wetland complexes not only supported vast wildlife communities, but they also cleaned the water and stabilized flow volumes and water temperatures.

To restore the health of this Bio-Region, the Superior Bio-Conservancy has established a five-point plan detailing how its goals can be achieved.

(See www.superiorbioconservancy.org/our-mission)

Rebuilding beaver populations is integral to the success of this plan. This will result in the most cost-effective way to protect the health of the Lake Superior Watershed and support the biodiversity within it.

The Fox Valley Sierra Group's January meeting will feature Bob Boucher, president and founder of the Superior Bio-Conservancy. Bob will provide more in-depth information on beaver ecology. He will also report on:

- his opportunity to join Dr. Steve Windels on his annual beaver tagging survey in Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park in October 2022,
- the first Midwest Beaver Summit, held in September 2023, and
- the status of litigation efforts in challenging and updating the 2013 Environmental Assessment and the National Environmental Policy Act's requirements against USDA Wildlife Services for killing 28,000 beavers, destroying 15,000 dams and accidentally killing over 1,000 otters in Wisconsin from 2013-2023.

If you would like more detailed information about the Superior Bio-Conservancy and topics related its goals and issues, explore its website at www.superiorbioconservancy.org. The Midwest Beaver Summit 2023 tab allows you to revisit several of the 2023 Summit's sessions via YouTube videos.

Winter Outings

January 1, Monday

New Year's Day Hike - Fallen Timbers Environmental Center, **1:00 PM, W4531 Robin Road, Black Creek**

Welcome the New Year with a hike and new friends from the Sierra Club Fox Valley Group. Fallen Timbers is a well used and well loved outdoor space for school groups during the week, but on the weekend, the public is welcome to come and explore. The building will be closed, so dress for the weather. Boots, etc! There is a port-a-potty on the grounds for public use. If we are lucky to have 5 inches of snow or more, snowshoes are welcome! This hike is open to everyone! An adult must accompany minors. Bring your thermos of tea or hot cocoa.

Please sign up on our website

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley

Any questions, please contact marjiefendt@gmail.com

January 17, Wednesday

Painting Party at Pinot's Palette in Appleton - 6:45 PM

See page 3 for details.

January 20, Saturday

Snowshoeing Ice Age Trail at Iola Winter Sports Park

Winter is an awesome time to see Wisconsin. You can really see the features along the Ice Age Trail, so come and snowshoe, explore and enjoy. Meet at Iola Winter Sports Park at 10:00 am and snowshoe several miles. Following the outing we can picnic at the Park Warming hut which is usually open. For details and to sign up; Penny Bernard Schaber at 920-739-6041 or pennybernardschaber@athenet.net

Or sign up on our website

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley

February 7, Wednesday

Evening Cross Country Skiing

Let's do an evening ski outing at Reid Park Golf Course in Appleton! At 5:30 for an hour or so of skiing. Often times owls can be heard around the course. For details and to sign up: Penny Bernard Schaber at 920-739-6041 or pennybernardschaber@athenet.net.

Or sign up on our website

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley

February 24, Saturday

Snowshoeing - To be determined

Depending on snow conditions we'll do a mid afternoon snowshoe with maybe a stop at a local pizza restaurant. Options could be High Cliff, Point Beach or Kettle Moraine. Stay tuned.

March 29, Friday

Terrell's Island, Omro - 10:30

It's Spring Break in Appleton! Join the Sierra Club Fox Valley Group on an early spring hike at Terrell's Island in Omro. Dress for the weather, as spring is so unpredictable! Families welcome! An adult must accompany children under 16. **Meet at the parking lot 5401-5541 Shubert Rd, Omro.**

This hike is wheelchair accessible. There is a port-a-potty in the parking lot. I would rate this as an easy hike. Please sign up on our website

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley

Any questions, please contact marjiefendt@gmail.com

For more information or additional outings, check out our facebook page or our website - sierraclub.org/wisconsin/fox-valley Click on the Meeting and Outings Link



Camp the Rock

What do pebble shores, native Americans, French explorers, the first Great Lakes Lighthouse, an industrialist, and a Sierra Club Outing all have in common? The answer is found 2 ferry rides from the mainland at the northern part of Door County.

