



**SIERRA CLUB**  
JOHN MUIR CHAPTER

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Community Members remind us the World Water Day Starts at Home** *Water quality in the Coulee Region affects people and ecosystems*

LA CROSSE—Residents gathering at Myrick Park Center today are not taking clean drinking water for granted. Speakers, including scientists, residents, and Representative Jill Billings highlighted pressing water quality issues. The Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter released [Water Quality and Health Impacts in Wisconsin](#), a white paper on some of the drinking water issues we face in Wisconsin and policy recommendations. This event was one of 4 events around the state today.

"Wisconsin's water resources are vast, but also very vulnerable. Right here in the Coulee Region, people are suffering from potential water pollution from nitrates, bacteria, and agricultural chemicals such as glyphosate," said local farmer and educator Ana Skemp, who spoke at the event. She continued, "I would encourage everyone to research local drinking water quality in their wells or in municipal supplies and to demand rigorous regular testing."

Dr. Kris Rolfhus, UWL Professor of Chemistry & Biochemistry, added, "The quality of life that we enjoy must include an assessment of our impacts on the environment. It is important for us, both individually and collectively, to be able to quantify the footprint and consequences of our activities on water resources."

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

"Our shared need for clean water makes water conservation unique in its ability to unite people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs," stated Dr. Colin Belby, UWL Associate Professor of Geography & Earth Science. "Water abundance and water quality will grow in importance as climate change continues to modify the hydrologic cycle. Without careful planning, human activities can have wide-ranging impacts on our water resources."

Several bills have been introduced in the legislature that could impact drinking water. Some, like the "Water Sustainability Act", authored by Senator Mark Miller and Representative Cory Mason and the 'Leading on Lead' bill authored by Senator Robert Cowles and Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt look to identify solutions to some of the concerns. More information about these and other bills are available in the white paper.

Representative Billings concluded, "We need strong public policy passed to ensure safe drinking water now and for generations to come. We often take our access to clean, safe, and easily accessible water for granted, which is why highlighting this undervalued resource is vital on World Water Day."

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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.*