



SIERRA CLUB
JOHN MUIR CHAPTER

NEWS RELEASE

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Community Members remind us the World Water Day Starts at Home

You don't have to go far to find people suffering from polluted water

MILWAUKEE—Today, on World Water Day, community members gathered to showcase the issues we have right here in the Milwaukee area. Speakers, including Alderman Jim Bohl and Dr. Jeanne Hewitt highlighted local water issues as well as solutions that ensure everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water. This event was one of four other events around the state in Bayfield, Milwaukee, Madison, and La Crosse.

The Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter released [Water Quality and Health Impacts in Wisconsin](#), a 'blue' paper on some of the drinking water issues we face in Wisconsin and policy recommendations to correct them.

"I am proud to be joining officials with the Sierra Club, an esteemed organization with an outstanding history of important work, to highlight key water issues in Milwaukee, across our state, and across the globe on World Water Day," **said Alderman Bohl, chair of the city's Water Quality Task Force**. "Our work to preserve the purity of our fresh water and our environment is critical and begins right here at home."

The [United Nations \(UN\) established World Water Day in 1992](#) in order to remind the world about the importance of protecting our freshwater resources. The day was tied to the UN's goal of making sure everyone has access to safe water by 2030. In Wisconsin, there are real threats to ensuring everyone has access to safe drinking water, including lead pipes, nitrate pollution, bacteria, parasites like cryptosporidium, and pharmaceuticals.

"Water is the great connector and equalizer — biologically, socially, economically, and culturally. We need to address and codify safe drinking water as a basic human right — not to be commoditized and subjected to market-based democracy and privatization," **said Professor Ehlinger of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Nursing School**. He continued, "We can't allow ourselves to abrogate the responsibility for the stewardship of our life-blood because of dysfunctional governance."

There are several bills that have been introduced in the legislature that could impact drinking water. Some, like the "Water Sustainability Act" and the 'Leading on Lead' bill authored by Senator Robert Cowles and Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt look to identify solutions to some of the concerns. Unfortunately, others like Senator Fitzgerald's latest high-capacity well bill could perpetuate existing

problems and cause future drinking water problems. More information about these and other bills are available in the blue paper.

"Wisconsin and the City of Milwaukee must do more protect residents from lead in drinking water. Lead exposure doesn't discriminate. Wherever there's lead in contact with water, there is risk, and the risks are frightening," **said George Olufosoye, southeast organizer with the League of Conservation Voters.** He continued, "In order to solve this problem state investment need to continue to aid in replacing outdated water infrastructure & communities need to be given the flexibility to raise funds to help replace lead laterals."

"In Milwaukee, we're fortunate to have a forward-thinking City and Milwaukee metropolitan sewerage district (MMSD) investing in green infrastructure to manage storm water where it falls, keeping pollutants from our waterways, "**said Pam Ritger, Staff Attorney with Clean Wisconsin.** "In 29 neighborhoods throughout the 30th Street Corridor area and north side of Milwaukee, Clean Wisconsin with project sponsor MMSD, partner Marek Landscaping and several engaged neighborhood associations have helped install 232 rain barrels and 25 rain gardens that capture 17,741 gallons of stormwater per storm and 246,300 gallons of stormwater per year, while providing environmental, social and economic benefits to communities," she concluded.

The Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter will release three additional blue papers in the next two months related to specific issues like lead pipes and water quantity issues in Wisconsin.

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Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters working to promote clean energy and protect water resources in Wisconsin.