



**GREAT WATERS GROUP
NEWSLETTER**

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/great-waters greatwatersgroupsc@gmail.com

Summer 2024 NO. 2

GWG volunteers mark Earth Day by cleaning up

Great Waters Group members were among the site captains and participants who celebrated Milwaukee Riverkeeper’s 29th annual Spring Cleanup for Earth Day by picking up trash along Milwaukee’s Lincoln Creek.

Some 5,000 Riverkeeper volunteers collected about 100,000 pounds of trash at more than 90 sites across the Milwaukee River watershed stretching all the way up to West Bend, as well as the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic rivers.

The Great Waters Group teamed up with Nearby Nature Milwaukee and the Northwest Side Community Development Corp., its partners in the Adopt-a-River program on Lincoln Creek at Hopkins Hollow, at several sites near 35th and Congress streets. Nearby Nature also staffed a site at Harriet Tubman Park at 48th and Hampton.

Ninety volunteers collected about 140 bags of trash, as well as a few tires, a mattress, springs, and bedframe, child car seat, inflatable swimming pool and a Spin scooter at those sites.

These days, the most frequently found items are plastic: shopping bags, food wrappers, straws, cups and bottles. Organizers hope that these cleanups remind participants how pervasive plastic food packaging has become and to consider their purchasing options when feasible.

Sierrans continued volunteering at the post-cleanup Rock the Green celebration. A few staffed a table displaying a jar with water and oil to show that water and oil don’t mix, highlighting the campaign against Enbridge’s Line 5 running through the Bad River Reservation in northern Wisconsin and under the Straits of Mackinac.



You might say GWG members pooled their efforts with other organizations in cleaning up along Lincoln Creek on Earth Day. This former outdoor splash toy has seen better days, but at least it won’t be cluttering the Milwaukee environment anymore.

Spring Program

Earth-Friendly Eating

Monday, May 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

First Unitarian Society, 1342 N. Astor St., Milwaukee

Learn how our food choices and food systems affect or aggravate climate change, and vice versa. Presenters **Bruce and Terry Wiggins**, longtime Sierrans who have been involved with various food organizations for years, will

(Continued on page 4)

Notes from the Chair

I've written before in this column about the Inflation Reduction Act that was signed into law in 2022. The IRA is monumental federal climate legislation that commits nearly \$400 billion to combatting climate change. Beyond its environmental impact, the IRA also holds the promise of significant financial relief for homeowners and renters through tax credits and rebates.

With the recent closing of the Public Service Commission's comment period on how rebates should be rolled out in Wisconsin, I'd like to explore how the IRA can be a powerful tool in the fight against climate change while putting money back into residents' pockets.

Climate impact of the IRA

Nine research teams, including a Princeton-led group, have modeled the effect of the IRA on carbon emissions. Their findings reveal that the IRA will dramatically cut U.S. carbon emissions, with economy-wide reductions projected to be 43% to 48% below 2005 levels by 2035.

Home energy savings through tax credits

The IRA establishes several consumer-focused programs through tax credits and rebates to help families lower their home energy bills.

Initiatives include:

1. Efficient electric heat pumps: Families replacing old furnaces with efficient electric heat pumps can receive a tax credit of up to \$2,000 and save an average of \$500 per year on energy bills.
2. Energy efficiency improvements: Homeowners making other energy

efficiency upgrades can qualify for tax credits:

- Doors: Up to \$500.
- Windows: Up to \$600.
- Home energy audit: Up to \$150.
- New insulation: Up to 30% off the cost, totaling up to \$1,200 a year.

Rooftop solar and battery storage: Installing rooftop solar, geothermal systems or battery storage can save homeowners up to 30% of installation costs and nearly \$400 per year on energy bills.

Wisconsin has received \$150 million in federal infrastructure rebates to make homes more energy-efficient.

- **Home Rebates Program:** This performance-based rebate offers up to \$4,000 per household and up to \$400,000 for multi-family buildings for energy-efficient retrofits.
- **Home Electrification Program:** Income-qualified households can receive up to \$14,000 for electrifying their homes, covering costs for heat pumps, panel upgrades and heat pump water heaters.

As the rebate program rolls out potentially as early as this summer, homeowners and renters can take advantage of incentives to reduce our carbon footprint and save on energy bills. Take advantage of tax credits now and stay tuned as more information becomes available soon on rebates. Go to <https://focusonenergy.com/> for details and updates.

Jenny Abel

Nearby Nature names executive director

Nearby Nature Milwaukee recently hired Timothy Scott Sr. as its first executive director. With extensive experience in nonprofit, commercial, and governmental sectors in Milwaukee, Scott is excited to collaborate with other environmentally conscious organizations to advance Nearby Nature's mission of supporting and celebrating environmentalism in communities of color.



