



Four Lakes Sierran

The Newsletter of the Four Lakes Group Sierra Club

www.4lakes.org



Summer 2009

Moving Wisconsin Beyond Coal

By *Dylan Mathieu*

Governor Doyle took a bold step toward a clean energy future last August by declaring that two state owned, coal-fired power plants would no longer burn coal. However, there are still thirteen more coal-fired plants at public facilities, each pumping soot, smog, and mercury into the air and contributing to global warming. More must be done to make Wisconsin a clean energy leader.

Wisconsin's state-owned coal facilities are symbols of our reliance on dirty fossil fuels. With Governor Doyle's continued support and the efforts of passionate advocates, we can transform Wisconsin's state-owned energy infrastructure into a model for renewable, local power sources.

The specter of climate change increases the importance of revamping the state's generating facilities. As Governor Doyle noted, "Global warming demands leadership, and as we plan for the future of the Madison heating facilities, we must chart a course that lowers greenhouse gas emissions and encourages new alternative energy sources." This is true - not just for Madison, but for the entire state.

In addition to carbon emissions that contribute to global warming and mercury pollution that endangers our lakes and streams, Wisconsin's state-owned coal plants hide another dirty secret. Wisconsin currently buys its coal directly from companies that engage in Appalachian mountain-top removal mining practices. By purchasing coal mined under these environmentally destructive conditions, Wisconsin helps fund the devastation of entire Appalachian ecosystems, as well as the local communities that have been inundated with mining debris. In West Virginia alone, mountain-top removal mining has leveled over 800 square miles of Appalachian forests, forever burying 1,200 miles of streams. As purchasers of energy resources for our universities and other institutions, should we continue to support such environmentally degrading mining practices? Converting our state-owned facilities to renewable energy

resources will send a message regarding mountain-top removal coal mining.

Wisconsin has the opportunity right now to transition from imported fossil fuels to locally grown biomass resources. This will benefit our rural economies while encouraging further development of renewable energy technology. Converting state-owned facilities to biomass will create a market for locally grown biomass resources and will keep our dollars within our state economy. According to the Governor's Task Force on Global Warming, Wisconsin has approximately fifteen million tons of potential excess biomass reserves that could be dedicated to providing power and heat for state-owned heating and electric plants. As one Platteville area farmer noted, "Planting switchgrass is a great crop for our highly erodible fields. We want [to] create more markets for grass and other biomass crops for energy and fuels." With tremendous potential for biomass production and state-owned facilities to provide an initial market for locally produced fuels, Wisconsin has the opportunity to become a national leader in domestically-grown renewable resources. Shifting the state's generating facilities from Appalachian coal to locally produced biomass will keep dollars within our state and help to position Wisconsin as a leading provider of alternative energy resources.

Wisconsin must continue Governor Doyle's efforts to move beyond coal, reflecting our state's commitment to environmental protection. Converting the remaining state-owned facilities into users of clean, alternative energies will help jumpstart the Wisconsin market for switchgrass and other biomass, and will bolster our rural economies with funds that would otherwise leave the state to purchase coal. A decision to stop burning coal and focus on renewable energy sources would be a significant step in turning Wisconsin into a clean energy leader. Land-based and Great Lakes wind power, industry-scale and residential solar, and biomass technologies will propel Wisconsin towards a future without fossil-fuel imports, mercury pollution, or rising carbon emissions. Governor Doyle summed it up when he declared "We must move away from our dependence on coal."

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Chair's Corner

by Don Ferber

Looking outside, the added sunshine and warmth as trees leaf out and flowers bloom is welcome. But balance is critical. The excess global warmth we face is daunting, especially given those who deny the problem, and those who put investment in coal and other dirty fuels ahead of a healthy planet.

That we must change our course is certain. And yes, it is possible if we have the will and choose to live sustainably. 20 years ago, how many were talking about global warming? Now it is widely accepted, and we are discussing ways to solve it. Even a year ago, the political situation was much more worrisome. Now we have elected many leaders at the federal, state and local level who are more environmentally inclined, and individually, we have many more sustainable options.

We now know that saving the planet does not mean austerity. Perhaps even the opposite. We CAN create green jobs, and reduce energy use and green house gases. We CAN create a healthy environment, and in turn a healthy populace - all while saving green AND keeping the planet green."

Just as you made your votes count, we ask you continue to speak up for the environment in the words you use and choices you make. You and the other 700,000 members of the Sierra Club make it a force to be listened to when we speak as Sierrans. That leverage means that when we work in concert, a little from each of you can go a long way, whether it be writing a letter to the editor, phoning a legislator, staffing a Sierra table, talking to your neighbor, or reducing your carbon footprint.

