



SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the
Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club

OCT-DEC 2024
VOLUME 42, No. 4

Wisconsin Election information for Kenosha and Racine

As we all know, the upcoming election is critically important on many levels and there are multiple resources available for us to check or tell friends about to help ensure informed voting. Check this website to register or verify registration and polling place, as well as sample ballot and info on voting absentee.

**START
HERE**

myvote.wi.gov/en-us/

The following sites provide information about races in our area, including who is running and background information, including voting record for incumbents. They also include the candidates' own statements of their priorities and reasons for running instead of the rather harsh ads we see on TV and the internet.

First Congressional District (CD-1) of Wisconsin U.S. Congressional Candidates:

https://ballotpedia.org/Wisconsin%27s_1st_Congressional_District_election,_2024

From this website: *All 435 U.S. House seats are up for election in 2024. Republicans have a 220 to 211 majority with four vacancies. As of June 2024, 45 members of the U.S. House had announced they were not running for re-election...Wisconsin's 1st Congressional District is one of 34 congressional districts with a Republican incumbent or an open seat the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) is targeting in 2024.*

U.S. Senator Candidates for Wisconsin:

https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_election_in_Wisconsin,_2024

From this website: *The Associated Press' Scott Bauer wrote, "The seat in battleground Wisconsin is seen as essential for Democrats, who know they must win there if they hope to maintain majority control of the Senate. A win there for Republicans would dramatically increase their chances of gaining the upper hand in an election landscape that has Democrats defending far more Senate seats this year."*

Milwaukee's NPR has a very thorough voter guide with detailed information about each candidate:

www.wuwm.com/candidate-for-wisconsin-senate-district-22-fall-election

Wisconsin Senate District 22 contains most of the city of Kenosha, the south side of the city of Racine, the villages of Somers and Sturtevant, most of the village of Mount Pleasant, and the northern half of Pleasant Prairie.

www.wuwm.com/candidate-wisconsin-assembly-district-63-fall-election

Assembly District 63 covers areas of northeast Racine County and southwest Milwaukee County, including most of the city of Franklin and the village of Caledonia.

www.wuwm.com/candidates-wisconsin-assembly-district-64-fall-election

Assembly District 64 covers the northeast corner of Kenosha County, including all of the village of Somers and the northern half of the city of Kenosha.

www.wuwm.com/candidates-wisconsin-assembly-district-65-fall-election

Wisconsin Assembly District 65 covers the southern half of Kenosha and the northern half of Pleasant Prairie.

www.wuwm.com/candidates-wisconsin-assembly-district-66-fall-election

Assembly District 66 covers the southeast corner of Racine County, including the south side of the city of Racine, most of the village of Mount Pleasant, and the villages of Sturtevant and Elmwood Park.

Where To Vote (Kenosha County):

www.kenoshacounty.org/1009/Where-to-Vote

Voter Information (Racine County):

www.racinecounty.com/departments/county-clerk/election-information/voter-information

GET INVOLVED ➡ START HERE!

- Wondering how to get more involved?
- Do you like to plan events?
- Want to help us select activism initiatives?
- Do you have a knack with numbers?
- Want to share your favorite local hiking, biking or paddle spots with the group?



If you answered yes to any of these questions, please consider joining the SEGG board! Executive Committee board elections are in early 2025. New board members provide a fresh outlook and exciting new ideas. The board meets monthly (roughly) for one hour to plan SEGG events and activities. We are a laid back, low-stress, fun committee. Since we are all volunteers, this should be fun! :) You can choose to be as involved as you wish.

Interested members should email a short bio and picture to Laura Schulz at schulztwin2@gmail.com by Dec. 8.

We are also looking for a conservation chair who would be responsible for educating the group on environmental issues and an outings chair to lead the group on hikes, bikes, paddles and more. Interested parties should email Laura at schulztwin2@gmail.com

Last Highway Cleanup of the Year - Saturday, Oct. 5

As many of our long-time volunteers have retired from this work, we really can use a new batch of members and friends to help keep the program going. It's not a bad way to spend about an hour and a half on a Saturday morning!

Meet at Blessed Hope Church, 4949 Hwy 38 (corner of Hwy 38 & 4 Mile Rd) at 9:00 AM. Safety vests and bags are provided.

