

N O R T H S T A R JOURNAL

NEWS ON OUR EFFORTS TO KEEP THE ENVIRONMENT HEALTHY FOR MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES

SPRING/SUMMER 2020
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SIERRA CLUB
NORTH STAR CHAPTER



CHAIR & DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Kamau Wilkins, Chair, and Margaret Levin, State Director

Fighting For Our Values

All Minnesotans — Black, white, urban, rural, Indigenous and immigrant — are tied together. We share one home, and we are therefore united in making our communities and planet healthy for all who live here.

We all deserve to thrive in safe communities, yet the inhumane daily assaults on Black and Brown people directly threaten our ability to maintain a healthy planet. The cruel, public lynching of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers is unacceptable and can not be tolerated. We cannot expect to come together to protect the planet if racism continues to tear us apart.

We should all be outraged by the racist violence inflicted upon George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and so many others. But as Sierra Club members, we need to go beyond outrage to working for justice.

To make that vision a reality, each of us has a role to play. Being “non-racist” is not enough. Just like we need to work hard to fight climate change and protect nature, we must be actively anti-racist. Indeed, we cannot separate these issues. The interests that have profited from our continued reliance on fossil fuels and have accelerated the climate crisis are the same ones who have benefited from environmental injustice, colonialism, and white supremacy.

Corporations, politicians, and our agency officials tell us they care about sustainability and environmental justice, but it’s time to do more than say the words. We need action. We are following the lead of our partners to demand changes that will transform the criminal justice system and other racist systems of oppression. And we are leading in the fight for a clean energy economy and environmental standards that are equitable.

We can have a healthy planet as a beautiful home for ourselves and future generations. We can live in a state where everyone has a safe place to live, with clean water to drink and clean air to breathe.

In times of crisis and tragedy, new structures and policies are born. Right now, the momentum of business as usual has paused and in that space we must forge a new way of life, centered on people, not profits.

Together we rise,

Kamau Wilkins
Chair, Executive Committee
Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Margaret Levin
State Director
Sierra Club North Star Chapter



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FEATURES

YOUR SIERRA CLUB IN ACTION

Throughout the Journal, you'll find articles on the work happening across the state. Here are just a few highlights of the ways we are coming together to build the future we need.



RALLY FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

In February, we rallied with local Service-Employees International Union (SEIU) 26 janitors to tell some of the biggest downtown Minneapolis building owners—including the IDS Center and U.S. Bank Plaza—that they deserve sick days, fair wages, and a Green Technician Program to reduce the carbon footprint of some of the biggest emitters in the state. This SEIU-26 led campaign was successful in winning a “green cleaning training fund” and launched outreach for a larger carbon and waste reduction community/labor table with major corporations in MN.

“We danced and chanted together in the streets of downtown Minneapolis. We stood solidly as a beautiful representation of the power that comes from being in community with one another!” (See a photo of the rally in downtown Minneapolis above.)

—Charles Frempong-Longdon Jr.

POWERING ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES

Our Coalition for Clean Transportation campaign has been pushing for electric school buses across Minnesota. We got some great press (tinyurl.com/eschoolbus), and now the Pollution Control Agency is investing nearly \$5 million to reduce climate pollution and protect our kids’ health through electric school buses. Lakeville Public Schools have been served by an electric school bus for three years, performing well in cold winters. Help your school clean up its dirty bus fleet by contacting joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org at 612-259-2447 today.

“I would love to go to school in a clean electric bus,” said Sage Houdek, age 8, pictured below. “As a Sierra Club dad, I’m proud to be working to help ALL students ride zero emission buses and breathe clean air!”

—Joshua Houdek

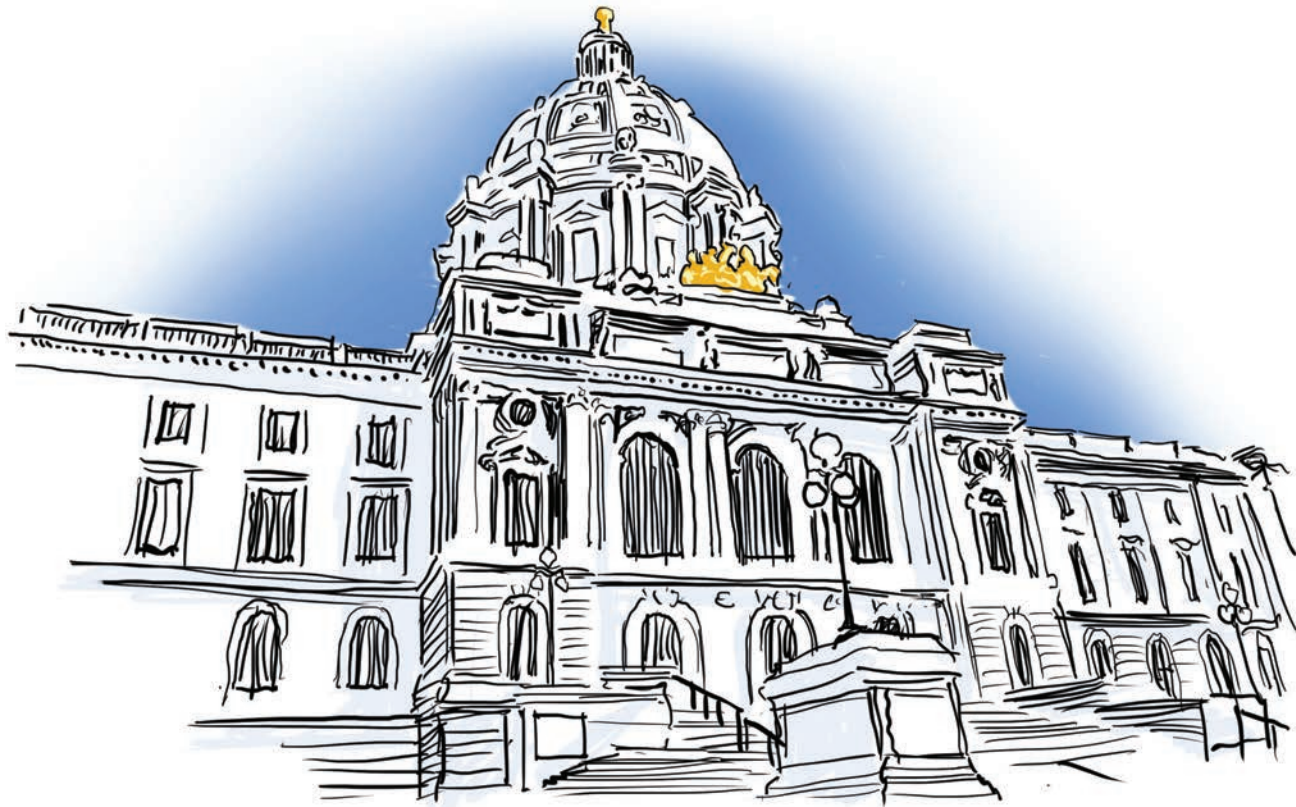


FIGHTING FOR ENERGY JUSTICE

The promise of a locally controlled municipal utility is that it can be more responsive to its community’s needs. At the urging of Sierra Club members and partners, the Rochester Municipal Utility began discussing forgiving utility debts that built up during the pandemic and starting a bill round up program to create a fund to help people when money is tight. However, the utility has not yet committed to forgiving pandemic energy debt and will not implement the round up fund until 2022.

