



**GREAT WATERS GROUP
NEWSLETTER**

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Fall 2024 NO. 3



The Green Tech Station is a brownfield turned green infrastructure showcase on N. 31st St. in Milwaukee, thanks to the Northwest Side CDC and partners. It also serves as an outdoor learning space, and it will host the Great Waters Group’s program on Sept. 16.

Photo by Reflo

Do your part in election

The Sierra Club has endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris for president, incumbent Tammy Baldwin for the US Senate and incumbent Gwen Moore for Congress. Here are two ways you can get involved in the crucial Nov. 5 election that will have major consequences for the environment and democracy:

- Help the Wisconsin Chapter make calls and send texts to club members to urge them to vote for conservation-minded candidates. Look for details in future e-letters or contact Heather, the volunteer coordinator, at heather.wittrock@sierraclub.org for more information.
- Donate time and/or money to local candidates in districts the Chapter has identified as “flippable” seats under the new maps. They are environmental lawyer Jodi Habush Sinykin in the 8th state Senate District on the North Shore and Mequon; and former League of Women Voters Executive Director LuAnn Bird in the 61st Assembly District, including Greendale and Hales Corners.

If you’d prefer to help get out the vote campaigns, check out Souls to the Polls, a nonprofit that unites faith leaders and congregations and offers free rides to the polls across Milwaukee. They can be found at www.soulstothepollswi.org.

You can also reach out to the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan organization that trains people to be poll watchers and registers voters at <https://my.lwv.org/wisconsin>.

If you’d like to work at the polls on Election Day and earn some money contact your city clerk (in Milwaukee the Election Commission is at <https://city.milwaukee.gov/election>).

And whatever you do, VOTE on — or before — Nov. 5!

Fall Programs

Welcome back to a new season of monthly educational programs. Information on future programs will be shared at www.facebook.com/SierraClubGWG, on the Calendar at <http://sc.org/GWG>, and in future newsletters.

Green Tech Station — Water Journey Through a Former Brownfield Site

Monday, Sept. 16, 5:30-7 p.m. Green Tech Station, 4101 N. 31st St., Milwaukee

Green Tech Station is a green space project featuring numerous “green infrastructure” technologies for stormwater management. Northwest Side Community Development Corp. led redevelopment of this former brownfield in Milwaukee’s 30th Street Corridor with support from many partners. Tour this new environmental education destination with NWSCDC and Reflo and learn about the property’s past, present and future possibilities.

Learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/GWG-GTS>.

(Continued on page 4)

Notes from the Chair

Members of the Great Waters Group Volunteer Leadership Council joined Mandi McAlister in May in a four-session series on how to become a multicultural environmental organization.

The Sierra Club has historically been an organization led by and made up of white members. While at the national level we have our first Black executive director — Ben Jealous — at the state and local levels there is a lot more we can do to be more inclusive and to further our work in environmental justice.

Mandi, the founder of Hummingbird MKE and leader of Fair Future Movement, introduced us to a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that are based on the research of author Tema Okun. First created in 1999 and revised in 2021, the list contains 17 tenets that pervade our society.

While it may seem extreme to call out our day-to-day habits and practices as rooted in white supremacy, Mandi uses this definition: “the widespread ideology baked into the beliefs, values, norms, and standards of our groups, communities, towns, and nation that teaches us overtly and covertly that whiteness holds value, and that whiteness is value.”

Characteristics of white supremacy include things like perfectionism, individualism, one right way, paternalism, defensiveness, right to comfort, fear of open conflict, quantity over quality, and power hoarding.

She asked us to assess which characteristics we see showing up most in Great Waters Group leadership. We landed on these three: constant sense of urgency, either/or thinking, and progress (defined as bigger/more).

Either/or thinking, for example, looks like trying to simplify complex things (e.g., believing that poverty is simply the result of lack of education). It can also show up as difficulty learning from mistakes or accommodating conflict.