Timothy Scott

Scott's background in business management, fund development and community service will help shape the organization's strategic vision. He also has strong community connections, experience in mentoring youth in green jobs and dedication to creating a greener, safer and more equitable Milwaukee.

A lifelong Milwaukeean, Scott has served on various boards and volunteered with organizations such as the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the Salvation Army.

David Thomas, long-time project coordinator, says, "We are excited and gratified that Tim has accepted this challenge, to take what we've started and to build the organization to greater heights in coming years."

Nearby Nature Milwaukee, an environmental equity initiative that began in 2017 with a grant from the Sierra Club Foundation, has partnered with the Great Waters Group on programs such as the Milwaukee Riverkeeper Adopt-a-River and the African American Environmental Pioneer Awards.

Nearby Nature aims to address the lack of access to green spaces for African American residents on Milwaukee's northwest side, especially a 6-mile stretch of Lincoln Creek from Havenwoods State Forest to Lincoln Park, with activities including hiking, biking and paddling. Learn more at <https://nearbynaturemke.org>.

Get your Line 5 yard sign

Canadian fossil-fuel giant Enbridge continues to endanger critical watersheds in northern Wisconsin, contributing to our climate crisis. Faced with a court-ordered shutdown of its aging Line 5 pipeline where it trespasses on the Bad River Reservation, Enbridge is seeking permits for a rerouted expansion that skirts tribal land, as well as Copper Falls State Park.

If you'd like to help raise awareness by getting a sign delivered, please fill out the form at <https://bit.ly/3w1e31t>.

GWG hikers to explore Falk Park hidden gem

Exploring Falk Park, a 'hidden gem'

Friday, May 17, 3- 5 p.m.

Falk Park, 2013 W. Rawson Ave., Oak Creek.

Join the Great Waters Group for a Friday, May 17, hike at Falk Park led by Jacob Sanchez, trails coordinator for Milwaukee County Parks. We'll learn about the park while covering the roughly 2-mile trail, and the rating is easy.

The All Trails app describes Falk as a "hidden gem," highlighting birds, spring wildflowers and ephemeral streams. Learn how protecting these seasonal streams is essential to safeguarding water resources, preserving habitats and ensuring the overall forest health.

Registration requested by May 16 at <http://sc.org/GWG>.

A Little Menomonee River hike and a boat trip exploring the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern are among the outings in the planning stages. Go to our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/SierraClubGWG, or the calendar page on our website for updates.

Ojibwe leader Bresette named to Hall of Fame

By Eric Hansen

Take a moment to consider the thoughts and accomplishments of Ojibwe environmental and treaty rights leader Walt Bresette, who was inducted posthumously into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame on April 18.

A member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, he was a key strategist and organizer in the massive water protector movements that swept Wisconsin in the 1990s.

Bresette had a nimble way of upholding treaty rights (and spearfishing by tribal members) while simultaneously reaching out to non-Native communities and explaining that the anti-pollution legal aspects of the treaties' ceded territories clauses benefitted both communities.

Bresette was one of the leaders in successfully blocking sulfuric acid trains from crossing the Bad River Reservation – an episode that became known as the Bad River Train Blockade.

Notably, he was also active in the massive campaign that blocked plans for a dangerous metallic sulfide mine at Crandon, on the headwaters of the Wolf River.

Opposition to the Crandon mine proposal became so widespread that it led to lopsided votes in the Wisconsin Legislature (29-3 in the Senate, 91-6 in the Assembly) for a “prove it is safe first” law that became known as the Mining Moratorium.

For more information:

Induction ceremony tape featuring Ojibwe author Patty Loew and Bresette's daughter, Katy, <https://wchf.org/2024-induction-events/>

Walleye Warriors, by Walt Bresette and Rick Whaley

Cap Times commentary by Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt
<https://bit.ly/4b7NzKA>

Milwaukee coalition members exchange ideas

The Great Waters Group is one of 22 organizations that have formed the Our Future Milwaukee Coalition, and on April 12, coalition members came together for the first time for a lively quarterly meeting.

Attendees shared their wide-ranging reflections on what they hope to address through the coalition, including housing needs, safe streets, bus rapid transit, freeway expansion pressures, protection of natural areas, schoolchildren's concerns about hunger and food waste, and health effects of climate change, all of which are addressed in Milwaukee's Climate & Equity Plan.

When the members drilled down on where to focus the coalition's work, what emerged was a clear determination to ensure timely progress and robust reporting on fair implementation of the Milwaukee Climate & Equity Plan.

You can follow the work of the coalition and more by subscribing to the OFM newsletter at <https://eepurl.com/h7AAsD>.