Let's follow in the footsteps of John Muir and protect our planet so we can continue to explore and enjoy it!

OUTINGS LEADERS NEEDED

One of the Sierra Club's primary missions is to encourage everyone to engage in outdoor activities and to experience nature's beauty. If you enjoy hiking, cycling, camping, paddling or any other outdoor sport, and are willing to help others do the same, we'd love to hear from you. Outings leadership is a very rewarding opportunity. You will have the chance to meet great people, share your love of outdoor activities with others, and participate in educational workshops to learn things from basic first aid to advanced wilderness survival skills. To learn more and see if this is the right volunteer job for you, please contact our Outings Chair, Kathy Mulbrandon at outingschair@4lakes.org.

Why a Rain Garden?

By *Patty Zahler*

You can reduce pollution to our lakes and streams by enhancing your landscape with an easy-to-construct, and even easier to maintain, rain garden. Rain gardens also serve as an educational tool to build environmental awareness in our community.

A rain garden captures water from rain and snow that would otherwise fall onto your rooftop, into your gutters, onto your driveways, sidewalks and compacted lawns, and end up in the street sewer systems. This water then drains into streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes, bringing winter road sludge, pesticides, fertilizers, and other pollutants with it. A rain garden of native plants can capture and absorb up to 70% of your annual rainwater runoff and return it to the ground, where it will filter through the deep root system of the plants, reduce impurities, and help replenish the ground water aquifer. You improve our precious water, and in return, your rain garden provides a colorful display of flowers with an urban habitat for butterflies, birds, and beneficial insects.



But won't a rain garden breed mosquitoes? The answer is a most emphatic "No!" Mosquitoes breed in standing water, such as flower pot saucers, yard containers, rooftop gutters, sewer catch basins located under sewer grates, ponds, or anywhere water is allowed to stagnate. Then it takes 9-to-12 days for the mosquitoes to reach the adult stage. Most rain gardens will absorb rainwater in an hour or so, while larger ones may take at most 24-48 hours.

Are they easy to install? Yes, even for a beginner gardener. Be sure to consult the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources "Rain Gardens: A How-To Manual for Homeowners," by Roger Bannerman, at www.dnr.state.wi.us/runoff/rg/. At the same site, under the heading "Wisconsin Native Plant Lists for Rain Gardens," you can view photographs of native flowering plants, along with descriptions of the plant height and light preference such as sun, shade, or partial shade. Using native plants and bushes will ensure that your rain garden will grow during both drought and

heavy rainfall. Once established, native plants require minimal maintenance, and no pesticides or fertilizer. You may want to select plants that will blossom at different times during the growing season, from early spring to late fall, thus ensuring an on-going colorful flower display.

For information on construction tips and other rain garden resources, please email Patty Zahler at pazap101@yahoo.com.

Be Sure to Watch Online - "Poisoned Water" by PBS (<http://www.pbs.org/video/video/1114515379>) - A must-see documentary regarding how storm water and water runoff effects our lakes, bays and oceans and the quality of our drinking water.

Fixing Climate: What Past Climate Changes Reveal About the Current Threat – and How to Counter It

by *Wallace S. Broecker and Robert Kunzig; Hill and Wang, 2008*

Reviewed by Kate Blumenthal

Wallace S. Broecker, a longtime researcher at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, warned about the possible consequences of global warming decades before it became a compelling public issue. Broecker collaborated with Robert Kunzig, an award-winning science writer, to create this fascinating combination of climate science history, what scientists know and theorize about the effects of carbon dioxide on our climate, and finally, what we might be able to do about it. We learn from Broecker that climate does change—naturally, dramatically, and rarely benignly. With inescapable logic backed by ingenious experiments (a fascinating story by itself) Broecker demonstrates that when mankind pushes nature as we are currently doing by dumping some sixty to seventy million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every day, climate will change even more dramatically and less benignly. The book ends, however, by giving us some hope in the development of new technologies that are directed not only at the reduction of carbon dioxide output but also at its harmless disposal.

George H. Denton, professor of geological sciences at the University of Maine, wrote, "A wonderful book about climate change and how to fix global warming, as seen through the eyes of one of our greatest living geoscientists. This extremely well-written account presents a host of fascinating characters, discovering secrets about how the climate system worked in the past and what this means for the future of civilization. It's the best book on the subject I've read."

Victory for Dane County RTA

By Caryl Terrell

We are one HUGE step closer to a stable, dedicated funding source that will provide transit service, stabilize existing bus systems and receive needed federal infrastructure dollars. Governor Doyle included three Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) in his state budget proposal; for Milwaukee County, Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Dane County. Only the Dane County RTA emerged unscathed and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Joint Finance Committee Co-Chairs Rep. Mark Pocan and Sen. Mark Miller for this. The Assembly and the Senate each have final votes on the State Budget before it goes to Governor Doyle's desk by July 1st. Improved mass transit is central to the economic growth and quality of life of Dane County.