Mandi helped find antidotes to our top three characteristics. For example, when we notice that people are using either/or language, we can push ourselves to come up with two or more alternatives.

Mandi also helped us set several SMARTIE goals. SMARTIE stands for Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable. One goal that we are eager to bring to fruition is to organize bimonthly volunteer nights where we work with BIPOC-led local organizations to take collective action on environmental justice issues of concern to residents.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic we held in-person volunteer nights, and we are looking forward to returning to them. Another goal is to have more of our monthly programs center on environmental justice themes. You are likely to see that reflected in the next round of programs starting up again in September.

We are grateful for Mandi’s insights and guidance, and we look forward to implementing the many lessons we learned. If you are interested in more information on what was covered in her sessions or would like to be a part of making these lessons reality, please get in touch with me.

Jenny Abel, Chair
Jabel209@gmail.com

Fall outings feature informative hikes

Join GWG members on a pair of fun and informative outings this fall.

Friday, Sept. 6, 3–5 p.m.

Mangan Woods, 6750 S. 92nd St., Franklin

Jacob Sanchez, Milwaukee County Parks’ trails coordinator, will lead us hiking through a beautiful upland old growth forest where opportunities abound to learn about distinctive features of glaciation such as moraines, kettles and glacial erratics.

The trail is easy, and the tall forest canopy provides welcome cover from the sun, but remember to bring water. We will have frequent stops to observe geological and ecological points of interest. Please register in advance online or by calling Dan McKinley at 414-467-2911.

Exploring the Westabrook Trail along the Milwaukee River in Autumn

Saturday, Nov. 9, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

Westabrook Trail, 4700 N. Port Washington Road, Glendale

This hike begins at the Holiday Inn Express parking lot and goes down to the historic site of Humboldt, Wis., near Capitol Drive, then Kern Park and back.

We will learn about native peoples and discover ecologically and historically significant sites on this roughly 4-mile round-trip hike along the Milwaukee Greenway, and we will hear how it will be preserved and enhanced for generations to come.

This hike, another collaboration with the River Revitalization Foundation, will have a special presentation about the Estabrook Falls fish passage project from local leaders.

Wear good hiking shoes, bring hiking sticks if you want, and water. It will be rescheduled in case of heavy rain.

Get details on these and future outings and register at <http://sc.org/GWG>.

Save the date for GWG Holiday Party

Save the date for the Great Waters Group’s annual holiday party on Sunday, Dec. 8, at Wil-o-Way Underwood.

We look forward to getting together with all of you for festive entertainment, our silent auction and the presentation of the 2024 Environmental Hero Award. See details in the next newsletter and e-letters.

DNR sticks to land swap at Kohler site

By RT Both
Sierra Club – Wisconsin Chapter Lands Team

Sierrans were elated last October when the Wisconsin Court of Appeals upheld earlier court decisions revoking Kohler Co.'s permit to build its fifth luxury golf course in Sheboygan County.

Elation soon turned to anxiety however when locals discovered PVC pipe, commonly used in the installation of plumbing, sewage and water systems, and wooden stakes indicating the location of future golf course greens, at the site.

Since then, the focus of organizing efforts to preserve the habitat at Kohler-Andrae Lakeshore has turned to the Department of Natural Resources, which continues to hold open the land swap it made with Kohler in 2018.

The land where Kohler wants to build the course is part of a rare and valuable ecosystem known as Kohler-Andrae Lakeshore, which includes both the state park and Kohler-owned acreage to the north. The old-growth forest on the Kohler site has not been logged for 150 years, according to naturalist Jim Buchholz, and the dunes on the Lake Michigan shore are globally rare.

In exchange for 9 brownfield acres of no conservation value, Kohler Co. was given almost 5 acres inside the state park to build a 22,000-square-foot maintenance facility and a four-lane road with a rotary to route traffic to the proposed golf course.

