

# N O R T H S T A R JOURNAL

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

FALL/WINTER 2020  
Volume 40, Issue 2



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**SIERRA CLUB**  
NORTH STAR CHAPTER

Illustration credit: Brian Bradshaw



## CHAIR & DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

In our 50+ years of working to protect Minnesota's environment, we've never seen a year like this. We know that no one in our state has been untouched by the multiple crises we are facing, from the pandemic to increasing climate disasters and clear and present threats to our democracy.

Through it all, Sierra Club's North Star Chapter has continued to show up every single day and fight for our communities. We are deeply encouraged by the way our donors, volunteers, and staff have responded to this unprecedented moment.

Over the last few difficult months, you helped to hold the line against Enbridge's dirty and dangerous Line 3 tar sands pipeline through continued legal challenges and fierce grassroots pressure from activists and Indigenous partners. You supported a cleaner and more equitable transportation system to reduce pollution and protect our health with more electric buses and vehicles, and light rail expansion. And in the wake of George Floyd's brutal murder and civil rights uprisings in our community, you have joined us in the ongoing struggle for racial and environmental justice.

The Sierra Club is recognizing our history of racism and picking up the pace on our journey towards justice. Internally, we are leading trainings and hosting conversations, like our Racial Justice Town Hall and our Environmental Justice 101 Training Series. Externally, we are seeking to build stronger relationships and friendships with folks across the movement for justice. This year we are proud to have launched our Partnership Grants which have supported urgent pandemic relief needs, rebuilding after the uprising following George Floyd's murder, and events like the march for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

We're intertwining the fight for justice throughout our programs and invite you to read with an eye towards finding connections. As we go to the press with this issue, we are just finding out the election results. We are incredibly proud of our work to mobilize the Chapter's largest election effort here in Minnesota.

Together we make Minnesota just and sustainable,

Kamau Wilkins  
Chair, Executive Committee  
Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Margaret Levin  
State Director  
Sierra Club North Star Chapter



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# A CROSSROADS: THE TIES BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RACISM



Participants at the Justice Caravan in Solidarity for George Floyd and Solidarity Memorial Vigil in Duluth kneel for the 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the amount of time Police Officer Derek Chauvin's knee was on George Floyd's neck. Photo credit: Tom Thompson

Scott Russell

Racial justice and environmental protection are deeply connected. Although this may not be readily apparent, once one example is pointed out, it's easier to see others.

We've seen the connection with Northern Metal Recycling in North Minneapolis. The company was granted permits to operate in a neighborhood made up predominantly of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and low-income households. Local environmental protection agencies were slow to install air quality monitors. Once these were in place, the state was slow to respond to violations with significant sanctions. That's how systemic racism crops up in environmental decisions.

We've seen the connection with the Line 3 tar sands pipeline, which threatens our water, wetlands, and wild rice. The state's environmental review found the project's burden would fall disproportionately on the Anishinaabe people. Three tribes have said they don't want this pipeline but aren't being heard. Yet Line 3 is moving through the review process, despite treaty violations. That's how systemic racism crops up in environmental decisions.

Over-policing contributes to a toxic

environment too. Traditionally, we at the Sierra Club haven't thought of policing as an environmental issue; folks think when we say "toxic" we literally mean poisoning the environment. But police are a part of our human environment, and our mission includes a charge to "educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment."

BIPOC community members are repeatedly stopped by law enforcement for minor infractions, any one of which might turn deadly. This makes for a toxic daily living environment.

Police violence also affects the environmental protection movement. Two years ago at Standing Rock, police shot rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons at water protectors in order to protect the profits of the multinational corporations that own the Dakota Access Pipeline. Here in Minnesota, Enbridge is paying money into an account for local law enforcement agencies to use against water protectors protesting Line 3.

We must engage in environmental protection by fighting systemic racism, and we must acknowledge Sierra Club's complicity. This July, Michael Brune, the National Director of the Sierra Club, issued a statement acknowledging

the organization's racist history and committing to undo the institutional racism that still exists in our organization.