Summer 2024



Walt Bresette brought vision and passion to the local environmental scene while defending treaty rights and earning induction in the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

Steve Voit Photography

Threatened Monarchs need help with habitat

Threatened by poisons, a changing climate and urban sprawl, Monarch populations are declining across North America, but it is habitat loss that has the largest impact on their survival. We can do our part to change that by planting milkweed, the monarch's caterpillar feeder, as well as native nectar flowers like bee balm, boneset, butterfly weed and purple coneflower. And, of course, by avoiding pesticides.

These plants can be purchased in full or half flats of milkweed or mixtures for monarchs and pollinators at www.TheMonarchTrail.org. The plant sale runs May 11 (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.) and May 12 (11 a.m. to 2 p.m.) at Greenfield Park Pavilion, 2028 S. 124th St., West Allis.

Look for other native plant sales at the Urban Ecology Center, Schlitz Audubon Nature Center and Wehr Nature Center.

Friends of the Monarch Trail invites everyone to plant their garden to feed the diversity of insects and birds and to help recover their diminishing habitat.

Fun brewing at the beer garden

Beer garden season is back! Join us as we share what the Great Waters Group is doing and compare notes on places to explore this summer while also supporting our county parks. This is a good way to meet environmentalists in a relaxed setting.

A GWG host will have a marked table from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Buy a beer or soda and drop by.

This schedule is tentative, so please register via the calendar at <http://sc.org/GWG> to get email updates, which also will appear at www.facebook.com/SierraClubGWG.

Wednesday, May 29 – Estabrook Beer Garden, Shorewood.

Thursday, June 27 – Whitnall Beer Garden, Greendale.

Thursday, July 18 – The Landing at Hoyt Park, Wauwatosa.

Thursday, Aug. 15 – South Shore Terrace, Milwaukee

Wednesday, Sept. 11 – Hubbard Park Beer Garden, Shorewood



Protect America's Environment for Our Families, For Our Future

Great Waters Group of the Wisconsin Chapter
P.O. Box 26798
Wauwatosa, WI 53226-0798

Non-Profit
US Postage
Paid
Permit 2093
Milwaukee, WI

Recycled Paper

Governor sues to free conservation projects

On April 17, the Wisconsin Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case filed by Gov. Tony Evers and the Department of Justice against the Wisconsin Legislature.

The complaint alleges violations of the Wisconsin Constitution's separation of powers when members of the Joint Finance Committee anonymously block conservation projects. The JFC's practice allows for a single anonymous committee member to halt any Knowles-Nelson stewardship grant for any reason, essentially giving an unchecked veto authority to any anonymous member of the committee.

Plaintiffs demonstrated that the JFC's actions have had real consequences for conservation projects across Wisconsin, including the Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs area in Ozaukee County and the Pelican River Forest in northern Wisconsin.

During the proceedings, Justice Jill Karofsky pursued a hard-hitting line of questioning with the attorney for the defendants. The justice wrapped up her questioning by saying: "I don't understand what processes, what procedures, what policy determinations the Joint Committee on Finance needs to make in order to veto a proposal. I mean, there doesn't seem to be any limits whatsoever. There are zero guardrails here."

We will stay tuned for a decision this summer.

Volunteer Leadership Council Contact List Voicemail: (262) 236-5623

Jenny Abel, Chair: jabel209@gmail.com
Linda Frank, Vice Chair, Chapter Delegate: linda@frankenvironmental.com
Scott Coulthurst, Secretary: scott.coulthurst@olympusgrp.com
Jane Schneider, Treasurer: janes0502@gmail.com
Victoria Gillet, Conservation Chair: torrig@gmail.com
Tim Karaskiewicz, Membership Chair: sctrk3@gmail.com
Kerstin Larson, Holiday Party/Fundraising Chair: larson.ker@gmail.com
Emily O'Neil, Equity Chair, Communication Team: enoelnadolski@gmail.com
Jasmine Viges, Programs Chair: jasmine.viges@gmail.com
Janet Dieter, Volunteer Chair: dieterjanet@gmail.com
Dan McKinley, Outings Chair: dan.mckinley@gmail.com
Karen Samelson, Publicity Chair, Newsletter Chair, Communication Team:
ksamelson16@gmail.com
David Thomas, Communication Team: david@thomerwald.net
Janet Anderson, Communication Team: janeta16@sbcglobal.net
Dale Hofmann, Newsletter Editor: dhofmann@yaho.com

Spring Program

(Continued from page 1)

explore how and why personal changes are necessary and why our food system also needs big changes. For example, buying organic is not the solution many think it is. Register at <https://bit.ly/May2024Program>.

This is the last monthly program until September. Look for information on the fall lineup in future newsletters.