According to Mary Faydash, president of Friends of the Black River Forest, the legal counsel for the DNR told attorney Christa Westerberg of the Madison firm Pines Bach, who has represented FBRF in its successful legal challenges of the Kohler plan, that this land swap deal is legal.

The swap was done without public hearings, and it constitutes a major change to the park's master plan. Under Wisconsin law, a state park master plan cannot be amended without holding a public hearing.

The Scott Walker DNR, under the leadership of businesswoman Cathy Stepp, initially made the deal with Kohler and allowed a sloppy environmental impact statement and skewed wetland mitigation permit application to sail through with no bureaucratic interference. However, the current DNR continues to insist on upholding it.

In response, the Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter's partners at FBRF plan an educational session at the park Sept. 29. Stephen Davis, professor of political science and environmental studies at Edgewood College, will speak.

A sign-on letter is being circulated to local and national environmental groups and other interested parties to encourage the governor to intervene. Look for updates in the e-letter.



Chapter Director Elizabeth Ward and campaign coordinator Jadine Sonoda joined the Great Waters Group for an Aug. 1 event at the Urban Ecology Center, where Milwaukee area environmentalists wrote postcards to the US Army Corps of Engineers opposing the Line 5 reroute and demanding that the tar sands pipeline be shut down.

Adopt-A-River cleanup set for Lincoln Creek

Join the Great Waters Group, Nearby Nature Milwaukee and Northwest Side CDC on Oct. 5 for an Adopt-A-River cleanup on Lincoln Creek, a program of Milwaukee Riverkeeper. We'll meet at the Bee Bus sign and spread out from there into Hopkins Hollow.

Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes, or high boots if you want to wade in the water. Bring your own reusable water bottle. So we have enough gloves, trash bags and snacks, please register at www.bit.ly/oct5clean.

Saturday, Oct. 5, 10 a.m.-noon
4350 N. 35th St. (at W. Congress St.) Milwaukee

Join us at the beer garden

It's not too late to join the Great Waters Group's monthly beer garden gatherings. They run through October.

Everyone is welcome to join us and meet other nature lovers in a relaxed setting from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. We'll also share updates on GWG activities. Look for a green tablecloth or Sierra Club sign. Buy a beer, soda or brat and stop by!

Wednesday, Sept. 11: Hubbard Park Beer Garden, 3565 N. Morris Blvd., Shorewood.

Thursday, Oct. 10: Estabrook Park Beer Garden, 4600 Estabrook Parkway, Shorewood.

Sign up at <http://sc.org/GWG>, and we'll let you know if weather forces a change in plans.



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

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Executive Committee has four new openings

Do you care about nature and environmental justice and want to do more?
We have an opportunity for you!

The Executive Committee of the Great Waters Group is an elected board of Sierra Club volunteers who meet about nine times a year to determine Group priorities and policy. Our ExCom members actively participate in a subcommittee as part of their volunteer commitment. We expect to have four openings, which are for two-year terms.

A nominee must be a member in good standing of the Sierra Club and the GWG and must give consent. If you are interested in joining our ExCom or in nominating someone, please contact Chair Jenny Abel at Jabel209@gmail.com by Sept. 15.

Want to wade in more slowly? We welcome volunteers for political, communications, conservation, outings or fundraising efforts.

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Fall Programs

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Trail Access for All

Wednesday, Oct 23, 5–7 p.m.

Kuumba Juice & Coffeehouse, 274 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee.

Join Karen and Jennifer Lemke, authors of *Easy Walks and Paddles* in Milwaukee, for an informative and inspirational discussion about accessible walks and paddles in the Milwaukee area.

Karen and Jennifer will start the program with a slow roll/walk and talk, and then head back to share the inside scoop on accessible trails and waterways in the Milwaukee area, as well as additional information about public restrooms, nearby eateries, environmental issues, historical tidbits about people who previously inhabited these spaces, and details about Milwaukee's social and cultural history.

Learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/TrailAccessforAll>.