To further this goal, each of the North Star Chapter's action teams will have a member committed to equity and racial justice. All teams will include environmental justice goals and equity in their work plans. We have created grants to support partnerships between our action teams and BIPOC-led organizations.

Some members have told us to "stay in our lane," and stop talking about race and privilege, while others are asking why we haven't done more. We welcome conversations about these issues. By learning and growing together we will build a movement strong enough to end the status quo which poisons our air, water, and climate and systematically overburdens Black and brown communities. A better world is possible.

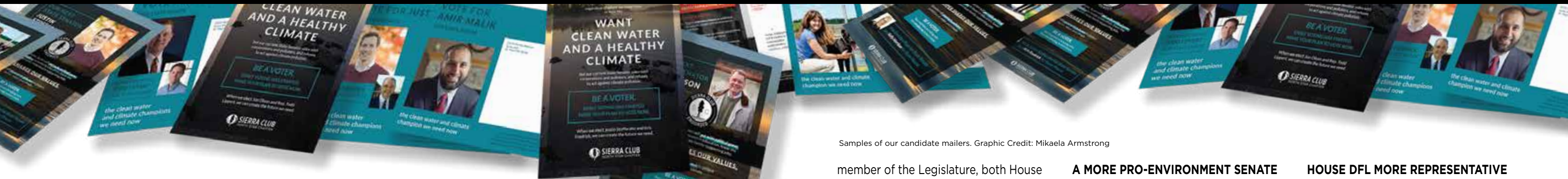
Please contact Mary Blitzer at [mary.blitzer@sierraclub.org](mailto:mary.blitzer@sierraclub.org) if you would like to discuss this or related topics.

*Scott Russell is a member of the Sierra Club's Change & Equity Team, regularly publishes on "Healing Minnesota Stories", and is the proud owner of a dome home.*



# Electing Climate & Water Champions *in Minnesota*

**We make Minnesota just and sustainable for all — Black and white, Native and newcomer, urban and rural.**



Samples of our candidate mailers. Graphic Credit: Mikaela Armstrong

## ELECTION ACTIVITIES

Despite all the chaos and hardship of 2020, staff, volunteers and activists came together to bring the voices of our 80,000 Minnesotans to some of our biggest challenges. We put together our largest effort to support climate and water champions ever. We know our new elected officials will have a tremendous impact on our ability to create the just, sustainable future we need.

The North Star Chapter focused on state races knowing our national counterparts were focusing on federal elections, including the Presidential and close Congressional contests.

Here in Minnesota we:

- Conducted a thorough candidate vetting and screening process, resulting in 117 endorsements by our Political Committee volunteer leaders.
- Prioritized 10 Senate Districts and 22 House Districts.
- Built a team of nearly 100 dedicated SierraVotes volunteers with whom we hosted weekly phone and text banks to reach out to 28,141 climate voters in our priority districts.
- Trained 31 Relational Organizers to talk with their own networks about voting and climate justice.

These volunteer efforts were supported by a digital and print campaign highlighting our candidates' support

for our shared values — clean air, water, climate and our communities.

- We sent 60,791 Minnesota voters at least two informational mailings with the facts on our endorsed candidates, along with the anti-environment records of their opposition.
- We ran digital ads in 15 races across the state which reached 81,000 Minnesotans with positive messages for our candidates.
- We emailed our members and supporters statewide to share our slate of endorsed candidates.

## ELECTION RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Minnesotans voted in record numbers, with nearly 80% of eligible voters turning out in support of their values. We saw voters reject Trump and his politics of fear in Minnesota with 52% of the vote. We also saw that voters in Minnesota remain divided between urban and rural areas and along partisan lines. We fought hard for climate and water champions — supporting new leaders, defending current leaders, and building power for the 2021 legislative session and beyond.