If interested, please contact Jeff Sytsma:
Jeff12759@aol.com or 262 637-6845 or 262 497-4761



Scuppernong Springs Nature Trail Hike

Sunday, October 13 ~ 1PM
By Outings Co-Leader Al Sommer



This nature area is adjacent to the Scuppernong segment of the Ice Age Trail. We will do a short hike of the trail connecting about ten springs in the vicinity of and contributing to the Scuppernong River.

This 1-1/2 mile trail takes you by the remains of an old marl pit. (Marl is a calcium carbonate material and silt that is formed in aquatic environments and apparently at one time had a value that made it worth mining.) It also takes you to about ten different springs that all have mostly different environments and are fun to see. Who doesn't like to watch water coming out of the ground and moving bits of calcium carbonate and silt around?!?

This nature trail and one of the trailheads for the Scuppernong segment of the Ice Age Trail are both near the intersection of Rte 67 and County Rd ZZ, about 5 miles north of the town of Eagle. I look forward to being able to share these unique and beautiful places with other club members and potential members. Upon completing this little hike we can head to Paradise Springs, which is the one-time site of another spring-based hotel.

We will meet in the parking lot for Scuppernong Springs Trail at 1:00 on Sunday, October 13.

Be prepared to sign the Sierra Club Outings Waiver.

Call or email Al Sommer at: 262-716-6955 / sommerallan4@gmail.com for more information.

Join the Sierra Club Wisconsin Book Club!

Our Book Club meets virtually to discuss a book related to climate change, environmental justice or equity in the outdoors.

Our next discussion will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 12 from 7-8 PM

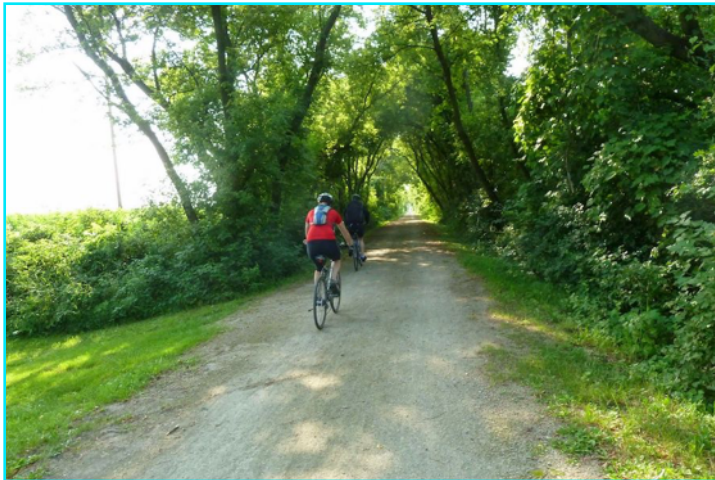
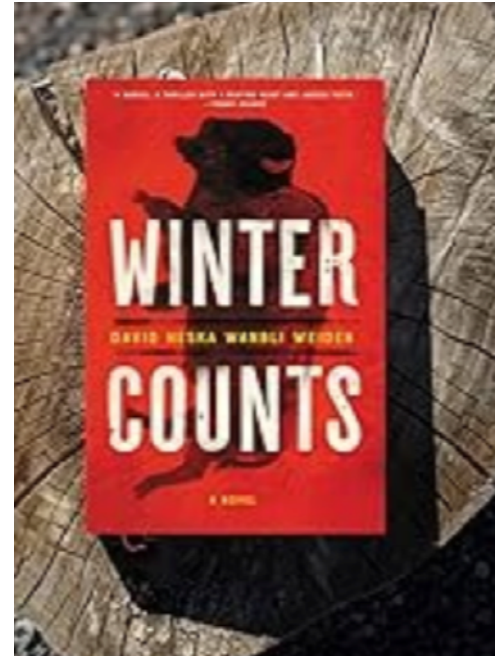
We will be discussing *Winter Counts* by David Heska Wanbli Weiden

A groundbreaking thriller about a vigilante on a Native American reservation who embarks on a dangerous mission to track down the source of a heroin influx. Virgil Wounded Horse is the local enforcer on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. When justice is denied by the American legal system or the tribal council, Virgil is hired to deliver his own punishment, the kind that's hard to forget. But when heroin makes its way into the reservation and finds Virgil's nephew, his vigilantism suddenly becomes personal.

