



Sierra

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group
OCTOBER 2024

*"It's real bad."
What Project 2025 would do to climate policy in the U.S. by Zoya Teirstein, July 19, 2024, Grist.org*

WEEK WITHOUT DRIVING

Monday, September 30 – Sunday, October 6, 2024

What is life like for those who don't or can't drive? How do non-drivers get to work or school, shopping and appointments? How does our car-centric society impact youth, elders, those with disabilities, and others who can't afford or don't want to drive a car?

From September 30 through October 6, national Week Without Driving (WWD) will highlight these and other questions and give us all a chance to learn and reflect. How do our transportation policies, budgets, and priorities impact the schedules, choices, finances, and health of non-drivers? How do they impact our communities budgets and our environment?

In Wisconsin, about 31 percent of residents are non-drivers according to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). In the City of La Crosse, up to 40 percent of individuals who are 15 or older don't drive, and in Grant County, it's 10 to 20 percent, WisDOT estimates.

The WWD Challenge asks participants to pledge to try not driving their car for a week. In some places it's easier than in others. And, many will find they must drive because there are not other options. But that's an opportunity to consider how a non-driver would cope with a "must drive" situation and to imagine a system where driving is a luxury.

For Wisconsin Sierra Club members, it's also a chance to examine how our current system is related to the issues we have been working on, including oil and gas pipelines, plastics and environmental racism, air and water pollution, access to wild and public lands, and more.

Learn more about Week Without Driving and sign up to take the challenge at <https://weekwithoutdriving.org> and, if you live in the La Crosse area, join CRSC and more than a dozen other organizations, agencies, and businesses in local WWD events and activities (learn more at <https://tinyurl.com/LaXWWD24>).

October 5 - Transit 2 Trails



On Saturday, October 5, the Coulee Region Sierra Club will host another Transit 2 Trails

outing. We'll catch an MTU bus at about 9:30 a.m. at the Grand River Station Transit Center, 314 Jay Street in La Crosse and travel to a local trail, returning at about 11:30 a.m.

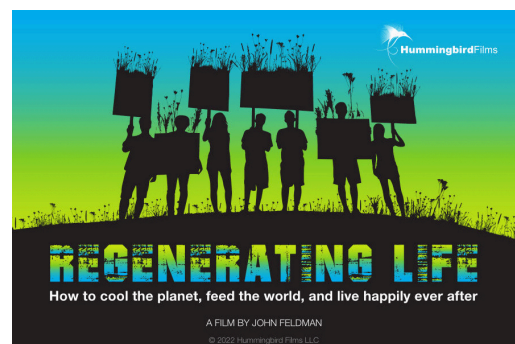
More details will be provided to those who register. You do not need bus experience to participate and MTU bus fare is FREE during Week Without Driving! This is a great chance to hike and try out the bus!

If you require accommodations to participate, please note this on the registration form at <https://tinyurl.com/CRSC-T2TRegister> or email us at CRSierra-Club@gmail.com or call or text 608-315-2693.

Oct. 15 - Regenerating Life

Join Wisconsin Chapter friends and members for an online film screening on Tuesday, October 15 at 7 p.m.

[Regenerating Life](https://tinyurl.com/WISC-RegenFilm) takes an ecological approach to unpacking the social and environmental crises that confront us, shifting the prevailing climate change story, and offering new, attainable solutions. Register for the screening at <https://tinyurl.com/WISC-RegenFilm>



Clean Energy Credits and YOU

On September 24, we heard from Quinn Rowe, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, about how individuals can take advantage of federal clean energy credits and incentives to save money and energy while reducing carbon emissions. Quinn talked about the different programs available and income levels that could allow some families to get up to \$14,000 worth of sealing, insulating, and appliance upgrades for no charge.

