



It's Our Nature

Newsletter of the Fox Valley Sierra Group of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Sierra Club Vol. 21 Issue 1

Fox Valley Sierra
Group

PROGRAMS

Currently we are not holding in person meetings but are holding Zoom Meetings.

Check for an email, our website or our Facebook page for links to join a meeting.

Until further notice the Zoom Meetings will be held on the following dates. Content has not been established yet.

April 8, 2021 - 7:00pm
May 13, 2021 - 7:00pm
June 10, 2021 - 7:00pm

July No meeting

August 12 - 6:00
possible picnic

OUTINGS

Because of Covid we are not leading group outings. Check our website or Facebook page for when we will hold them again.

www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/foxvalley

www.facebook.com/foxvalleysierra

From the Chair

March 2021, By Alan Lawrence

A year ago, I wrote my column for the newsletter that ultimately, we cancelled at the last minute, cancelled because the new pandemic had cancelled all our meetings, outings and events. We are still doing things only virtually, but at least we have started having online meetings and are publishing a newsletter. Looking back on that unpublished column I have decided to include my first paragraph, written as our world was falling apart.

I am writing my column during a week that I hope can be looked back to as a short period that we got past. I am referring to the new coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, spreading like wildfire, claiming evermore victims, panicking the world, and causing economic hardships. I am referring to a sudden bad turn in the stock market, where each day I watch, aghast, as my retirement investment shrinks. Russia and OPEC engage in a price war on petroleum, driving the price of oil lower than production costs for oil producers in most of the world. And this is before I begin to talk about our president and the elections. And this before all the problems we already had with climate change and wars and refugees.

We have not gotten through the pandemic yet, but many people are acting like they believe we are beginning our recovery. At least vaccines have been developed and are rapidly being administered. I think there is reason to hope, though we are not yet safe.

I'm surprised, but relieved, that the crashing stock market has recovered as it has. Gasoline prices have remained awfully low, which is probably a relief to most of us as we've endured a "bad year". But it was interesting, early in our pandemic during the "shutdown", that air quality noticeably improved since there was less driving.

We now have a new president, and it is my opinion that the environment will be better with him in charge. But we also know that presidents need people supporting them. We will have to help him, while holding him accountable.

A year ago, when the wrath of the new pandemic was still new, and it was unknown how badly it could go, I thought about how species go extinct. That made me think about the major extinction event we appear to be in. Scientists are aware of five mass extinction events in the past, so it really bothers me that a sixth is happening right now. The current rate of extinction of species is estimated at 100 to 1,000 times higher than natural background rates. Scientists have named our current sixth mass extinction as the Holocene extinction, or the Anthropocene extinction (a result of human activity).

It is doubtful that this coronavirus will kill off humanity, but we still have everything else that we had assumed might play a bad part. In recent years climate change has been among our greatest concerns, though we still have pollution and overpopulation as issues.

Continues on page 2...

....From the chair on page 1

A recent article by Erin Brockovich (Anyone remember her? Do you think she knows what she is talking about?) talks about a new book "Countdown", by Shanna Swan. The marketing reviews for the book say, "*In the tradition of Silent Spring and The Sixth Extinction, an urgent, meticulously researched, and groundbreaking book about the ways in which chemicals in the modern environment are changing—and endangering—human sexuality and fertility on the grandest scale.*"

Shanna Swan writes about PFAS, a "forever chemical" which is found in many things and is in Wisconsin's water. Our Republican legislators have repeatedly blocked enforcement of regulations that would help protect us from these chemicals. It is apparently just about everywhere in the world now and it is affecting humans. Men and women today are only half as fertile as their grandparents were. Let that sink in.

While this may be sort-of good news with our overpopulation problem, remember that this is a "forever chemical" and won't affect only one generation. It reminded me of the problem in the 1970's with DDT and eagles, affecting their ability to reproduce. Earth Day sprang up and regulations followed, and thankfully we still have eagles.

The pandemic isolated us. But families rediscovered the outdoors. Parks around the country reported record numbers of visitors as people looked for ways to safely get out of their homes for some fun. Thankfully, we have these green spaces. Hopefully, we will continue protecting even more places.

But the pandemic also brought out the bad side in some of us. A recent Post-Crescent article says that bird shootings doubled during the pandemic. The head of an animal rescue group said, "When people get frustrated, they get angry, and they take it out on animals." People are shooting hawks, eagles, and other birds they see along roads, right from their cars.