He enlists the help of his ex-girlfriend and sets out to learn where the drugs are coming from, and how to make them stop. As Virgil starts to link the pieces together, he must face his own demons and reclaim his Native identity. He realizes that being a Native American in the twenty-first century comes at an incredible cost. *Winter Counts* is a tour-de-force of crime fiction, a bracingly honest look at a long-ignored part of American life, and a twisting, turning story that's as deeply rendered as it is thrilling.

Find our event page by searching "Sierra Club Wisconsin Book Club" on Facebook, or on the Sierra Club Wisconsin website. Sign up to receive the Google Meet Invite or phone number to call in. Please join us for as many book club reads as you would like, and feel free to drop in even if you haven't finished the book or are only able to attend one discussion during the year. Books are selected from a list of recommendations from book club attendees.

Contact Cassie at cassie.steiner@sierraclub.org with questions.



White River Bike Trail Outing Sunday, Nov. 17 ~ 1PM

By Outings Co-Leader Al Sommer



Please bring your bicycle and join me on a 17-mile ride, partially on the White River Bike Trail.

We will meet at the small parking lot on Spring Valley Road at 1PM. As you go west through Burlington on Rte 36 and you are exiting the town you will see Morman Road going north, you will go past Burlington Garden Center, you will see the new modern looking Burlington Clinic to the west and exit Rte 36 on Spring Valley road going south. As soon as you pass over the 83/36/11 bypass you will see the parking lot on the west of the road.

We will go west on the trail through beautiful downtown Lyons, then through beautiful downtown Springfield and soon after that we will turn north on a not too busy road and then east on a less busy road til we get close to Lyons again and will finish the ride on the trail at the parking lot. Bikers who do not want to ride on the road are welcome to do an out and back ride entirely on the trail. For those riders the trip will be approximately two miles shorter. We will be riding at a relaxed pace and there will be opportunity for discussion of what we see.

Plan on signing the Sierra Club waiver form while in the parking lot.

Please let Al Sommer know if you plan to attend: 262-716-6955 or sommerallan4@gmail.com

Don't miss out! Get on our e-news list!

SEGG e-news are emails with notices about club events and outings in between receiving the regular newsletter.

Sign up on the SEGG website or email Laura Schulz at schulztwin2@gmail.com.

HOMES are now available in Wisconsin!

That is, the “Home Efficiency Rebates” program of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) which provides rebates for single and multi-family buildings to make them more energy efficient. This program is for home efficiency improvements, such as insulation and heating/cooling improvements.

Focus on Energy has been selected for implementing the IRA’s programs in Wisconsin and detailed information is available on their website: focusonenergy.com/ira-homes

A good place to start is to complete a form on the Focus on Energy IRA page that allows homeowners to enter data related to family size and income to see if they qualify for the program. A basic summary with qualifying information is below.

Modeled Energy Savings	Income Level	Single Family	Multifamily*
20% - 34%	Household with incomes less than 80% AMI	100% of project cost, up to \$5,000	100% of project costs, up to \$5,000 per unit
	Household with incomes between 80% AMI and 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$2,000	50% of project costs, up to \$2,000 per unit, \$200,000 building max
	Household with incomes greater than 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$1,500	50% of project costs, up to \$1,500 per unit, \$200,000 building max
35% or greater	Household with incomes less than 80% AMI	100% of project cost, up to \$10,000	100% of project costs, up to \$10,000 per unit
	Household with incomes between 80% AMI and 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$4,000	50% of project costs, up to \$4,000 per unit, \$400,000 building max
	Household with incomes greater than 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$3,000	50% of project costs, up to \$3,000 per unit, \$400,000 building max

For those who qualify, getting a home energy assessment done is a required step in the overall process in this program. The assessment usually costs about \$500 and tax credits are available to cover this cost for those who qualify.

An IRA registered contractor must perform the assessment. A list of contractors and a search tool by zip code is available on the website. The Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate Program (HEAR) focuses on electrical upgrades and electric appliances. It is not yet active here in Wisconsin but should be available very soon.