Travel north of Sister Bay you will find the ferry to Washington Island; a 40 minute ferry trip across Death's Door will get you to an island community secluded from the hustle of Door County. Don't stop there, as just another ferry ride north of Washington Island is the ROCK!

Rock Island is a deposit of mostly white limestone left behind by a retreating glacier. It was occupied by native Americans and in the early 1600's the Potawatomi tribe co-existed with French explorers. In 1836 the first lighthouse on the Great Lakes was built on Rock Island due to the treacherous waters in the area. In 1910, an industrialist from Chicago purchased most of the island. Today, Rock Island is owned by the State of Wisconsin and is a State Park run by the DNR.

This September the FVSG coordinated a weekend outing to Rock Island State Park. The 5 participants enjoyed 3 days and 2 nights exploring the various trails, beaches and cemeteries, learning about the history of the island, and enjoying spectacular overlooks of Lake Michigan. The park has few amenities, no vehicles, no bikes, no electricity. If you are lucky enough to spend the night under a clear sky, you will experience a starry night like no other in Wisconsin.

Hopefully this article has piqued your interest so that some day you take the opportunity to visit Rock Island to enjoy this hidden gem of the State Parks System. You won't be disappointed.



Wisconsin Conservation Congress Updates

Summarized by Karen Van Offeren

Amy Mueller, Sierra Club – Wisconsin Chapter, provided the Fox Valley group with the following update on the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC).

Good news from the WCC Legislative Committee. Two citizen resolutions promoted by the Sierra Club were advanced.

- Removal of administrative barriers to Stewardship Program projects.
- Wisconsin DNR Support of Farmers with Non-lethal Predator Prevention Programs.

For full meeting minutes, go to the Wisconsin DNR website. Click on About > Conservation Congress > Scheduled meetings, agendas, and minutes under About the Congress > 2023 > September 6, 2023 Legislative Committee

The Environmental Committee supported advancing a major resolution to “Eliminate lead from firearm ammunition used in hunting by 2030.”

They also supported that the DNR include more information on the harmful impacts of lead in all hunter and fishing materials.

Additional resolutions advanced included:

- “Prohibit use of wake boat ballast systems on all waterways to minimize transfer of aquatic invasive species;”
- “Develop and enact chronic toxicity limitations for PFAS compounds in surface and groundwater;” and
- “Create a public awareness campaign on the impact of outdoor cats on wild bird populations.”

For full meeting minutes, follow the path listed above and selecting September 30, 2023 Environmental Committee

An important WCC meeting of the District Leadership Council is scheduled for January 12-13, 2024.

The council will determine which citizen resolutions will move to state-level as a WCC question on the annual survey known as the “Spring Hearing” which is held in April.

NOTE: The WCC “Spring Hearing” survey format is currently being debated by the WCC delegates. The online survey format used for the past four years may be replaced by in-person meetings or a hybrid version. Information on how to participate in the 2024 “Spring Hearing” will be provided once available.

Wolf Management Plan and Wolf Hunting Rule Update

Original post by Sierra Club Wildlife Team & Elizabeth Ward
Summarized by Karen Van Offeren

After a contentious three-year fight over wolf management, Wisconsin’s Natural Resources Board approved a Wolf Management Plan and Wolf Hunting Rule. While reaction to the approval has been mixed, the Sierra Club is taking a positive view and acknowledging the major victories contained within the plan.

Positive points include:

- **Recognition of the ecological and cultural importance of wolves.** This includes biodiversity, forest health and public support for Wisconsin’s wolves.
- **Adaptive management instead of an arbitrary, numeric population goal.** This is a best practice that was supported by numerous scientists and is in line with most natural resource management in Wisconsin.
- **New zones and subzones with tags that are zone-specific.** (In the infamous 2021 hunt, tags were issued for any zone in the state. As a result, as zones closed, hunters would move to a zone that was still open. This led to a cascading amount of pressure all at the same time. This will now be prevented.)
- **“Low quota” subzones have been created where requested.** These extend about six miles around tribal land to help protect reservation wolf packs.
- **Registration time to report a wolf kill has been decreased to eight hours.** (Previously, the registration period was 24 hours. As a result, the quota was inordinately exceeded.)
- **Hound training on wolves has been restricted.** Training will only run during the time a harvest zone is open for hunting. It will close when the respective zone closes to hunting. (Previously, hound training was open 365 days a year.) In addition, **hunters are not allowed to use hounds at night.**
- The **plan outlines strategies for increasing public education** related to the implementation of non-lethal conflict deterrent techniques.