We saw this mean-spirited behavior with a wolf hunt (slaughter) in February. Against all scientific evidence a hunt was authorized. But it was conducted as a massacre of hate against the animals. Wisconsin lost more than 20% of its wolves in less than three days. The hunt was conducted day and night, with packs of dogs, snowmobiles, and GPS technology. This unprecedented hunt took place during the breeding season, killing pregnant females and disrupting family packs at a time critical to pup survival. The wolves stood no chance.

Sierra Club includes many hunters among its members. But clearly this wolf hunt was not the type of hunt we should condone. What should we do to influence future wolf hunts? I viewed this not as a

hunt, but as a lynching of an animal species.

Wolves are actually an important animal. Conservationist Aldo Leopold wrote, "Just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer." It has been fascinatingly documented how well wolves help protect the environment, including trees, shorelines, and rivers. Apex predators create stability amongst the species they prey on and maintain the health of plants and animals right down the trophic ladder. Wolves earn their keep.

It is no surprise that in the Ojibwe tribe creation story, wolves are often described as family members to the tribe. Wolves were referred to as a brother or sister along with a perception that if whatever happens to the wolves, it will happen to one of the Ojibwe tribe. They also traveled the world together and spoke the same language. Our society must show more respect to this animal.

Earth Day, celebrated April 22, and generally for a week or month, was started in 1970 as the idea of Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson. This celebration came on the heels of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" book of 1962. The country knew the world was in trouble and 20 million Americans participated in the first event. That was 10% of our population! Today it is a worldwide environmental movement involving billions of people.

Earth Day is our opportunity to celebrate the fact that humans are not alone and that we need all other species of animal and plant for our own survival. It is our opportunity to remind ourselves of our responsibility to support the environment and the species upon which our survival depends.

Thanks for reading my comments. As leader of our group, I welcome your feedback. Alan Lawrence, 920-730-9515 or alan_lawrence99@yahoo.com

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**Next Newsletter Deadline
for submitting materials
August 10th
for September thru December Issue.**

Wisconsin's State Natural Areas: Gems of Native Landscapes

By Diane Perschbacher

Looking for a unique little gem to explore within our state? Check out one of Wisconsin's State Natural Areas (SNA). These areas have seen little human intervention or have recovered from initial disturbances and now form pockets of pristine natural landscapes to study and enjoy. Besides preserving our natural communities, SNAs also contain significant geological formations, archeological sites and rare plants and animals.

The State Natural Areas program was created in 1951 at the urging of early Wisconsin conservationists. The state-sponsored program was the first of its kind in the United States. Today the program encompasses 406,000 acres within 688 areas and is managed by the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation (within the Wisconsin DNR). The land itself can stand alone, be part of another state area such as a state park, or be owned by one of the program's partners. Many of these areas are open for hiking, canoeing, fishing and hunting, though most lack amenities such as maintained trails and bathroom facilities. They are also used for scientific study, education and preservation of genetic and biological diversity.

Management practices vary based on the specific site. Some areas mature with little human intervention, while others require hands on activities such as invasive removal and controlled burns to maintain their natural state. Volunteers assist DNR staff with these activities, along with others such as monitoring rare species and collecting seed.

To learn more about SNAs or search for one near you, visit <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Lands/naturalareas/index.asp>

New Name for our State Chapter

Our State Chapter has long been named after John Muir, founder of Sierra Club, an honor granted to Wisconsin because his boyhood home was in Wisconsin. However, this was confusing for most of the Club since all other chapters were named for states or geographic features. None for people.

Our state board felt we needed a name change, and 80% of those who responded to the ballot in our chapter newsletter agreed. We are now the "Wisconsin Chapter".

There are six groups within the chapter, including our seven-county Fox Valley Group. We have 2100 members in our group and 20,400 across the Wisconsin Chapter.



Oshkosh-Larsen Trail Prairies run on both sides of the Wiouwash State Trail in Winnebago County. The Wiouwash allows many visitors to view these wet mesic prairies with easy access.



Spruce Lake Bog features an undisturbed shallow seepage bog lake, situated in one of the many kettle holes characteristic of the interlobate glacial deposits scattered throughout the area. A trail and boardwalk lead to the lake.