“No one in Rochester should have to choose between paying for electricity and food, especially during a pandemic. We will continue to fight for energy justice in Rochester — contact me to get involved!”

—Rick Morris



NO PROGRESS AT LEGISLATURE: BLAME THE KOCHS, NOT THE VIRUS

Peter Wagenius

Minnesota is the only state in America with a divided legislature. This has been the case since the 2018 election when Democrats took control of the House due mainly to election of new representatives in Metro area suburbs, many of whom were endorsed by the Sierra Club. The Senate, which was not up for election in 2018, remains in Republican control.

While divided government is often a recipe for gridlock, each session is still an opportunity to advance Sierra Club's vision of a sustainable and equitable future. Every session is a chance to see which legislators stand up for Minnesotan values and protect our air, water, lands and climate.

This session we are glad that the legislature made some progress, like banning the toxic chemical TCE and investing some of the Renewable Development Fund in Solar Rewards and other renewable energy programs, but the session ended with most of the largest bills still in limbo.

BLAMING THE VIRUS? OR THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

Obviously, COVID-19 made a big impact on the session. It would be easy to blame the virus for every missed opportunity. But after an initial halt, legislators adapted to holding remote hearings conducted online. So it wasn't the virus that prevented progress on clean energy. It was the businesses that make up the Chamber of Commerce, including Flint Hills Refinery owned by the Koch Brothers, who have made their billions in fossil fuels. The Senate, where the Chamber holds an effective veto over the Republican majority, spent much of the session pushing a "Fossil Fuels Forever" bill and calling it "Clean Energy First." Sierra Club led the way, together with our allies, to keep pushing for an actual Clean Energy First bill, which would help reduce customers' energy bills, create and sustain jobs throughout Minnesota, and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

CLIMATE CHAMPIONS EMERGE IN 2019

Even with the virus slowing things down in 2020, we still have plenty of information to judge legislators' commitment to the environment. In 2019 the House of Representatives passed serious legislation on the environment. This included a bill for 100% Clean Energy by 2050 and an Omnibus Transportation Bill with real funding for expanding transit.

Unfortunately, Republicans in the Senate refused to support both those bills in 2019. House Republicans even voted overwhelmingly against a simple bill to acknowledge that climate change is real and caused by human activity. Senate Republicans took a similar vote.

HOUSE ENVIRONMENTALISTS ORGANIZE INTO CLIMATE CAUCUS

In September 2019, environmental legislators in the House organized into the House Climate Action Caucus, chaired by Rep. Patty Acomb, and held hearings in the fall preparing for the 2020 session. In February, they unveiled the "Minnesota Can-Do Climate Actions" a serious package of one-time appropriations to address the climate crisis. It included \$191 million in new investments in solar, energy efficiency and other programs to reduce greenhouse gases and benefit public schools, homeowners, local governments, and nursing homes. Sierra Club was building support for this package when COVID-19 struck and the ensuing economic fall out wiped out the surplus that could have funded this entire package. As of this writing, we are seeking other funding for Solar on Schools and other pieces of the Can-Do Package.

BUILDING A NEW GREEN ECONOMY

2020 is a "bonding year," when the legislature typically approves issuing bonds to fund building projects around the state. With historically low interest rates, many legislators recognized the bonding bill as Minnesota's best tool to stimulate the economy. It's also an opportunity to build a new, green economy. The Sierra Club and the Transportation Forward coalition pushed for big investments in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as well as bike and infrastructure, like Safe Routes to School and water infrastructure. But, House Republicans threatened to stop any bonding bill if Governor Walz continued to use emergency powers to protect Minnesotans from the virus.

Senate Republicans offered a bonding package that disproportionately subsidized road projects in Republican districts at the expense of every other priority: clean air, clean water, transit, higher education and more. It included no money whatsoever for transit, biking and walking. With transportation now the leading cause of carbon pollution, this is unacceptable.

SENATE OMNIBUS 'ENVIRONMENT' BILL

In a disturbing trend, like the Senate version of the "Clean Energy First" bill which really is a "Fossil Fuels Forever" bill, the Senate "Environment" bill was full of provisions that actually harm our environment. As an example, the Chair of the Senate Environment Committee Bill Ingebrigtsen threatened to not pass any environment bill unless it included language to strip Governor Walz of his existing authority to implement "Clean Cars," which would protect our air and climate by requiring more stringent emissions standards. Like with so many bills, this threat prevented any agreement between the House and Senate before the end of the regular session.

ELECTIONS MATTER

Throughout the 2019 and 2020 legislative sessions we have seen that elections matter—that the newly-elected environmental champions who took the House in 2018 have been pushing forward bold new policies. We have also seen the damage that is done when politicians in the pockets of big oil remain in power. The 2020 elections are critical. They provide us a chance to put environmental champions in power at the state Senate. With the state Senate led by environmental champions, we could pass the systems-changing legislation described above, which is desperately needed to transition to 100% clean energy by 2050 and realize the equitable, sustainable future we need.

*Note as of press time, June 10, the special session of the Legislature had not started. During the special session we anticipate continuing to push for bonding dollars for our priorities including clean energy and transit, and supporting systemic changes to address police brutality and racial injustice in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder. Check online for updates.

Peter Wagenius is the North Star Chapter Legislative & Political Director. When he's not at the Capitol, you can find him chauffeuring his two young daughters around town on an amazing longtail cargo bike.



Watercolor by: Gail Speckmann

Gail Speckmann is an international award-winning watercolor artist, instructor, judge, author and published poet from Plymouth, MN.

Ellie Krueger is a student at the University of Minnesota. She enjoys reading, walking her dog, and fending off ever-encroaching insanity.

The Freckled Sky

Ellie Olivia Krueger

The freckled sky blushed
As the sun flirted with the moon.

No breath disturbed the branches
As the trees hummed in time with my heart.

Sink softly under
Into silken sleep;
Sink in satin silence
In the cool, dark deep.

Sing a sweet song of sorrow
For a past that has passed by--
Time suspended
In the green tiger's eye.

The breeze brushes my hair back from my face
Familiar as my mother's hands.

I have never felt so utterly alone
As when I am in a room full of people.
And I have never felt so utterly close
To something yet unknown
As when I sit in solitude
Serenaded by the bullfrog.

Emerging Heart

Gail Speckmann

The beating heart of the Earth,
Mother to all nature,
all living things,
does not sit idly by
when destruction looms.
She arises, like a sun dawning,
ushering in a new day,
so that all other days may yet follow.
Reminds us to care for Her
even as She cares for us.

CAMPAIGNS

**THE ENERGY
MOVEMENT
ACROSS MN**
MINNESOTA CAN'T
AFFORD ANYTHING
LESS THAN 100%
RENEWABLE
ENERGY



Steve Payne

The Star Tribune reported that nearly half of Minnesota's power came from carbon-free energy sources in 2019. That's great news, but given the severity of the climate crisis, it's not enough.

Our entire state is under threat from climate change. Respiratory problems like asthma will worsen. The evergreen northwoods in the Arrowhead Region will increasingly look more like the deciduous big woods in the center of the state. Torrential rains will exacerbate flooding in the Red River Valley. Storms will continue to damage cities along the North Shore.

These impacts won't be evenly distributed. As we are seeing during the COVID-19 pandemic, communities of color suffer most in a crisis. These communities already experience higher rates of respiratory conditions like asthma, which put them at higher risk from pollution and climate change effects like increased temperature.