But We’re Not Done

If we want a sustainable wolf management plan in Wisconsin, Act 169 must be repealed.

Act 169 requires a wolf hunt regardless of the science or Tribal input if wolves are not protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Unfortunately, the wolf management plan and wolf hunting rule calls for a hunt and allows hounding, baiting, trapping and electronic predator calling as required by law.

For more information on this topic, go to the Sierra Club – Wisconsin Chapter website. Click on Blog under the Newsroom tab.

PFAS: An Important Update Presented by Wisconsin Conservation Voters

by Karen Van Offeren

PFAS is a critical environmental issue. Why?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of highly toxic human-made chemicals resistant to heat, water and oil.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports:

- PFAS are widely used and long-lasting chemicals that breakdown very slowly over time.
- Their use has been widespread, and they persist in the environment. Therefore, they are found in the blood of people and animals all over the world. They are also present in a variety of food products.
- PFAS are found in water, air, fish, and soil at locations across the nation and around the world.
- Scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.
- There are thousands of PFAS chemicals, and they are found in many different consumer, commercial and industrial products. This makes it challenging to study and assess the potential human health and environmental risks.

The harmful health effects combined with the prevalent use and long-lasting chemical structure of PFAS is what makes this issue so critical. For decades, PFAS has been used for industrial applications, in firefighting foam, and in countless consumer products.

Commonly called “forever chemicals” because they breakdown so slowly in the environment, PFAS have been linked to serious health problems including: cancer; liver damage; decreased fertility; increased risk of thyroid disease; growth, learning and behavior impairment; interference with the body’s natural hormones, decreased response to vaccines, and increased cholesterol levels.

As of the time of this report, over 120 communities in Wisconsin have found PFAS in their drinking water.

As a result of the serious implications of PFAS, Wisconsin Conservation Voters has classified PFAS as a priority issue. The Wisconsin

Conservation Voters advocate for sound environmental laws and policies. They hold elected officials accountable for their votes and actions. And they advocate for pro-conservation candidates who will champion their priority issues like PFAS. The Wisconsin Conservation Voters organization is committed to ensuring who they are and who they work with reflects Wisconsin as a whole.

At the Fox Valley Sierra Group meeting held on November 9th, Jessica Nemcheck presented an update on the PFAS issue. She is the Northeast Organizer for Wisconsin Conservation Voters and is based in Green Bay.

Jessica set the stage for her report by reminding us that this past summer, Governor Evers signed the state biennial budget. Included in the budget was \$125 million allocated to remediating PFAS contamination. However, to use that money, the legislature must pass strong legislation that prioritizes communities first.

For months, Wisconsin Conservation Voters has been working with legislators to draft Senate Bill 312 in a way that benefits communities and holds polluters accountable.

Despite extensive statewide feedback from concerned citizens and impacted community members, Senators Wimberger, Cowles and Tomczyk voted the PFAS community grants bill out of committee with restrictions that would limit the Department of Natural Resource’s ability to test for PFAS and take enforcement action against those responsible for the contamination.

As a result, this current legislation would degrade Wisconsin’s spills law, a tool that has protected Wisconsinites from pollution for decades. It also shifts the intent of the “innocent landowner grant program” away from private well owners and toward corporate entities.

Senate action on this critical bill is ongoing as this article is being written and published. Watch for updates in future Fox Valley Sierra Group announcements and publications. You can also visit the Wisconsin Conservation Voters website at conservationvoters.org for more information and current legislative updates.

Fox Valley Sierra Group
Of the John Muir Chapter of the Sierra Club

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