Want to be a part of the youth movement to win the Green New Deal? Sunrise Appleton is a local way to get involved with a national movement for change. Our goal is to bring climate justice, education, and principles to the Fox Valley. Sunrise Appleton is always recruiting!



More information can be found at-

www.facebook.com/sunriseappleton

www.sunrisemovement.org

Why Gerrymandering is the Most Important Issue Even as other Issues have Great Importance?

By Penny Bernard Schaber, Former State Representative Assembly District 57 (2009-2014)

What is the number ONE issue for us as environmentalists?

**Is it Clean Air? Is it Clean Water? Is it Biodiversity?
Nope . . . it is . . . Fair Maps and a ban on gerrymandering!!**

To me, gerrymandering has become the number one, most pressing issue of all because if we do not change how the legislative districts are drawn, we will not be able to change anything else as the gridlock caused by gerrymandering will continue and nothing of importance will be done in the State Legislature or in Congress.

Gerrymandering history in US and WI:

Because of the power that goes with it Gerrymandering has been with us for many years.

The Governor of Massachusetts, Eldridge Gerry, was in charge of his state's 1812 redistricting process. One of the districts had boundaries that looked like a salamander; hence the term and the act of "gerrymandering" have been with us since that time.

Redistricting, or the redrawing of boundaries for local, state and federal legislative boundaries, is required in our US constitution. The redrawing is done in the year following the 10 year census using the newly collected census data to determine the number of congressional districts, the funding of many programs and the boundaries of districts. For example we are completing the collection and analysis of census data from 2020 and will do redistricting in 2021.

Wisconsin had district lines that were generally neutral in terms of partisan make up because for the 30 to 40 years before 2010 Wisconsin had split government. Neither party had full control of the boundary drawing process, so the final drawing process was done through the court system with the legislature and the Governor having limited reviewing and amending opportunities. During these years with split government; the maps drawn by the Courts received approval from the legislature, were signed by the Governor and became the new districts for the next 10 years.

How did Wisconsin get so gerrymandered now?

In 2010 the Wisconsin legislature, Senate and Assembly, and the Governor's office were all held by a Republican majority. At that time there was the formation of the Tea Party and a lot of resentment of Government which resulted in the Republican Majority which allowed the drastic 2011 redrawing of the legislative maps in Wisconsin giving the Republicans a built in majority for 10 years.

In other states, this type of partisan redistricting was done by Democrat majorities. Gerrymandering has not been an only ONE party problem.

Gerrymandering has resulted in entrenched one party majority rule in many states. It has resulted in primary elections becoming the battle ground election between moderate and extreme candidates. Basically, gerrymandering has resulted in nothing getting done at the federal level for a number of years and has resulted in drastic changes in Wisconsin between 2010 and now.

Stewardship funding has been cut, prove it first protections against mining have been repealed, regulating and responding to PFAs has not happened and control of runoff from CAFO's continues to be a problem in our area as well as all around Wisconsin.

What to do about it?

GET ACTIVE! . . . CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS!

Here is a link to the Wisconsin State Legislature. You can click on the "Who are my Legislators" link, or look up your legislators by name or district number on this website: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>, This website also has great information about legislative committees and the bills that have been introduced. It is a great resource to use for many things.

The Fair Maps Project Coalition efforts have resulted in many referendums and resolutions being passed throughout Wisconsin. You can find information about this group at: <https://www.fairelectionsproject.org/fair-maps-wi/>

55 counties and 5 municipalities have passed resolutions supporting Fair Maps. The citizens of 28 of those counties and citizens of 20 other municipalities have passed referenda. A resolution is a statement passed by the County or Municipal Board/Council while a referendum is a non-binding position statement passed by citizens. Both are important tools for letting legislators know about the level of support for Fair Maps in the Districts they represent.

Here is a link to the Ban Gerrymandering toolkit from the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. It includes a list of the counties and municipalities and lots of great information about getting active!