Rural communities that depend on outdoor tourism, such as Ely in northern Minnesota, will suffer as their local ecosystems change. And flooding will hit family farms and small towns the hardest.

The Sierra Club is committed to addressing the climate crisis by getting our state to 100 percent clean energy. Our state must stop all fossil fuel energy production and must transition to renewable sources like wind and solar.

And while we're campaigning to win 100 percent renewable energy, we're working to address the worst disparities in our state. As least twice as many black Minnesotans are unemployed as whites and are often stuck in jobs with lower pay and less job security. New jobs in the clean energy sector are a way to address this.

Our campaign to increase energy efficiency and transition our entire state to locally-generated renewable energy sources will create thousands of new jobs, which would help close the

unemployment gap and help supply well-paying jobs in communities that need them. We're fighting to demand that those jobs be good union jobs that go to residents in our state who have been excluded from such economic opportunities in the past.

All the new wind turbines, solar panels and efficiency programs that will create this new energy future must be built somewhere; these will create new sources of income or reduce energy bills. If done right, the economic benefits of that new infrastructure could begin to heal racial inequities and division between urban and rural areas in our state.

No matter where you live, you've got the opportunity to get involved in one of our campaigns to get our state from 50 percent renewable to 100 percent. (over)

Check out all our campaigns to get our state to 100 percent clean energy and build a new future for our state.

ACROSS MINNESOTA

Cooperative utility member-owners across the state are demanding that their utilities close their coal plants in the Dakotas and replace them with renewable sources.

Did you know that almost 30 percent of Minnesotans get their electricity from coal-fired power plants in North and South Dakota? Coal is one of the dirtiest energy sources and coal plants in the Dakotas produce millions of tons of carbon dioxide a year, in addition to other respiratory pollutants.

Many coop customers live in rural areas and get their power from cooperative utilities. Coops operate all across the state: Connexus Energy and Dakota Electric Association in the Twin Cities suburbs, Redwood Electric Cooperative in southwest Minnesota, Red River Valley Cooperative Power in northwest Minnesota. If you are a member-owner of a cooperative utility, or your utility is Otter Tail Power, then your electricity may be produced by a coal-fired power plant in the Dakotas. The Sierra Club hired a new campaign representative to get these plants replaced with renewable energy sources. To get involved, email him at steve.payne@sierraclub.org.

MINNETONKA & WESTERN SUBURBS

The intergenerational group Minnetonka Climate Initiative (MCI) is still hard at work after winning 2020 funding for a Climate Action Plan and electing climate champions to the City Council. This year, MCI's focus has been to persuade the Minnetonka City Council to establish a sustainability commission and develop a climate action plan. MCI members are cautiously optimistic that a sustainability commission will be initiated mid to late 2020 and a climate action plan could be started later this year. MCI envisions a healthy, flourishing and abundant future for people who live, work and visit Minnetonka. The volunteer group will continue to advance sound climate actions by building citizen leaders and providing education, outreach and advocacy.

TWIN CITIES & CENTRAL MN

We're fighting to ensure that when the Sherco coal plant closes, it's not replaced by a fracked gas plant that would emit over 3 million tons of carbon annually.

Xcel Energy, the largest electricity provider in Minnesota, is submitting its updated 15-year energy plan to the Public Utilities Commission this June. Xcel provides energy to Minnesotans across the state, including most of the Twin Cities Metro area, St. Cloud, Mankato and Northfield. Sierra Club teams have been active in pushing for 100 percent clean and equitable energy from Xcel. Unfortunately, Xcel's big commitments to retiring coal plants and investing in clean energy are overshadowed by their proposal to build a massive new fracked gas plant in Becker. The plant and connected pipelines would cost Xcel customers over \$1 billion to build and would contribute 3 million metric tons of carbon to the atmosphere annually. Let's be clear: we can't afford to build new fossil fuel infrastructure in a climate crisis. To get involved with our campaign to stop fracked gas in the Twin Cities, contact Patty at patty.okeefe@sierraclub.org.

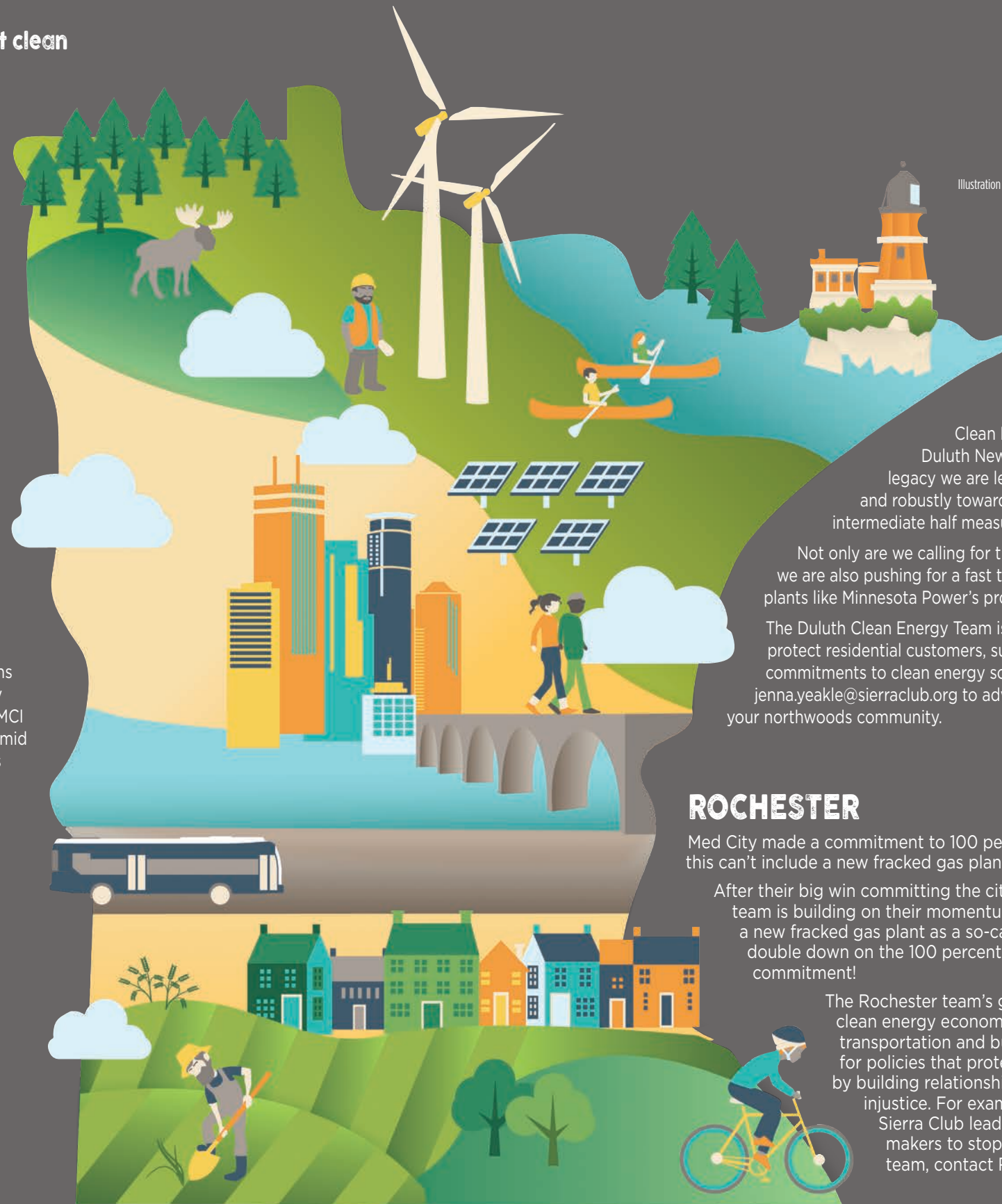


Illustration by: Mikaela Armstrong

DULUTH

From the shores of Lake Superior and across northern Minnesota, Sierra Club members are campaigning to retire the Boswell coal plant and stop new gas plants.