The program was not recorded, but Quinn has provided this summary and there's more information at the WCV web page: <https://conservationvoters.org/priority-campaigns/clean-energy-plan>

President Biden's Affordable Clean Energy Plan is the largest investment in clean energy in world history, dedicating a whopping \$370 billion dollars to help homeowners, renters, local governments, schools, small businesses, and others to transition away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy. This is done through incentives, lowering the costs of clean energy and energy-efficiency home improvements. There are three major incentives that homeowners are eligible for – the clean energy tax credits, the HOMES rebate, and the HEAR rebate.

The clean energy tax credit is the first and largest of the three benefits, covering clean energy generation, energy efficiency upgrades, and electric vehicles. With this, there is a discount of up to 30 percent on solar panels, heat pumps, battery storage, insulation, windows, efficient appliances, and more. Consumers are able to save up to \$7,500 with a point-of-purchase tax credit for new electric vehicles, and up to \$4,000 for used electric vehicles. To take advantage of this tax credit, check to see if your purchase is eligible with a contractor or through the IRS' site; save the receipt from your purchase; fill out IRS Form 5695; and deduct the tax credit from your federal taxes. Not only will you save on the home improvement, but your monthly energy costs will go down too! The clean energy tax credit is a part of the federal tax code until 2032, so its benefits will be long lasting.

The HOMES rebate is the most recent benefit to be rolled out, with Wisconsin being the first state to release the rebate! The HOMES rebate is focused on improving household energy efficiency, so things like Energy Star appliances, home insulation, heat pumps, windows, and exterior doors are covered. Eligibility for this program is based on household income, but homeowners could be eligible for a rebate of up to \$10,000. The HOMES rebate requires a home energy assessment, in which a licensed contractor will conduct a series of tests around the household to see what improvements could be made to improve the home's energy efficiency. Once figuring out which improvements work best for you, you apply for the rebate through Focus on Energy. Once they accept your application, the rebate is applied at the point of purchase, meaning that you will save big on these upfront costs!

The third rebate is HEAR, which is expected to be rolled out sometime in October. While the HOMES rebate is

focused on whole-home renovations, the HEAR rebate is more focused on smaller improvements. Things like Energy Star appliances, home insulation, heat pumps, windows, and exterior doors are all covered by HEAR as well, but it's

more focused on buying just one appliance or improvement as opposed to a whole-home renovation. Like HOMES, HEAR has income eligibility, in which eligible beneficiaries can get up to 100 percent of the purchase of many of these minor improvements. Like HOMES, you apply through Focus on Energy to receive the rebate before purchasing the appliance. Once approved, the HEAR rebate will be applied at the point of purchase. Unlike the clean energy tax credits which are available to everyone until 2032, the HOMES and HEAR rebates are first-come, first-served. The federal government allocated nearly \$150 million to the State of Wisconsin to fund the HOMES and HEAR rebates, meaning that it's paramount that information about these programs is shared as quickly and as widely as possible. We want every Wisconsinite in every corner of the state to take advantage of these benefits as soon as possible!

This is all very exciting information, and it can be difficult to know where to start looking. Wisconsin Conservation Voters has a dedicated website with all of this information and more. It includes an energy-savings calculator, municipal-specific programs, a list of contractors certified to know all about these benefits, and tons of stories of Wisconsinites utilizing the benefits from President Biden's Affordable Clean Energy Plan. If you have any questions about any of these benefits, please feel free to reach out to me, Quinn Rowe, Federal Clean Energy Campaign Manager with WCV, at quinn@conservationvoters.org or at 715-204-9024, and I can guide you in the right direction. I hope you are all able to take advantage of these great cost savings benefits and can help us fight for a clean energy future!

With the help of these federal investments, we can all be part of the solution.

Benefits available for the next decade:

 CLEAN ENERGY: 30% tax credit on solar, geothermal, and battery storage	 ENERGY EFFICIENCY: 30% tax credit on insulation, windows, appliances, heating and cooling, and more	 ELECTRIC VEHICLE: Up to \$7,500 point-of-purchase tax credit for new vehicles, up to \$4,000 for used vehicles
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Make sure you save your receipt and verify eligibility with your retailer or contractor. Investing in clean energy today can provide instant savings on your utility bill, and, come tax season, you will receive significant savings on purchases made today.