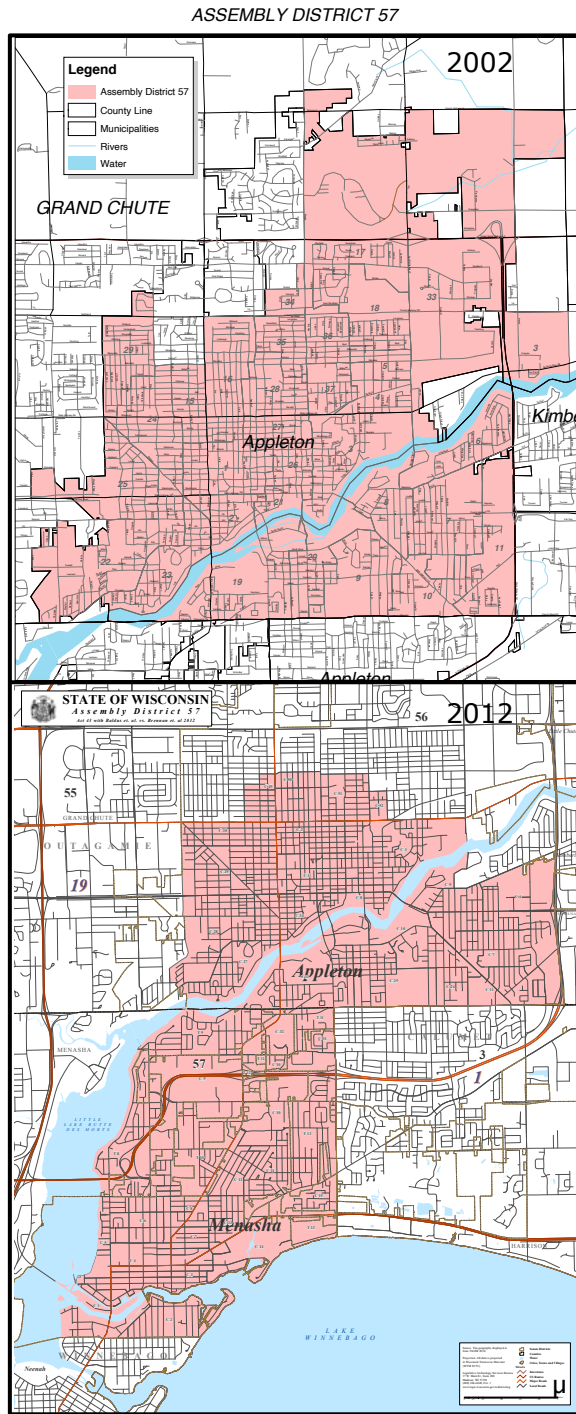
<https://www.wisdc.org/reforms/118-redistricting/6392-toolkit-for-banning-gerrymandering-in-wisconsin#resolutions>

The CD8 Fair Maps Committee is active in our area. We have made sure that Brown and Door Counties passed referenda,

that Shawano County passed a resolution in 2020 and Appleton had a Fair Maps referendum on the April 6th ballot.

To get active with the CD8 Fair Maps Committee or to get END GERRYMANDERING yard signs contact me at pennybernardschaber@athenet.net.

It is essential that we work to END GERRYMANDERING in this legislative session so when the actual process of drawing the maps is started, it will be completed in a non-partisan way.



An example of gerrymandering. The 2002 map contained most of Appleton. The 2012 map was changed to the central part of the city of Appleton and Menasha allowing for a less diverse population.

Wisconsin Wolf Hunt

By L Menefee

The recently held wolf hunt in Wisconsin was rushed through just weeks after removal of federal protections in the last days of the Trump administration. Wisconsin is the only state legally requiring an annual wolf hunt, and the only state to allow wolf hunting with dogs.

Two of the most troubling aspects of the wolf hunt during breeding season are a lack of transparency on the establishment of quota, and a lack of public input on the WDNR's "Emergency Rules." These rules violated Acts 169 which established a mandated, annual hunt, and Act 20, which modified Act 169. Neither Act allows for night hunting or the use of meat as bait for hunting wolves, but WDNR justified these tactics because "the Act [169] does not prohibit them." Act 169 specifically outlaws "animal parts and byproducts other than liquid scent."

216 wolves were killed over 60 hours, exceeding the state designated quota after allocating 81 wolves to the First Nations bordering the ceded territories. The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission called the rushed hunt during breeding, "disrespectful" and declined to "harvest" their allotted quota. Over 87% of the wolves were captured with the use of hounds.