Clean Energy Team Volunteer Leader Linda Herron wrote in the Duluth News Tribune, "If we care at all about what environmental legacy we are leaving to future generations, we need to move rapidly and robustly toward clean, renewable energy as fast as possible with no intermediate half measures."

Not only are we calling for the retirement of Minnesota Power's remaining coal plant, we are also pushing for a fast transition to clean energy, which means no new fracked gas plants like Minnesota Power's proposed Nemadji Trail Energy Center.

The Duluth Clean Energy Team is partnering across sectors, generations and state lines to protect residential customers, support community and worker transition, and uphold local commitments to clean energy solutions and climate action. Connect with jenna.yeakle@sierraclub.org to advocate for the transformative changes you want to see in your northwoods community.

ROCHESTER

Med City made a commitment to 100 percent clean energy—this can't include a new fracked gas plant.

After their big win committing the city to 100 percent renewable energy, the Rochester team is building on their momentum. Even with this commitment, the city is considering a new fracked gas plant as a so-called "backbone" infrastructure. A top priority is to double down on the 100 percent renewable commitment with a 100 percent fossil free commitment!

The Rochester team's guiding goal is a just, equitable, and fast transition to a clean energy economy. To achieve this, they're also working to switch public transportation and buildings to run on renewable energy, all while advocating for policies that protect low income households. The team does this work by building relationships with groups on the frontlines of racial and economic injustice. For example, at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Sierra Club leaders worked quickly with partners and with city decision makers to stop all utility shut offs. To get involved with the Rochester team, contact Rick at rick.morris@sierraclub.org.

Steve Payne is a Campaign Representative with the Beyond Coal Campaign. Steve grew up in southern Florida and has been a union organizer for the last decade in Minneapolis. While he developed his passion for the natural world in tropical Florida, it continues today as he explores the wild places of Minnesota.

ON THE ROAD, TRACK, AND TRAIL TO EQUITY



“On the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, St. Paul City Council voted to remove one lane of car traffic to make room for a walking and bicycling trail. It was one of the biggest political wins of the last 20 years. Keeping St. Paul on the trail to sustainable transportation and healthy.”

Illustration credit: Saint Paul Public Works Department



Environmental Justice advocate Roxanne O'Brian and her daughter. Photo Credit: Sadie Luetmer

Emilie Wille

I used to picture climate change as factories spewing toxic gases into the air and spilling waste into wetlands. I assumed major pollution sources were removed from my own life and only indirectly affected my daily routine. But when I joined the Land Use and Transportation (LUT) Team in January, my entire mindset shifted. The largest contributor to climate change pollution in the state and country is something that we inevitably use and interact with each day, something we rely on to work, to see friends and loved ones, and to engage in our communities: transportation.

Our need for widespread access to clean transportation options extends far beyond slowing the rate of global warming. This is an issue of equity and social justice, as underserved populations are most adversely affected by health problems related to car and truck emissions, lack of access to convenient transit, and the absence of safe walking and biking routes. We cannot achieve our goal of preserving the planet without ensuring environmental justice for all, which is why the LUT Team advocates for clean transportation options such as walking, bicycling, transit, and electric vehicles.

The LUT Team is happy to report many big campaigns and wins that will bring about change:

#GoMpls - We are championing the transformative Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan. The plan's aim is to make biking, walking, and transit so safe and convenient that, by 2030, three of every five trips in the city will use one of these means.

#OpenStreets - Social distancing brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for more places to walk, bike, and roll, as more people rely on outdoor activities to maintain their physical and mental health. Sierra Club member Becky Alper started a petition to open Minneapolis **#Parkways4People**. “It’s been exciting to be part of the international movement to close roads to cars and open them to people-powered transportation,” Becky said. “We need to ask decision makers to continue these positive changes even after the pandemic has subsided.”

#FundTransitNow - At the Capitol, we advocated tirelessly for bus rapid transit and Safe Routes to School bonding dollars. There is a lot of work ahead for 2021 to secure stable, dedicated funding statewide for clean transportation options like transit, walking, bicycling, and electric vehicles.

#CleanCarsMN - The Coalition for Clean Transportation is advocating for rules that will bring more zero emission electric car and truck options to our state. More at pca.state.mn.us/air/clean-cars-mn

#TransitEquity - Sierra Club strongly opposes highway expansion projects.

More lanes mean more traffic and more pollution. Together with local community members and elected leaders, we are opposed to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) I-94/Highway 252 expansion in North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park. To date, our advocacy has forced MnDOT to push back construction, require a robust environmental impact statement, and include bus rapid transit as an alternative.

In North Minneapolis, where residents have been disproportionately harmed by pollution, it is critical that transportation projects move forward equitably. The LUT team is now closely monitoring Phase II of MnDOT’s Rethinking I-94 project through Minneapolis and St. Paul. I-94 decimated neighborhoods in the 1960s, including St. Paul’s Rondo neighborhood. The I-94 project must address past injustices by reducing toxic emissions and reconnecting severed communities.

Minnesota has long been a leader in green initiatives. Together we are bringing our vision for an equitable transportation future closer to being realized. We will not stop fighting until all Minnesotans can exercise their right to live in a healthy, accessible, and connected environment.

Emilie Wille is a new(ish) volunteer with the Land Use & Transportation Team. She also creatively and beautifully curates our Instagram account. Go explore with her by following @sierraclubmn

THE THREAT CONTINUES AS SULFIDE ORE MINING COMPANIES REFUSE TO RELENT

Sunset in the BWCA. Photo Credit: Alec Olson

Brian Madson

Minnesotans value water. We are proud to be the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

No surprise, then, that Minnesotans overwhelmingly oppose sulfide ore (copper nickel) mining near the Boundary Waters, according to a MPR/Star Tribune poll.

Unlike traditional iron mines, sulfide ore operations release toxic heavy metals like mercury, which causes acid runoff. The PolyMet mine is the furthest along in permitting. It is near the Boundary Waters, and in the St. Louis River watershed, which runs through the Fond du Lac Reservation and provides drinking water for the people of Duluth. In the history of sulfide ore mining, no mine has ever operated without polluting nearby lakes, streams, and groundwater.

Yet despite the threats and the opposition, the effort to open these mines continues. Why? Because international mining corporations continue to push them, because some politicians continue to promote them, and because various federal and state agencies support them. The Sierra Club is one of many organizations and individuals actively working for a different, better future for the region.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has issued four permits to PolyMet. All four were struck down by Minnesota courts. Most recently, in March 2020, PolyMet's air pollution permit was rejected; the Sierra Club is a co-plaintiff in that case.

Instead of standing up for public health as is their mission, the MPCA joined PolyMet in a suit against these decisions. Several other permits issued under the Clean Water Act remain under legal challenge.