Guidance is available on Focus on Energy’s website for both the HOMES and the HEAR programs but since it can still be a bit confusing, SEGG is talking to some experts who we hope will offer a presentation for members with tips and insights to take some of the confusion out of the process.

Please watch our newsletter and your email for updates on when we can schedule this meeting and let us know if you have questions or special requests related to making our homes and lives more energy efficient that you would like to see included.

Let’s help “POWER WISCONSIN FORWARD!”

We Energies plans to increase our rates by 6.9% in 2025 and 4.8% in 2026. These rates are planned despite these facts:

- **We Energies is already the most profitable utility in Wisconsin and has the 5th highest utility profit rates in the country.**
- Rate increases over the last decade have been over double the rates of inflation. In fact, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) estimates the average monthly bill for We Energies residential customers jumped from \$57.59 to \$127.29, equal to a 120% increase since 2005. If increases had been consistent with inflation, bills would be under \$95 per month.
- Racial disparities related to energy burden (percentage of income required to pay energy bills) for Milwaukeeans is among the highest in the nation.
 - We Energies customers are still paying for the Oak Creek coal plant, the most expensive construction project in the history of the state.
 - We Energies shareholders have received increasing dividends for over ten years.
 - We Energies six top executives were paid a combined \$31.2 Million in 2023.
- We Energies is proposing to spend \$2.1 Billion on new natural gas facilities, for which they will then request additional increases in 2027.

As a “regulated monopoly,” We Energies is required to get approval from the Public Service Commission (PSC) before they can raise our energy rates. Residents have the opportunity to express our concerns to the PSC, which is responsible for regulating utilities in Wisconsin and ensuring that they provide safe, reliable, and affordable services, before they make a decision about the requested rate increases. **Written comments can also be submitted from now until October 7, 2024** at: <https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERF/comment/filecomment.aspx?util=5&case=UR&num=111>

There will be future opportunities to express our concern about the planned gas plant expansion. Watch for updates and info on Sierra Club Wisconsin’s website: <https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/leave-gas-in-the-past> and at Power Wisconsin Forward: <https://powerwisconsinforward.com/#Whatsatstakeforwisconsin>



Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network

By Laura Buska: Root-Pike WIN Communications Coordinator
Protecting Water Quality and Native Habitat through Restoration



Protecting Lake Michigan comes in many forms. From the iconic lakeshore trash clean up to the less connected but just as impactful native planting, to the large-scale restoration project, all have a place in the protection of local water quality. Root-Pike

Watershed Initiative Network is a Kenosha-based 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to projects and programs that restore, protect, and sustain the watersheds of the Root-Pike basin within southeastern Wisconsin. This summer, their team have been busy progressing projects and hosting events that connect the community with water-quality and habitat improving restoration work. Read below and visit www.rootpikewin.org to learn more about their projects and programs.

Campbell Woods in Mount Pleasant: Two years ago, Root-Pike WIN was in panic mode. Campbell Woods, a 20- acre old growth forest in Mount Pleasant was up for grabs. This area of the Pike River watershed, deemed “ecologically significant”, had an uncertain future. Root-Pike WIN had just become a land trust but lacked the financial means to make the acquisition happen. Now, with the help of many community partners and the Department of Natural Resources, the final acquisition of a seven-acre parcel is complete. On August 30th, Root- Pike WIN closed on the land purchase and is now the property owner of Campbell Woods. This area has a storied and tumultuous history. Now, the final and most gratifying chapter has been written. The full 20-acre parcel of old growth forest and wetland will now remain protected into perpetuity. The space will serve as inspiration to other landowners to shield valuable natural areas from development. A passive trail system is planned and will be open to the public once the restoration is complete. This seven-acre acquisition would not have been possible without the generous donations from the neighboring community and the Department of Natural Resources. Additionally, the Village of Mount Pleasant and Racine County provided significant support to acquire the first 13 acres. Learn more about the history of Campbell Woods: www.tinyurl.com/campbellwoods



Racine Marina Pollinator Patch

Pollinator Patches: Root-Pike WIN’s Pollinator Patch Program is a turf to native prairie conversion program at underserved schools and public spaces. The program creates living classrooms to connect K-12 students with WI native heritage, while improving stormwater infiltration, and increasing native habitat for native pollinators, specifically the federally endangered Rusty Patched Bumble Bee. This year so far, over 350 students and volunteers transformed 5,500 square feet of turf to native prairie at Kenosha Bradford High School, and Racine’s Harbor Park, Olympia Brown Elementary School and Goodland Montessori School. Additional patches are being planned at the Rex Plex in Pleasant Prairie, Kirkorian Park in Sturtevant, and the Randall Town Hall in Randall, Wisconsin.