ELECTIONS

The Wisconsin Chapter has endorsed state candidates in the November 5 election. To learn more about it, please visit <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/blog/2024/09/sierra-club-2024-endorsements>

Absentee-in-person voting begins on October 22 in most Coulee Region municipalities. Please check with your Clerk or get more information at <https://myvote.wi.gov>

CRSC Board Elections

We are seeking candidates for the Coulee Region Sierra Club board. Elections will be in December. New terms begin in 2025. Terms are two years. The board meets monthly and plans club activities and events.

If you are interested in serving your club, please email CRSierraClub@gmail.com OR call or text 608-315-2693 with your name and a statement about why you are interested and your pertinent experience. If you need more information before deciding, please email, call, or text us.

We encourage club members living outside the La Crosse area to self-nominate, but everyone is welcome to run. We will publish information about voting by mail and online in November and candidates' statements and ballots in December.

Environmental Education Grants

For spring 2025, CRSC will offer grants of up to \$200 each for environmental education projects to schools or community organizations involving young people at the elementary and middle school level within the CRSC region: Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties.

Applications may be completed online, emailed or mailed. The deadline for applications is January 3, 2025 with awards by January 31. For more information, visit sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee/Education.

Funding for this program is possible thanks to an annual grant from the Paul E. Stry Foundation, shared dues from club memberships, calendar sales, and donations made by community members. To donate, email CRSierraClub@gmail.com or call 608-315-2693.

Vernon Electric Solar Farm

Vernon Electric Co-op's new Bluff Prairie Community Solar Farm near De Soto, developed by OneEnergy, LLC, is ready for subscribers.



The annual cost per 1 kWh subscription is \$50, with availability based upon previous energy use. Subscribers should see a 12% return on investment after the first year. Learn more at <https://vernonelectric.org/bpcs>

October 8 Highway Cleanup

Our fall highway cleanup will be on Tuesday, October 8 at 5:30 p.m. Please meet at the water pumping station just west from the Gillette Street/River Valley Drive intersection to get your bags, gloves, and safety vests.



If you have questions, please call us at 608-315-2693.

Bike Friendly Survey

The City of La Crosse recently applied for Bicycle Friendly Community status from the League of American Bicyclists! As part of their review process, the League wants your input on bicycling in La Crosse. If you've ever biked here, please take a minute to complete this survey and share your input: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BFC_2024



Help the League of American Bicyclists gain a better understanding of local bicyclists' experiences and perceptions of bicycling in La Crosse.

The survey is open until October 15.

October Global Birding Day

#BIRDSUNITEOURWORLD

October Big Day is an opportunity to unite around our shared love of birds. Last October, nearly 36,332 people from 191 countries submitted 83,735 checklists with eBird, demonstrating the power of birds to bring people together.

Each year more and more participants join in this global celebration. You can join in all of Global Bird Weekend on October 11, 12, and 13, and submit your sightings - but remember October 12 is the BIG DAY!

Learn more at <https://globalbirding.org/>

CRSC Board Meetings

CRSC board meets monthly online and members may attend. Email CRSierraClub@gmail.com or call 608-315-2693 for the Zoom access information. The next meeting is October 29 at 6:30 p.m

Transformative REC Grants

From Wisconsin Sierra Club, Sept. 6, 2024:



Yesterday President Biden was in Westvy Wisconsin at the Vernon County Electric Co-op to announce some big news for all Dairyland Power Co-op customers and Wisconsin residents.

President Biden's climate bill, the Inflation Reduction Act, provided a historic \$7.3 billion funding for carbon reductions through the USDA's Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program. This is the largest investment in rural electricity since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act into law in 1936.