So far, not so good.

The mining companies claim that they will bring good jobs to the region, but that's simply not true.

Mining employed nearly 16,000 people on the Range at the peak of production in 1979. But by 2017, mining jobs had shrunk to 5,700. Will sulfide mining bring these 10,000 jobs back? No. Fewer than 1,100 mining jobs will be created in the region, according to the corporations, and fluctuating copper prices will undoubtedly entail periodic layoffs. Moreover, sulfide mines only produce for 20 years, making the impact of these mines slight, when compared to other sources of employment.

The region's economy has changed. The Range's largest employer is now healthcare, with a growing number of small businesses in the mix. Outdoor recreation provides thousands of jobs. Given risks of sulfide mining and these companies' troubled environmental histories, we can conclude that these corporations are asking northern Minnesota to trade many lifetimes of sustainable employment for 20 years of precarious mining jobs.

Governor Walz campaigned on a theme of "One Minnesota." His call for diverse stakeholders to come together to decide what is best for our state is precisely the approach we need in Northern Minnesota. Aaron Brown, the Iron Range author echoes this notion: "We must diversify our economy and open the imaginary borders we draw between us and the rest of the world," he writes in the *Minnesota Reformer*.

Here is an invitation to Governor Walz and his administration to create a "One Minnesota" commission of stakeholders in the region to figure out how to protect the Boundary Waters, Lake Superior, northern Minnesota communities' water supplies, treaty rights, and create sustainable, good-paying jobs.

Right now, we're being given a false choice. We can and must do better.

Brian Madson is a volunteer on the SierraAction team which supports legislative and political solutions to our state's most pressing problems.



A BROKEN SYSTEM MAKING BIG DECISIONS

ENBRIDGE LINE 3 OIL PIPELINE DECISIONS LOOM



Scott Russell

Major decisions are coming this summer on the fate of the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline. This tar sands pipeline will cause billions of dollars in climate change damages, and will threaten wild rice beds and over 200 bodies of water with catastrophic oil spills.

While the pipeline outcome is uncertain, one thing is clear: our regulatory system is broken.

The Sierra Club, along with other environmental and Indigenous groups, and Native Nations, spent years before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and more recently before the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), raising the many reasons to reject this dangerous project.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION APPROVES PERMITS

The PUC ignored Line 3's climate impacts. It ignored treaty rights. It ignored state rules that said pipeline routes should avoid crossing streams and wetlands. It ignored the Department of Commerce's assessment that Enbridge failed to show the Midwest region needs the oil this pipeline would bring.

The PUC gave Enbridge pretty much everything it wanted, approving Line 3's certificate of need and route permit.

Of additional concern is the PUC attitude toward public input. At times it felt like the PUC treated us more as troublemakers than concerned citizens, so much so that the Minnesota Legislative Audit Commission decided to audit the PUC's public engagement process. Its findings are expected soon.

THE MPCA LOOKS LIKE IT WILL FOLLOW SUIT

MPCA took a very narrow view of its role in reviewing the project. It is poised to approve Line 3's water crossing permits, despite the pipeline crossing more than 200 streams and other water bodies and

trenching through 79 miles of wetlands.

And again, we have concerns about the process of public engagement itself. Enbridge staff had ample opportunity to communicate with PUC and MPCA staff and build working relationships. Meanwhile, those of us opposed to Line 3 have not had similar access.

The Minnesota Environmental Protection Act rules require the MPCA to "provide the public with systematic access to decision makers, which will help to maintain public awareness of environmental concerns and encourage accountability in public and private decision making." As a Sierra Club volunteer who has followed the process, I can tell you, those rules were broken.

We are proud of the work we have done with our partners, such as co-sponsoring the Gitchi-gami Gathering to Stop Line 3 in Duluth and the Stop Line 3 Block Party in front of the PUC offices. As a team, we showed up repeatedly at PUC public hearings. We hosted letter-writing events, tabled, and held other public education events — we even caroled in front of the MPCA offices (see photos)! We have grown the movement and actively sought access to decision makers.

But the MPCA decided to move forward on Line 3 permits during the pandemic without real public input.

Public engagement was limited to submitting written comments or offering a two-minute monologue on a phone-in Town Hall. The MPCA ignored requests to reschedule in-person hearings at a later time (including requests from the White Earth Nation).

And the MPCA doesn't even have to respond to comments. For example, Line 3's environmental impact statement said that Indigenous people would bear a disproportionate burden from Line 3. I submitted a comment that approving Line 3 would contradict the agency's environmental justice policy, which states "that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting

from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies."

The MPCA has yet to respond to me or to publicly defend how it weighed environmental justice as part of its decision.

UPDATE ON THE PROCESS

Due to legal challenges, the PUC had to fix Line 3's environmental impact statement, then vote again on its route permit and certificate of need. The PUC reapproved those permits on May 1st, the trigger allowing the Sierra Club and other Line 3 opponents to refile lawsuits against the PUC at the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Those are expected to be heard soon.

The MPCA will decide on Line 3's water crossing permits no later than August 18th. We and others have asked the MPCA to deny the permits. If it can't say no, then we've asked that the agency at least hold a contested case hearing. That would give opponents a better opportunity to make their case.

Meanwhile, those opposed to Line 3 continue to tell the MPCA that it needs to live up to its mission: "to protect and improve the environment and human health." Rather, than "protecting" the environment, the MPCA seems to see its role as minimizing damage. If the MPCA keeps "protecting" our clean water this way, someday we won't have any left.

Scott Russell is the co-chair of the Stop Line 3 Team. He is also a frequent contributor to our blog and also for the Healing Minnesota Stories blog. Healing Minnesota Stories was created to promote dialogue, understanding and healing between Native American and non-Native peoples, particularly those in various faith communities.

TIPS FOR A LOWER WASTE LIFESTYLE DURING COVID-19



Photo Credit: Maerin Renee

Maerin Renee

As the COVID-19 pandemic blazes across the planet, many of us have found that social distancing and shelter-in-place orders have necessitated an unanticipated deceleration of our fast-paced lifestyles. Maintaining a zero or lower-waste lifestyle can be a challenge during this time, especially as many stores and shops are currently prohibiting reusable mugs, containers, shopping bags, and bulk food shopping.

Unfortunately, regardless of the allowances we must make in deference to the pandemic crisis, the problems of environmental degradation, climate change, and plastic pollution will remain. The Zero Waste Task Force has some tips for maintaining a lower-waste lifestyle that will help keep you, your family, and the planet healthy.

1. Choose Paper. When shopping, if there is an option, choose paper bags over plastic. While not a perfect

solution, paper decomposes faster than plastic. Plastic bags can take between 400 and 1,000 years to decompose. Paper is also more widely recyclable than plastic.

2. Go Big. If your local bulk goods have been reduced or eliminated, packaged goods might be your only option. Reduce waste by purchasing the largest size and avoid single-serving items.

3. Eliminate Food Waste. Make your fresh fruits and vegetables last longer with proper storage techniques. Use a damp produce bag, tea towel, or cotton bag to keep greens and herbs crisp, store asparagus and carrots in water, separate bananas from other fruit to prevent overripening, and compost what you are able.

4. Learn to Cook. Now is the time to make meals out of leftovers, create stocks out of food scraps or jam out of overripe fruits, and jump on the bread-making bandwagon. Adopting a DIY approach will result in purchasing less

packaged goods, meaning less landfill waste.