The regulations state six hounds may be used at any one time in pursuit of a single animal. However, groups of hounders, licensed and unlicensed, in a dozen or more trucks and snowmobiles, congregated on public lands to facilitate the frequent replacement of tired hounds with fresh. "The Act" also does not prohibit the use of snowmobiles to run down wolves, but dog boxes on snowmobiles allowed hunters, whether licensed or not, to run a fresh dog off road, closer to the wolf. State regulations do prohibit "contact" between hunting hounds and prey, but in practice this law is unenforceable and unenforced, especially when kill is "self reported" and the carcass is not inspected. Radio monitoring of one hunt described a "vicious battle" between a wolf and attacking hounds. (The wolf lost.)

Until Act 169 is repealed, there will be more of the same, including this November, when WDNR will set another quota and likely reissue the "Emergency Rules," because "the Act does not prohibit them."

Plastic-Wrapped Pandemic

By Annette Cornell

In a year that was marred by illness and heartache, we have been pretty limited to our own bubbles. The world has been facing a pandemic, after all, which physically ailed a large portion of the human population; it was only natural to go into survival-esque thinking. How are we going to keep ourselves from becoming sick? And how do we protect our neighbors, friends and families?

For many, having to ask these questions meant filing the environment away; there were more immediate, personal matters to attend to, and we could address environmental issues later. The stay-at-home orders which defined the early part of the pandemic had a profound effect on the environment, though: global carbon emissions dropped significantly as vehicles were kept from the roads, air travel was ceased, and production was slowed.

But this was while our globalized gears were coming to a halt. Now with vaccines being distributed, the economy making a recovery, and the population returning to semi-normal living, carbon emissions are again on the rise. And so is human-generated waste.

Disposability has long been a tradition for consumer goods; indeed, since the '50s and '60s, the stream of single-use plastics has boomed exponentially. Consumerism is fed by the principle of continuous profit, so it only makes sense that manufacturers rely on products that can be easily bought, used and tossed (just to be bought all over again). For the environment, however, disposable goods have serious negative implications.

Especially in terms of disposal, single-use materials like plastic and styrofoam are frustratingly wicked because they are often not recyclable. After leaving the curbside bin, the disposables usually take one of three avenues: they go to the landfill, are fed to incinerators, or fall into continuous circulation. At the landfill, goods decompose and release methane and carbon dioxide into the air, which are greenhouse gases that further add to the current climate crisis by trapping more heat in the atmosphere. Incineration has a similar effect by releasing toxins into the air, but instead of biodegrading like in a landfill, goods are set aflame (beware the rosy 'waste-to-energy' procedure which is gaining popularity).

The last avenue which our disposable products can take is the most visible and readily heartbreaking. Continuous circulation of waste -- particularly plastics -- has become a seemingly insurmountable issue. There is no place on Earth which has been left untarnished by plastics, with microplastics (tiny fragments of plastic) having been found both at the top of Mount Everest and in the depths of the Mariana Trench. The United States' buy-waste-repeat model becomes evermore apparent with the literal garbage mountains and "plastic beaches" which are found in

developing countries where we dump our waste. Plastics have been prevalent for long enough that microplastics have been found in fish, tea bags, and even human placentas.

The pandemic, already a formidable foe, is compounded when I consider the amount of blind-eyed waste it has generated. For instance, when restaurants first began to re-open after the stay-at-home orders gradually lifted, many only offered takeout to avoid having people congregate in their dining rooms. Takeout is a wonderful convenience, but a single meal can constitute various forms of disposable waste: think the straw and cup from fountain beverages; plastic cutlery; napkins; single-serve condiment packets; waxed paper boxes or crinkly food wrap used as packaging and bags in which to carry the food home. Some grocery stores have adopted a similar single-serve packaging strategy, wrapping rolls, donuts, and even fruits and vegetables individually in an effort to decrease the level of customer contact.

Disposable masks and gloves can serve as our shields against the virus, but they have also become an egregious form of waste. Consider the amount of used masks that you might have seen left behind on sidewalks and curbsides and parking lots. Necessary or not, disposable masks have found their way into the landfills, incinerators and even continuous circulation, which is unfortunate when the CDC has confirmed that the general public can wear reusable cloth masks for effective defense against transmitting the virus.

Although the pandemic has temporarily become our way of life, the disposables to which we so often turn can be avoided. With Earth Day approaching, perhaps it is vital to consider the impact of our products -- from their extraction of raw materials to production to purchase to disposal -- and how we might reduce our consumption.