"Even though bus ridership is at near record levels," wrote Dane County Supervisor Mark Opitz of Middleton (OpEd, The Capital Times 4.17.09), "Metro's current funding structure is not sustainable for various reasons, including a surge in fuel prices and a relative decrease in state assistance (as a percentage of all revenue sources). As a result, the Long-Range Metro Transit Planning Committee, which I chair, is joining others in urging the Legislature to grant local governments the authority to establish an RTA to help with the governance and funding of metropolitan transit systems. (Wisconsin is the only state in the Midwest that does not yet allow the formation of RTAs.)"

Major bond rating service Moody's says that the only sure bet in real estate development is in transit-oriented development. RTAs spur transit system growth, stimulating both construction and manufacturing industries. RTAs create jobs by hiring locally and the fuel efficiency of transit insulates communities from fuel price shocks, keeping dollars at home instead of sending them to Saudi Arabia to buy fuel. In addition, RTAs help create a stronger economy by giving employers better access to workers, and workers better access to jobs.

Mass Transit improves our quality of life by easing costly traffic congestion, reducing air emissions, lowering health care costs for asthma and other diseases and keeping communities in compliance with air quality standards to avoid costly pollution sanctions. (EPA has listed Dane County as not meeting federal Clean Air standards for fine particulates.)

RTAs provide a solid financial mechanism that allows Wisconsin to compete for federal transit-construction dollars. With a modernized transportation system, Dane County

will have a competitive edge in attracting and retaining business and residents.

As currently configured, the Dane County RTA will be governed by a board of nine members: two appointed by the County Executive; two appointed by the Madison Mayor; one each appointed by the Mayors of Fitchburg, Middleton and Sun Prairie; one appointed by the Governor and one village member appointed by the Dane County Cities and Villages Association. It will be empowered to impose up to a 0.5% sales and use tax after holding a non-binding referendum.

For more information and to volunteer to help, contact Caryl Terrell (608) 833-8828, Liz Wessel (lizard59sc@yahoo.com) or Don Ferber (608) 222-9376 cell.

Educational Programs

The Four Lakes Group hosts a monthly program from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month from September through November and January through May. These educational offerings are open to the public and we invite everyone to join us. Each meeting starts with a brief update on current issues and upcoming events, followed by a program featuring a speaker or presentation. If you have any questions, please contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 or d_ferber@sbcglobal.net.

Our fall, 2009 programs will be held at the Goodman Community Center, 149 Waubesa Street, t on the east side bike path. For our Fall Program Calendar, please check back later in the summer by visiting our website 4lakes.org or contacting Don Ferber.



STAY IN TOUCH with eNews

Learn about local events, action items, legislation notices and reminders of outings and programs by subscribing to our eNews

Update list. Your privacy is important to us and the list is not shared with any other organization. See our website for subscription information.z

SIGN UP AND GET INVOLVED TODAY!

Outings

All Sierra Club outings are free, unless noted, and open to the public. However, we ask that you PLEASE RSVP and notify the leader if you plan to come, and be sure to leave your name and phone number so you can be contacted if necessary. If you decide not to attend, please notify the leader of the change. Thank you and we hope to see you on the trail, on the water, or at the table!

Sunday, June 28, 10:00 a.m. - Devil's Lake Rim Geologic Jaunt

Join Kathy for a hike along the rim of Devil's Lake and to learn about and explore the geology and natural history of Devil's Lake. This scenic walk has a few challenging sections with a total elevation gain of about 1200 feet. Bring a good pair of shoes or hiking boots, plenty of water, sunscreen, a lunch and weather-appropriate clothing. We'll meet at the South Shore parking lot near the concession at 10 A.M. For carpooling from Madison, we'll be leaving from the Parmenter Street Park & Ride (Parmenter St & Hwy 12 – Middleton) at 8:45 AM. Please be early so we can hook up with people at the park on time. For more information and to RSVP contact Kathy Mulbrandon at kmulb@charter.net or 608-848-5076.

Sunday, July 5, 9:00 a.m. (38 miles); 10:00 a.m. (25 miles) - Bike the Badger State Trail

Choose a 25 or 38 mile round trip. The long route meets at Dawley Conservancy Park lot on Seminole Highway at 9:00 a.m. We'll ride to the trailhead at Purcell and Sayles Trail to meet those opting for the shorter route at 10:00 a.m., and ride the trail south through Belleville to the Stewart Tunnel (bring a bike light or flashlight). After the tunnel, we'll ride back to Belleville for lunch. Bring your own, or eat at a cafe in town. We will then ride back to our respective starting locations. There will be a brief talk about trail riding etiquette and safety at each starting point. For more information and to RSVP contact Bill Fenske: 608-852-7241 or duh.guru@att.net.