5. Shop Your Pantry. Reduce trips to the grocery store by shopping your own pantry before buying something new. You might be surprised by what you find in there. Creatively meal plan around items you already have—like that can of pinto beans you bought six months ago—and clear out space in your pantry at the same time.

With only a little more effort and a dash of creativity, it's possible to maintain a lower-waste lifestyle while working together to keep each other and the planet healthy.

Maerin Renee is a volunteer with the Zero Waste Team. While taking the above photo of her refrigerator, she almost snapped a shot of her cat. "Athena jumped in the fridge and wouldn't come out until I lured her with treats!"

Amanda Hefner

Over the past few months, the Forests and Wildlife Stewards have been working hard to confront issues and agendas that compromise the health and well-being of our cherished forested areas in Minnesota.

Did you know that we have 16.2 million acres of forested land in our state? That's a lot to protect! As activists of the land, the Forests and Wildlife Stewards work towards lowering harvest levels in federal, state, and county forests that are currently being managed for periodic logging. This is an important task in Minnesota because our forests are not only a source of recreation, scenic beauty, and joy; they are also critical for wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and species biodiversity.

Our state's forests are currently under threat of increased logging and aggressive timber-harvesting plans. These agendas are being rolled out at both the state and local level.

The Forests and Wildlife Stewards are against these plans. Increased logging in intact forests and wildlife management areas can have far-reaching negative effects on our state's environment. Logging will also hinder our goal of decreasing our carbon footprint.

Studies have shown that intact forests, particularly old growth forests, act as fantastic carbon sinks, sequestering CO₂ from the atmosphere. This makes them a great natural medium in the fight against climate change. While the natural storing of carbon makes intact forests a valuable resource in mitigating global climate change, less than 20 percent of the world's forests remain intact.

Right now, the Forests and Wildlife Stewards are pressuring the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to keep logging out of Wildlife Management Areas. The DNR's current timber harvest plan calls for too much logging in too many places that have been set aside for wildlife. We have met with the DNR Commissioner and submitted 916 comments on this issue, and we will continue to monitor the situation and pressure staff to defend wildlife and forest health.

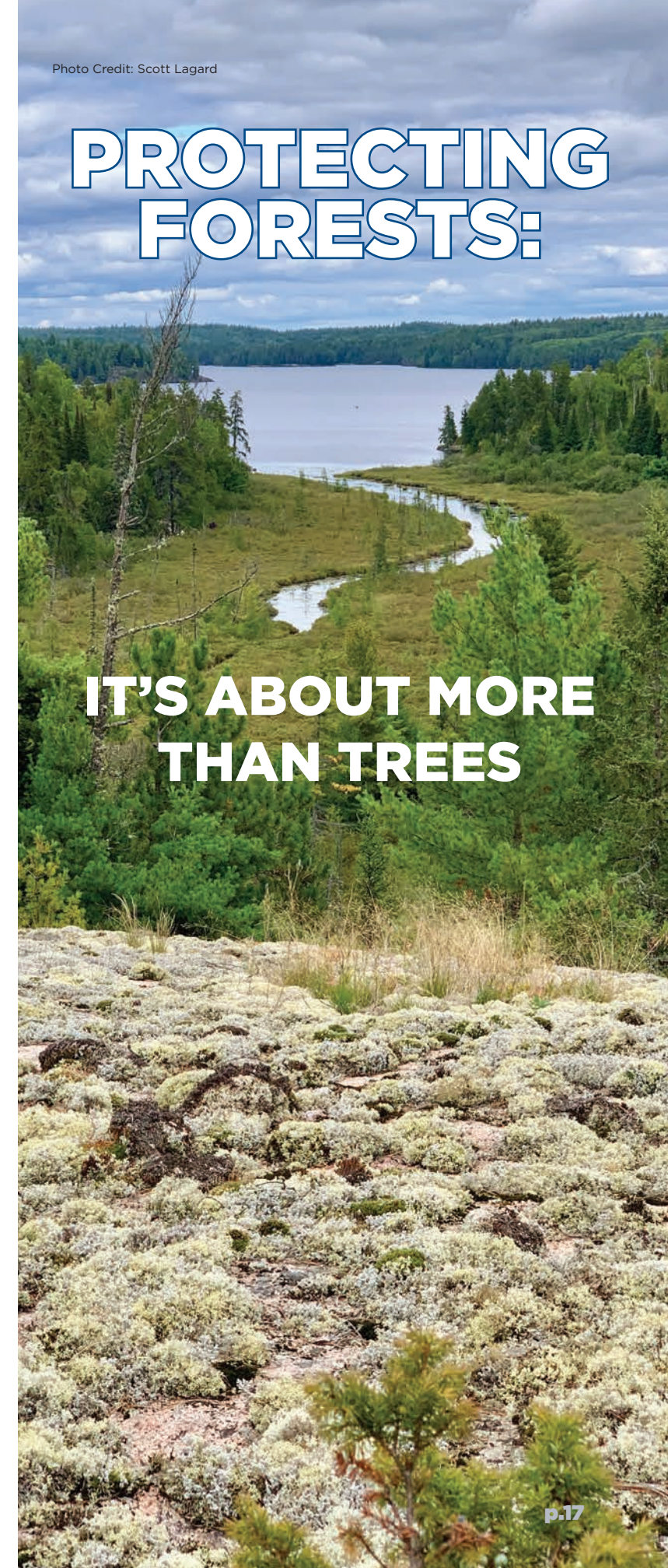
Our forests provide irreplaceable benefits to our state and global community. Therefore, the Forests and Wildlife Stewards will continue their work to ensure that valuable natural resources such as our forests will remain protected and intact for generations to come.

Amanda Hefner is a volunteer with the Forests and Wildlife Stewards. She also is a recent Environmental Geography MA graduate of the University of Minnesota and is an avid hiker, cat lover, and hockey fan.

Photo Credit: Scott Lagard

PROTECTING FORESTS:

IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN TREES



YEARNING FOR AWE AND ADVENTURE IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

Alec Olson

Getting your head around the state of the world this spring was nothing short of an anxiety-inducing nightmare. What's usually relegated to science fiction became a reality as the world faced a pandemic that continues to mount an omnipresent threat. One of the only ways to slow it is to stay at home.

People in government, business and, of course, health-care grappled with what to do - and how fast to do it. The spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, swept through the U.S. quickly, changing everyday life for just about everyone.

In Minnesota, stay-at-home orders went into effect in March and later extended into May in an effort to slow the spread and, ultimately, reduce pressure on health-care workers and facilities.

Under Governor Walz's order, people were to limit outings to essential errands - as in getting to safety, traveling to care for family, or buying groceries. As Minnesotans, the idea of hunkering down during a storm is second nature - just as nature and the outdoors are ground into the culture.

While there wasn't a mighty blizzard or a torrential downpour, the storm was, and is, a hardship just the same.

While it's critical that people limit travel to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, Governor Walz's executive order allowed people to enjoy the outdoors, including "walking, hiking, running, biking, hunting, or fishing." When recreating outdoors, you'd still have to practice safe social, or rather physical, distancing protocols.

The outdoors has proven time after time to be a sanctuary to those suffering from mental or physical ailments. Some researchers have found that more than two-thirds of people flock to the outdoors during stressful times, according to the University of Minnesota. The vast majority of people report feeling better after spending some time in nature - or even seeing signs of nature.