Here are a few questions to consider when making a purchase:

- **How long will I use this product for?** If the answer is less than 10 minutes, which is often the case with takeout orders and to-go coffee cups, then you might consider dining in or bringing your own mug.
- **Is this product reusable?** If not, then is it recyclable or is there a stronger alternative available?
- **Is this purchase sustaining a *need* or fueling a *desire*?** Our needs are based on survival, but unfortunately, buying frivolous non-essentials only promises momentary happiness.

As we wander through the aisles at our grocery stores or favorite retail outlets, there are infinite opportunities to go beyond consumerism and act as a conscious steward of the environment. If we are mindfully aware of our purchases' lifespans, even amidst the pandemic, then there will be hope for a planet which is less stressed by consumer-driven waste in the future.

Celebrate Earth Day • April 22, 2021

Join the Fox Valley Group and Appleton Public Library on Earth Day for an online program centering on how we can collectively make a large-scale impact on climate change.

CIVIC CONVERSATIONS

Appleton Public Library

APRIL 22ND 6:00PM
CLIMATE CHANGE:
MAKING A COLLECTIVE
IMPACT



Climate change is a global problem that requires individual as well as collective action, requiring the collaboration of entire communities, who must make decisions on the source of energy that powers and heats their factories, their offices, and their homes, transportation options, building and construction criteria and practices, as well as land use. Dr. Pablo Toral, professor of international relations and environmental studies, will discuss ways we can collectively make a large-scale impact.

Dr. Toral's teaching and research interests include international political economy, environmental politics, international relations theory, international governance and development, with a focus on Latin America and Europe.

To join, watch for an email from the Fox Valley Sierra Group or check out our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/foxvalleysierra

EARTH WEEK : APRIL 19-25, 2021

The Great Trash Clean-Up

A WAY TO
COME
TOGETHER
WHEN WE'RE
APART

This Earth Week, will you be part of the solution for our littered landscape? Join the Fox Valley Sierra Group on April 19-25 as we walk and pick up trash.

1. Plan a walk in your local neighborhood or park.
2. Pack a garbage bag and yard gloves.
3. On your walk, be mindful of the trash you pick up and just how much accumulates. How can we reduce this waste?
4. **Bonus:** bring along a separate bag for recyclables like discarded aluminum cans. (Just remove them from the bag before recycling -- or turn in for cash at a scrap yard!)
5. Snap a photo of your findings and share your reflections with the Sierra Group on Facebook.

Share your trash clean-up experience at
<https://www.facebook.com/foxvalleysierra>

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FOX VALLEY SIERRA GROUP CONTACTS

Chairperson & Webmaster

Alan Lawrence • (920) 730-9515
153 Northbreeze Dr.,
Appleton 54911-1224
alan_lawrence99@yahoo.com

Vice Chair

John Engel • (920) 475-1472
325 Parkwood Drive, Neenah 54956
johnwengel@earthlink.net

Treasurer

Diane Perschbacher • (920) 216-2159
2531 Bruce Ct., Neenah 54956-6108
DPerschbacher1@new.rr.com

Newsletter Editor

Monny Hjerstedt • (920) 558-0013
567 Oak St., Neenah 54956
mhjerstedt17@gmail.com

Facebook

Penny Paiser-Wilson • (920) 720-9741
133 Klompen Court,
Neenah 54956-4352
wilscats@new.rr.com

Outings, Forestry & Land Management

Rich Krieg • (920) 660-3557
1428 S. Clay St., Green Bay 54301
richkrieg@new.rr.com

John Muir Chapter Conservation Chair & FVSG Delegate

Will Stahl • (920) 725-9185
216 Stevens St., Neenah 54956
wrsy55@sbcglobal.net

Membership & Hospitality

Jo Hjerstedt • (920) 479-4900
567 Oak St., Neenah 54956
jhjerstedt@hotmail.com

Environmental Education

Diana Lawrence • (920) 730-9515
153 Northbreeze Dr.,
Appleton 54911-1224
law_di03@yahoo.com

Consumerism & Waste

Annette Cornell • (920) 594-0168
annette.k.cornell@gmail.com



FVSG web site

Stay up-to-date on the latest environmental news, outings, programs and events by checking out our website at sierraclub.org/wisconsin/foxvalley or find us on [facebook.com/foxvalleysierra](https://www.facebook.com/foxvalleysierra)