Shagbark Recreational Area in Kenosha: Pike Creek is rated as "impaired" by the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Agency for poor water quality. This condition is mainly because of excessive stormwater - and the pollutants it picks up as it flows over roof tops, lawns, sidewalks, and roads. The solution: native flowers, grasses and

trees, or "the original green infrastructure". To begin implementing these solutions, Root-Pike WIN and the City of Kenosha are converting the Shagbark Recreational Area’s 35 acres of turf grass to wetland and native prairie at the headwaters of the Pike River. The groundbreaking event in June invited the community to get involved in the project by planting a “Pollinator Patch”. Over 100 locals attended including Kenosha Mayor Bogdala, Senator Kerkman, multiple Kenosha Alders, and volunteers from Bradford and the community. Attendees planted 112 native plants and then got to take a free plant home. In three years, these plants will be prevalent through the Shagbark area, infiltrating and cleaning stormwater while providing habitat for native pollinators. This project is being funded by the Fund for Lake Michigan, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Microsoft. Learn more at www.tinyurl.com/shagbarkwi



Shagbark Groundbreaking

Community Events

RiverBend Chainsaw and Art Festival

Sunday, October 6th, 9am-2pm 3600 N. Green Bay Road, Racine, Wisconsin 53404

Join in the fun as you watch chainsaw artists at work – pick your favorites as all carvings go to auction at 3pm! There will also be nature focused handmade works of art for sale, nature trivia trails to walk, a silent auction, and canoe/kayak rentals. From 10am-2pm Kid's Tree climbing will be presented by Wisconsin Arborist Association

Visit riverbendr Racine.org for more information.



Eco-Justice Center Upcoming Programs

7133 Michna Rd, Racine

Needle felting classes:

October 5 – Mushrooms – 9:30am-12:00pm

November 9 – Pumpkins – 9:30am-12:00pm

December 14 – Elephants – 9:30am-12:00pm

New Moon Hike: November 1 - 6:30-8:00pm

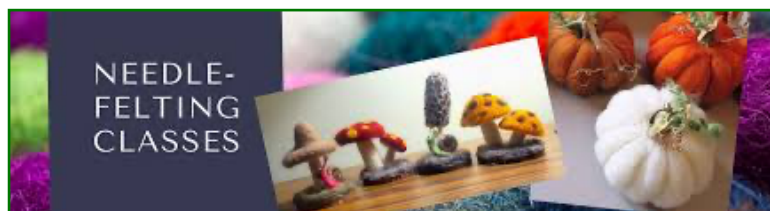
Kombucha Brewing 101: December 7 – 10:00-11:00am

Winter Solstice Celebration: December 21 – 6:30-8:00pm

Eco-J Gift Shop Open

Buy local, handmade, and fair trade! Local Bub's honey, fair trade alpaca hats & scarves, felted animals, unique ornaments, homemade jellies, syrup, and more. Dates: Nov. 23, 24, 29, 30 Dec. 1, 8, 14

Please visit our website at ecojusticecenter.org to register for classes or for more information.



It's Cranberry Time!

Orders are being taken now until October 29 for early November delivery or pick up.

Our fresh berries come fresh from a family-operated Wisconsin grower and many have said that they are the best available.

The cost is **\$4.25** per one-pound bag.

These berries are large, nutritious and delicious. Cranberries are a superfood rich in antioxidants. Stock up now for your holiday and healthy eating needs.

Cranberries can be stored in the refrigerator for weeks or in the freezer for up to a year.

Place your order with
Jeff Sytsma at
jeff12759@aol.com or
262 637-6945



WISCONSIN CRANBERRIES



2025 Sierra Club calendars will be available for purchase with November delivery or pick up expected.

Wall calendars have 12 monthly photographs from award-winning nature photographers and cost \$18.95.

Engagement calendars are a weekly formatted desktop appointment calendar with 52 photographs for \$19.95.