Wednesday, August 5, 7:00 p.m. – Full Moon Hike – Verona Segment (North)

Meet at the Hwy PD trail head at 7:00 P.M. Moonrise is at 7:03 PM. We'll Stroll through prairie, admire a few old oaks, and learn a little about your backyard landscape and the many varieties of wild flowers. This segment is about 2.5 miles. Wear weather appropriate clothing and bring a flashlight, water and a snack to enjoy while watching the moon. This hike will also include members of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Take Verona Rd to Cty PD (McKee Rd). Turn right for ~ 2 miles just past the High Point Rd stoplight. Turn left into the parking lot by the metal buildings. For more info, contact Kathy Mulbrandon at kmulb@charter.net or 608-848-5076.

Sunday, August 30, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. – Sierra Summer Picnic and Prairie Extravaganza

Join the Four Lakes Group for our annual summer soirée at

Lake Farm County Park off Lake Waubesa. In the morning at 10 a.m., you can choose to do a bike ride starting at the park (about 15 miles), or meet at the park at shelter #3 to collect prairie seeds and learn about native prairie plants. An opportunity to paddle to the picnic is offered at 11:00 a.m. A picnic potluck will be at noon at shelter #3. We'll provide scrumptious grill items and refreshments, and you can bring your favorite side dish or dessert to share. At 1:30 p.m., we'll do a prairie/woodland walk to learn more about invasive plants and our native plant communities. Come for the entire day or for one or more activities. For more info or to RSVP, contact Kathy at Mulbrandon@kmulb@charter.net or 608-848-5076.

Sunday August 30 – 11:00 a.m. - Paddle to the Picnic

Join Bill at the boat dock behind Rutabaga the paddle sports shop to paddle to the Sierra Club picnic. PFDs are required. Rentals are available from Rutabaga; contact them at 608.223.9300 to reserve a kayak or canoe. Meet at the dock behind Rutabaga's at 11:00 AM. We'll paddle about 2 miles to Lake Farm Park and enjoy the picnic and then paddle some more to a point across the lake where we'll see and learn about several historically significant landmarks dating to the late 1800's. We'll get you back to Rutabaga in time to return a rental if necessary. RSVP to or for more information contact Bill Fenske; 608.852.7241 or duh.guru@att.net.

Thursday – Sunday September 3-6 Backpack the Northern Kettle Moraine

Join Bill on a self-contained backpack hike along a total of 17.7 miles of the scenic Ice Age Trail in the Northern Kettle Moraine. We'll meet at Parnell Tower parking lot and start out hiking .5 miles to shelter 4 on Thursday night. We'll then hike 7.2 miles on Friday to shelter 3. On Saturday we'll pass Mauthe Lake and have an opportunity for a swim or shower before continuing on to shelter 2; a total of 6.5 miles. On Sunday we'll have an easy 3.5 mile hike to the New Fane Trail Area parking lot; giving us the opportunity to relax at home on Labor Day. Cost will be \$10.00 per person to cover the shelter reservation fees. There is a limit of 10 persons on this outing. If we get ten, the cost will be reduced. For reservations, car pool information, or more information contact Bill Fenske; 608.852.7241 or duh.guru@att.net.

Outings: Liability Waiver & Carpooling...

In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see the John Muir Chapter's web site.

To facilitate the logistics of some outings, participants may make carpool arrangements. The Sierra Club does not provide insurance for carpooling and assumes no liability. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel.

CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.



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New Newsletter Policy

Our goal is environmentally responsible, cost effective communication with all of our members. We are mailing this newsletter to all members for whom we do not have email addresses as well as to everyone who requested a hard copy. Everyone else will receive an email notice and can download the latest issue off of our web site. To help save trees and reduce costs, please consider sending us your email address if you are receiving a printed copy of this newsletter.

GET OUTING NEWS VIA EMAIL

Stay up to date on all local outings by subscribing to the JMC-4LAKES-OUTINGS list. Membership is not required to subscribe to this list and receive outings news. To join, go to <http://4lakes.org/outings.htm>, look for a box headed 4Lakes Group Outings News, and follow the simple instructions.



Explore and enjoy and protect the planet



You're barking up the wrong tree.

The Sierra Club and over 1.6 million Americans fought hard to protect the last 60 million acres of pristine, roadless areas in our National Forests. But still, logging trucks continue to roll in. Logging in National Parks provides less than 4% of our wood products. So why not recycle, reuse and help save our beautiful National Parks?

Bark with us. Join Sierra Club.

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