### STATE SENATE MAJORITY: CLOSER, BUT NOT YET

Corporate polluters currently benefit from a State Senate controlled by a 35-32 Republican majority. So we needed to flip at least two seats. Three Sierra Club priority candidates, Lindsey Port, Aric

Putnam and Ann Johnson Stewart won and flipped seats our way. Unfortunately, two DFL incumbents who did not seek or earn our endorsement, Matt Little and Dan Sparks, appear to have lost their seats. So as of press time, the net partisan change is 1 seat for a 34-33 Republican control.

We were not relying on those non-Sierra DFL candidates to win their elections. In addition to our three winning candidates, we worked hard for six other environmental challengers, including Sara Flick and Aleta Borrud in the Rochester area who each lost with 49% of the vote. While those close losses are heartbreaking, it matters that all but one of our six challengers performed dramatically better than previous challengers in the same districts four years ago. We hope these great candidates run again. They have built campaign teams and name identification that could make the difference in two years.

You read that right. This new Senate term is not 4 years. This Senate term is just two years. Because of redistricting required by the 2020 census, every

member of the Legislature, both House and Senate, will be up for re-election in 2022. Anti-environment Senators from the Rochester area just got a big scare. If they keep voting against clean air, clean water and the climate, we'll be ready for them in 2022.

### HOUSE ENVIRONMENTAL MAJORITY: PROTECTED

Sierra Club participated in maintaining an environmental majority by helping to re-elect first term environmental legislators including Patty Acomb, Shelley Christensen, Kelly Morrison, Todd Lippert, Kristin Bahner, Kelly Moller, Ginny Klevorn, Heather Edelson, Steve Elkins, Dan Wolgamott and Ami Wazlawik. In particular we put our resources into defending Christensen, Morrison, Wolgamott, Lippert and Wazlawik. All five were elected on explicitly pro-environment platforms and only two were re-elected with more than 51% of the vote. Whew!

There are some other notable positives coming out of the election:

### A MORE PRO-ENVIRONMENT SENATE DFL CAUCUS

For many years, the Senate DFL Caucus has been significantly less assertive than House Democrats when it comes to standing up for the environment. But that is starting to change. New Senators endorsed by Sierra Club including Jen McEwen, Omar Fateh, Mary Kunesh-Podein and Erin Murphy will have an impact. This was not a guaranteed outcome. The Sierra Club put significant resources into the Senate primary in

### HOUSE DFL MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF MINNESOTA

Already strong with environmental leaders, the House DFL will be much more racially diverse in 2021 with new Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders. Sierra Club endorsed Cedric Frazier, Esther Agbaje, Heather Keeler, Athena Hollins and John Thompson who will take office in January. Together with first term legislators Tou Xiong, Ruth Richardson, Mohamud Noor, Hodan Hassan, Aisha Gomez, Samantha Vang, Kaohly Her, and Jay Xiong, the House of Representatives will be far more representative than at any time in Minnesota history.

### WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

We did incredible work together. The election is not the end; it is a goal post. We will keep organizing for our voices and values to be heard. Thank you for supporting this work with your dollars and time.

*Mary Blitzer, Margaret Breen, Natalie Cook, Margaret Levin, Sophia Pechaty, and Peter Wagenius compose the staff team leading our political program.*

**“IT JUST FELT SO GOOD TO FILL IN THOSE BUBBLES.”**

- DOREEN, SIERRAVOTES VOLUNTEER

Duluth where Jen McEwen was running a strong challenge to an incumbent Democrat with a bad record on the environment. We did this not only to help McEwen win, but to also send a strong message to other Democratic incumbents that we will hold them accountable. We are proud to report that Jen McEwen won the primary and general election, bringing a bold, new progressive voice to the Capitol from Duluth.



# THE NEED TO PROMOTE OUTDOORS FOR ALL HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER

William O'Brien State Park in the fall. Photo credit: Alec Olson

Alec Olson

I took my family to William O'Brien State Park this fall to chase down the brilliant views of the red, yellow and orange leaves. The fall is a special time in the North. But there is a poignant truth about fall. The summer winds down, the days begin to escape us.