Contact Jeff Sytsma at Jeff12759@aol.com or 262 637-6945 to place your order.

Save a Tree & See in Color!

Email schulztwin2@gmail.com to request a full-color, digital newsletter emailed instead of a paper copy.



Your tax-deductible donation helps us continue to "Explore, Enjoy and Protect" SE Wisconsin.

Checks can be made out to *Sierra Club SEGG* to be used towards any purpose, or to *Sierra Club Foundation* to be used strictly for educational programs and activities. Mail donations to: Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave, Racine, WI 53405



SEGG encourages you to WRITE to your legislators on the issues you care about. Find your representative at legis.wisconsin.gov

Senator Stephen L. Nass
Senate District 11 (R - Whitewater)
State Capitol Room 10 South
P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882
(608) 266-2635
Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov

Senator Van H. Wanggaard
Majority Caucus Chair
Senate District 21 (R - Racine)
State Capitol Room 319 South
P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882
(608) 266-1832
Sen.Wanggaard@legis.wisconsin.gov

Senator Robert W. Wirch
Senate District 22 (D - Somers)
State Capitol Room 127 South
P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882
(608) 267-8979
Sen.Wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Ellen Schutt
Assembly District 31 (R - Clinton)
State Capitol Room 316 North
PO Box 8954, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 237-9131
Rep.Schutt@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Tyler August
Majority Leader
Assembly District 32 (R - Lake Geneva)
State Capitol Room 119 West
PO Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-1190
Rep.August@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Nik Rettinger
Assembly District 83 (R - Mukwonago)
State Capitol Room 8 West
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 237-9183
Rep.Rettinger@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Amanda M. Nedweski
Assembly District 61 (R - Pleasant Prairie)
State Capitol Room 7 West
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 237-9161
Rep.Nedweski@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Robert Wittke
Assembly District 62 (R - Racine)
State Capitol Room 18 West
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 237-9162
Rep.Wittke@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Robin Vos—*Speaker*
Assembly District 63 (R-Rochester)
State Capitol Room 211 West
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-9171
Rep.Vos@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Tip McGuire
Assembly District 64 (D - Kenosha)
State Capitol Room 15 West
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-5504
Rep.McGuire@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Tod Ohnstad
Assembly District 65 (D - Kenosha)
State Capitol Room 128 North
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-0455
Rep.Ohnstad@legis.wisconsin.gov

Representative Greta Neubauer
Minority Leader
Assembly District 66 (D - Racine)
State Capitol Room 6 North
PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-0634
Rep.Neubauer@legis.wisconsin.gov

2024 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership

Executive Committee

Laura Schulz (*Co-Chair/Programs*).....schulztwin2@gmail.com
Gloria Randall-Hewitt (*Co-Chair*).....evegardener@gmail.com
Kelsey Saari (*Secretary*).....saari.kelsey@gmail.com
Alex Weyenberg (*Conservation Chair*) alex.weyenberg@gmail.com
Allan Sommer (*Outings Chair*).....sommerallan4@gmail.com

Keith Kohlmann.....rowdyjunction@gmail.com
Tom Rutkowskinatom@wi.rr.com

Other Group Leaders

Jeff Sytsma (*Treasurer*).....jeff12759@aol.com
Mary Schroeder (*Hospitality*)..ilovedogsandcats2@yahoo.com
Jessica True (*Outings*).....jessicattrue@yahoo.com

The newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group is published quarterly by Group members. Please send articles, event submissions, photographs, corrections and/or comments to: Laura Schulz - schulztwin2@gmail.com

Southeast Gateway Group
of the Sierra Club
3508 Washington Ave
Racine, WI 53405-2934



Follow Us!

facebook.com/sierraclubsoutheastgatewaygroup

Scan Code to
View Every
Sierran
in Full-Color on
our website.



sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway



TUES NOV 5



What's Inside:

WI Election Information / HOME Rebates / Cranberry Time!
Root Pike WIN: Protecting Water Quality / WE Energies' Rate Hikes
Book Club - *Winter Counts* / White River Bike Outing
Scuppernong Springs Hike / 2025 Sierra Club Calendars
Community Events...and much more!



Photo taken at the press event held in Chapla Park in Racine on Aug. 8, 2024