During a time of heightened stress and anxiety, being able to simply go for a walk in a nearby park is like medicine. So, during a time of extreme uncertainty and stress, why not enjoy some time outdoors to take the edge off?

FIND ADVENTURE CLOSE TO HOME

Having a strong affinity for the outdoors comes with something of an adventurous spirit. The urge to hit the road is always present, even if subdued in the back of your mind. But that yearning never ceases. It's what pushes you to go farther and explore new horizons.

Unfortunately, that's out of the question. Unless, new horizons means a few blocks away or a short drive from home. People need to limit their geographical footprint, and take the necessary precautions when they do venture out. See the Minnesota Department of Health website for its guidelines.

When it's all over, people will likely relish their freedom like never before. But, until then, it's best to get better acquainted with your local woods.

For those who live nearby, state parks remain open for day use. Check the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource website regularly for updates and more detailed information. Mobile apps like AllTrails, Gaia GPS or The Hiking Project can help you find nearby trails as well, along with record your hikes, add notes and reviews, and more.

SET DOWN ROOTS

Rather than feeling stuck, why not set down roots? As spring turns to summer, the time for starting a garden couldn't be better - even if you're bound to an apartment or a small patch of land. So long as your plants can live with the amount of sunlight available, a garden is a viable source of happiness, pride and distraction.

Being homebound is also a good time to learn about the natural world. Minneapolis-based Sidewalk Plant Lab is helping people discover more about the local flora that sprout out of sidewalk cracks and perennially show up around town.

On Instagram (@sidewalkplantlab), Liz Dengate, a long-time Sierra Club volunteer, shares regular posts of plants found around the Twin Cities. Part of the organization's mission is to label the plants with handmade signs to help others identify the plant.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

You can only walk around the same block so many times. There is only so much work you can do in a garden. If you can read about plants all day, more

power to you. But, for some, the more time at home might've had you itching to run off to the wild.

Channel that energy into the future ahead. Where do you want to go when it's safe? What adventure do you want to have when the dust clears? The Friends of the BWCAW published a free e-book for use as a planning tool, including suggestions for bucket-list trips. With nothing but time, start planning that epic now.

ACTIVISM AT A DISTANCE

One major theme of the pandemic is that it forced rapid change on everybody. Some good, some bad. One positive was that people were able to find connections in spite of physical distance and unprecedented challenges.

The use of video conferencing software, live streaming platforms, and social media skyrocketed with activists finding alternative routes to keep the communication going during a critical time. Some were able to organize in person while adhering to social distancing guidelines, including a drive-in demonstration around the State

Capitol advocating for the Boundary Waters. People found a way to stay on top of the issues at hand and press on.

"These are trying times," said Governor Tim Walz in a news release on his executive order. "But we are Minnesotans. We see challenges—and we tackle them. No matter how daunting the challenge; no matter how dark the times; Minnesota has always risen up—by coming together."

During a time of remote rallies and demonstrations, you can find a community to be a part of and contribute to - the Sierra Club included. We are now hosting Conversations for People and the Planet, where we provide an overview of a given topic like Climate Justice or Sulfide Mining and then have conversation to build connections with each other and find ways to help out, even if it's at a distance.

Alec Olson is the co-editor of the North Star Journal. And a happy (and somewhat nervous) expectant father!

HEROES, NOT MARTYRS



“We see the faces of those we now call heroes...who have never been treated as such.”

Charles Frempong-Longdon Jr.

Our heroes are kind. Our heroes are brave. Our heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Our heroes are reflections of humanity's most treasured qualities. They are selfless and dedicated to the greater good. There can be no question that their selflessness is something beautiful, but what condition do we leave our heroes in? Do we consider their well-being as we applaud their heroism?

In these unprecedented times, we adapt, decode, and survive with new rules. But it is important to remember that the old rule still stands. Systems of inequality have divided our communities since the colonization of this land. They still exist and cause harm during the present crisis.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities in the Twin Cities have never been a priority when it comes to repaying debts. Time and again, white supremacy and environmental racism have relegated their concerns to the periphery.

One such example of environmental racism is the placement of the HERC trash incinerator in North Minneapolis, where it spews toxins into communities of color. According to MPR reports, rates of asthma and lung cancer in these communities far exceed statewide averages.

We see the effects of white supremacy in the labor of black and brown immigrants

exploited for low wages, their bodies treated as resources to be extracted. We see the faces of those we now call our heroes—health care workers, grocery store employees, bus drivers, teachers, food service worker — who have never been treated as such. We now have a clear grasp of the importance of these occupations, but we see the sinister impacts of the old inequitable systems in their lives.

Essential workers, many of whom are BIPOC low income workers, suffer from COVID-19 at far greater rates than those of us who are able to stay home now. Black Americans are dying from COVID-19 in much higher percentages than white Americans. On top of being exposed to higher rates of infection and complications from the virus, essential workers are also forced to navigate our system's reality: low-paying jobs for their invaluable labor, rent payments that compound as the months go by, and unaffordable health care are all exacerbated by the burden of environmental racism.

Our essential workers are heroes, not martyrs, and heroes' lives are not risked unnecessarily. Inequity plagued us long before this crisis. Echoes of injustice will be heard throughout its duration and onward unless we dismantle the foundations of oppression.

This means fighting for all of us and especially our BIPOC heroes. Fighting

for a Minnesota where all--black, brown, white, urban, and rural — have a safe place to live with clean water to drink and clean air to breathe, and all can work free from exploitation.

This is the work of the Sierra Club and the particular focus of the Healthy Communities Program. The Healthy Communities Program centers relationship, narrative, and healing as a holistic approach to movement building. Current campaigns include efforts to shut down the HERC incinerator in North Minneapolis, and to require the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to take environmental racism into account when making permitting decisions.

Environmental policy is not exempt from the historical racism which is embedded into the systems and institutions of the United States. Only through centering the voices of those most marginalized can transformative, real solutions emerge.

Charles Frempong-Longdon Jr. is an Environmental Justice organizer with the Sierra Club's Healthy Communities program. On their off time they enjoy biking, cooking, and writing. Their poems have been featured in Apt Magazine and Flypaper Magazine.

CHANGING TO WIN

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT MUST EMBRACE JUSTICE

Delaney Russell and Marya Hart

In our Chair & Director's column, you can read about how and why our journey towards a sustainable future must be grounded in equity.

Here we discuss further why our work to save the planet must include advocacy on issues from housing to workers rights and police brutality.

The historic model of separating environmental issues from other community needs isn't working. We have wins, here and there, but over the last decades, environmental organizations have been failing. We aren't meeting our climate goals, and scientists at the Smithsonian estimate that species are being lost at rates of 100s or even 1,000s of times the natural rate. What we're doing isn't working; we must change.

So we (and the environmental movement in general) are in a stage of transformation. We are building a broader movement to give us the power to create full systems change.

We have learned that keeping the planet healthy for us and future generations requires addressing the roots of our current crises: the underlying systems of extraction and oppression. To succeed, we must adopt and create new systems of mutual sustainability and respect for the earth, for ecosystems, and for each other.

We must align with the earth and with each other, including reaching across the momentum of history and systems of injustice to align with the communities



Delaney, left, and Marya, right, receive awards at our Solstice Celebration. Photo Credit: Candace Baker

which have been harmed most by economic, racial, and environmental injustice.