Yesterday, the White House and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the winners of the grants and loans. 16 rural electric cooperatives, including Wisconsin's Dairyland Power Co-op, will receive funding. The New ERA program will fund investments in renewable energy, storage, transmission, and large-scale emissions reductions. This funding will allow these leading electric cooperatives—serving one-fifth of rural Americans—to accelerate the adoption of afford-

able and reliable clean energy, improving resilience and lowering costs for their members.

Dairyland Power Co-op will receive almost \$573 million to procure 1,080 megawatts (MWs) of clean energy, including power purchase agreements for four solar installations and four wind power installations across rural Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa.

What this massive investment means:

- Dairyland customers' electric rates are estimated to lower by 42 percent over 10 years than they would have been without the New ERA funding.
- The award will drive an estimated \$2.1 billion in clean energy investments throughout the region
- Pollution will be reduced by an estimated 3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually— the equivalent of taking 729,000 gasoline-powered cars off the road every year— or 90 million tons over the lifespan of the projects.

Thank you, President Biden for bringing these investments to Wisconsin!

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Read more about the role the Sierra Club played in this historic program at <https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2024/09/transformative-energy-grants-pull-back-curtain-rural-renewable-enthusiasm>

More October Events

10/ 1: Week Without Driving Walk Audit 3 p.m. UWL Whitney Center <https://www.uwlax.edu/calendar/?e=31120>

10/ 1: Riverland Energy Co-op Member Appreciation Day 4 to 7 pm Onalaska Omni Center <https://www.riverlandenergy.com/member-appreciation-day-2024>

10/ 2: Hear Here Community Hangouts & Third Spaces Bike Tour 5 to 9 p.m. Start at Pearl Street Brewery, 1401 St. Andrew St. <https://www.uwlax.edu/calendar/?e=30944>

10/ 2: Week Without Driving Drift Cycles Demonstration and Bike Ride 6 p.m. The Nature Place, Myrick Park. <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=978472030991441&set=a.694476096057704>

10/ 2: Salt Smart! presentation 7 p.m. The Nature Place, Myrick Park <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=978472030991441&set=a.694476096057704>

10/ 4: Kickapoo Valley Reserve Annual Pasta Supper Fundraiser <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Annual-Events/DamChallenge/>

10/ 5: Wisconsin Bike Fed Free Teaching Safe Bicycling clinic 12:30 to 5 p.m. Black River Beach Neighborhood Center, 1433 Rose Street, La Crosse lacrosseata.blogspot.com/p/week-without-driving.html

10/ 5: KVR Dam Challenge Triathlon <http://kvr.state.wi.us/Events/Annual-Events/DamChallenge/>

10/ 9: The Status of the Black River Fishery 6:30 p.m. Lunda Center, Black River Falls <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/status-of-the-black-river-fishery-the-hub/>

10/9, 10, 17, 19, 25, 26: Volunteer for the Wild with Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Various locations. <https://mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/october-2024-volunteer-wild>

10/11: Science Cafe - More Water More of the Time 6 p.m. JavaVino La Crosse <https://www.uwlax.edu/calendar/?e=31061>

10/12: Born Learning Trail Grand Opening 11 a.m. 120 N. Wataer St., BRF <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/born-learning-trail-grand-opening-ribbon-cutting/>

10/12: Prairie Stargazing from 7 to 9 p.m. at Tunnelville Cliffs. mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/2024-prairie-stargazing-walk

10/14: Indigenous Peoples Day 11 to 6 pm in downtown La Crosse <https://ho-chunknation.com/events/la-crosse-indigenous-peoples-day/>

10/18-24: Jackson In Action Fall Hike at Lunda Community Park <https://www.blackrivercountry.net/event/jackson-in-action-2024-fall-hike-series/>

10/22: Inspiring Sustainability Awards 6 p.m. La Crosse Distilling Company. Tickets: <https://www.sustaininstitute.com/upcomingevents>