We must fight for democracy, stop gerrymandering and voter suppression, and keep money out of politics. Corruption in politics, like oil money from the Koch Industries and the Flint Hill refineries, influence our politics to the point that we have 50 Minnesotan Republicans on record denying that climate change is caused by humans. When more people can vote (and right now people of color are disenfranchised at higher percentages than whites) we gain environmental voters. When more people have access to good wages and can live in safe communities, more people can join the fight for environmental sustainability, instead of fighting to survive in an unjust society.

Together we can build the power to win a sustainable future. We can act on our fundamental interconnectedness with the planet and with each other. To embody this means proactively incorporating equity into all aspects of our work.

To this end, our Change & Equity Team is working on internal and external transformation. Here's a current snapshot of our progress:

- **VOLUNTEER STRUCTURE & TRAININGS** — We are offering volunteer teams resources for how to create inclusive, equitable spaces

based on the Jemez Principles (check them out at <https://www.ejnet.org/>

[ej/jemez.pdf](https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf)). We have shifted team structures to be more action-oriented. We are offering training and resources on the basics of environmental justice and how to be anti-racist. (See our calendar for upcoming trainings.)

- **PARTNER EVENTS & SUPPORT** — We are collaborating with partner organizations led by Blacks, Indigenous, and People of Color to make sure we are aligned with their needs and benefiting from their perspective on how to build a more just and resilient world.
- **CAMPAIGNS CENTERED IN EQUITY** — All of our campaigns from zero waste to clean air affect Minnesotans differently. We are working to ensure that marginalized communities' voices are heard and centered in our campaign work.

Delaney Russell is a member of the Sierra Club's Change & Equity Team and leads trainings on Environmental Justice. Marya Hart is Chair of the Communications Team and editor of the Deeper Dive volunteer newsletter.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Executive Committee (ExCom) is the governing committee of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter. The ExCom has overall responsibility for strategic planning and budgeting; establishing and overseeing the subcommittees that plan and implement the conservation campaigns, electoral efforts, communications, and outdoor activities; and hiring and overseeing the State Director.

ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR TERMS BEGINNING 2021

The ExCom is made up of fifteen at-large elected Sierra Club members in Minnesota. Any current member is eligible to run. Members are elected for a rotating three-year term, and those elected at the end of this year will begin their terms in January 2021. We invite you to submit names to the Nominations Committee for consideration for ExCom election. Members who are not nominated by the committee can petition for candidacy with the signature of 25 members if submitted by the petition deadline.

See photos and bios online at:
<https://www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/chapter-leadership>

PROPOSED ELECTION TIMELINE:

- July 31, 2020 - Deadline to submit names to Nominating Committee for consideration
- September 21, 2020 - Nominating Committee reports nominees to ExCom
- October 5, 2020 - Deadline to submit petitions to Secretary
- October 20, 2020 - Elections Committee appointed to count ballots

- November 2, 2020 - Week of ballot mailing
- January 4, 2021 - Closing date of election

If you are interested in running for the ExCom or for more information, please contact the chapter office at north.star.chapter@sierraclub.org or 612-659-9124.

LIST OF CURRENT AT-LARGE EXCOM MEMBERS

NAME	RESIDENCE	END OF TERM
Kate Brauman	Minneapolis	2020
Marty Cobenais	Bagley	2021
Luther Dale	Shoreview	2022
John Doberstein	Duluth	2020
Katie Eukel	Minneapolis	2021
Filsan Ibrahim	St. Paul	2020
Lyz Jaakola	Cloquet	2020
Sam Murphy	Minneapolis	2021
Lois Norrgard	Bloomington	2022
Sammie Ardito Rivera	Minneapolis	2022
Hannah Smith	Minneapolis	2021
Tom Thompson	Duluth	2022
Alicia Uzarek	Minneapolis	2022
Kamau Wilkins	Rochester	2020
Sarah Wovcha	St. Paul	2021



Ensure your environmental legacy by naming Sierra Club or your favorite Sierra Club Chapter in your will or trust. These gifts cost you nothing now. You can hold on to your assets for as long as you need them and you can change your beneficiaries at any time.

If you have named Sierra Club or your Chapter as a beneficiary or would like to discuss doing so, please contact us today

LORI SULLIVAN Director of Gift Planning
 2101 Webster St, Suite 1300, Oakland, CA 94612

(800) 932-4270
gift.planning@sierraclub.org
sierraclubplanning.org



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We are nearly 80,000 Minnesotans working for our communities' well-being through environmental protection.

TOGETHER WE:

- Work in partnership for environmental and racial justice
- Create change through grassroots political advocacy
- Pair volunteer leadership with professional expertise

OUR PRIORITIES:

- Move Minnesota to Clean Energy
- Protect Lands and Waters
- Promote Sustainable Communities and Transportation
- Connect Minnesotans to Nature

Thank you for being a part of the North Star Team!



The Minnesota Sierra Club staff team



The Sierra Club Foundation benefits from workplace contributions to the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which provides a payroll giving option to support local member organizations that protect, conserve and restore Minnesota's environment.

To learn more about adding this giving option at your workplace, please contact Margaret Levin at 612-659-9124 or margaret.levin@sierraclub.org.



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N O R T H S T A R JOURNAL

NEWS ON OUR EFFORTS TO KEEP THE ENVIRONMENT HEALTHY FOR MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES



Photo Credit: Chuck Dayton

or current resident

Volunteers Wanted!

Contribute your time to protect the air, water, lands and climate we all depend on. Join us for remote meetings for now, and in person when we can.

CAMPAIGN TEAMS: Lead grassroots advocacy campaigns on our most pressing issues

Stop Line 3, 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 PM
 scott.russell@northstar.sierraclub.org
 marcy.leussler@northstar.sierraclub.org

Land Use & Transportation, 1st Monday at 6:00 PM
 alex.burns@northstar.sierraclub.org

Zero Waste, 1st Tuesday at 7:00 PM
 lori.olinger@northstar.sierraclub.org

100% Clean Energy, 4th Tuesday at 6:30 PM
 clean.energy@northstar.sierraclub.org

GEOGRAPHIC TEAMS: Organize in your city for 100% Clean Energy

Rochester, 2nd Monday at 6:30 PM
 rick.morris@sierraclub.org

Duluth, 1st Tuesday at 5:30 PM
 jenna.yeakle@sierraclub.org

Minnetonka/Wayzata, meeting times vary
 patty.okeefe@sierraclub.org

STEWARDS TEAMS: Research, monitor and advocate for environmental issues.

Forests and Wildlife Stewards, 2nd Monday at 7:00 PM
 bob.graves@northstar.sierraclub.org

Waters and Wetlands Stewards, 2nd Monday at 7:00 PM
 steve.ring@northstar.sierraclub.org

CAPACITY TEAMS: Share your talents and skills with us

SierraAction: Use our grassroots power to impact legislation
 4th Wednesday, satish.desai@northstar.sierraclub.org;
 erik.hillesheim@northstar.sierraclub.org

Communications: Hone your photography, design, and writing skills
 Quarterly meetings, mary.blitzer@sierraclub.org

Equity Outreach: Spread the word about protecting our planet
 Ongoing events, charles.frempong-longdon@sierraclub.org

Outings: Find new friends and explore Minnesota parks
 Ongoing events, greg.allison@northstar.sierraclub.org

Inspiring Connections Outdoors: Plan and lead activities for youth new to the outdoors
 Ongoing events, mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org