For me, I become somewhat frantic. My internal alarm bells sound and the drive to get outside soars. The annual fall traditions of chasing peak colors is a time I must afford myself, and I'm glad I did, because the hour-long drive to the state park proved more than worth it; the views were nothing short of picturesque.

I needed that time to recharge and reset, because for me, spending time outside is a medicine I can't do without.

## We Venture Outside to Heal

With my wife, 3-month-old son, and puppy in tow, time outside can be limited.

But it doesn't take long to benefit from

time outside. Spending roughly 20 minutes a day outside benefits one's health and wellbeing. Although twenty minutes doesn't seem like much, it can be a relatively big ask for some, especially those with little free time or no connection to green spaces.

My family's time at the park would span an hour, but I could have spent all day there. We set out to cover a portion of the Hiking Club trail, a 5.3-mile loop that winds through a prairie, with stretches through the woods. On a sunny day, the prairie appears to shine. It's a warm, golden hue with tall grasses that sway in the wind making it resemble a lake. The trees that enclose the prairie put on a show with a nice mix of fall colors.

These perfect fall days create a sense of ease, even during unrest.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 53 percent of adults in the U.S. say their mental health has been negatively affected by the pandemic; up from 32 percent in March. But, of course,

the pandemic hasn't been the only stressor of 2020.

From systemic and environmental racism to threatened public lands, social and environmental justice issues remain front and center for many of us. And some don't have the privilege to escape to a state park for an afternoon as I do.

Spending time outdoors has helped me both physically and mentally, and I try to help others find the benefits of a life spent outside.

As we hiked, I recalled my experiences volunteering with Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program, an initiative aimed at connecting people of all races, ages, income levels and backgrounds to nature through outings.

I volunteered to guide a group made up primarily of Black teenage boys. During these outings, it wasn't uncommon to hear some of them say that this was their only connection with the outdoors — and that stuck with me.

I'm a white man, living in Richfield with plenty of access to public parks, green spaces and trails near my house. I can't imagine not having a connection to nature — even if it was only a city park.

I had some understanding of the barriers standing in the way of people of color. The odds were stacked against them when it came to accessing public lands. But hearing it from these boys, who joked with one another on the trail and were fascinated by the intricacies of nature, has stayed with me. Experiences like these fuel my work with the Sierra Club and other organizations which promote equity in the outdoors.

## We Must Promote 'Outdoors for All'

Barriers to the outdoors come in many forms. The Sierra Club seeks to address them in multiple ways, including by centering our campaigns in equity. A couple of examples come to mind:

- **Clean Air:** is necessary to safely recreate outdoors in your backyard, neighborhood park or National park. The Sierra Club fights for clean

air for all: shutting down polluting infrastructure like the HERC garbage burner, fracked gas and coal plants, along with reducing and eliminating vehicle emissions by expanding transit and electric engines. All of these disproportionately impact Black and brown neighborhoods.

- **Justice:** When we build justice into our campaigns, we start to narrow many opportunity gaps including the "adventure gap" Black and brown Minnesotans face. When we lobby Xcel Energy to change their 15-year plan, we are pushing them to ensure that new work generated by the clean energy economy includes folks who have been left out -- like Black and brown workers.
- **Building connections outdoors:** I've seen how programs like ICO can bring positivity to people's lives and build a bridge to the natural world. The outdoors should be enjoyed by all, but it's especially important to help those who have historically

experienced limited access. Through the Sierra Club, volunteers can help bridge the gap and provide resources needed to achieve Outdoors For All.

We also are pushing back against policies that could make Black and brown Minnesotans less comfortable outdoors, including DNR Conservation Officers being outfitted with riot gear and deployed during civil unrest in Minneapolis or against Indigenous water protectors.

For more information about how you can help the Sierra Club improve equity in the outdoors, visit [www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/inspiring-connections-outdoors](http://www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/inspiring-connections-outdoors) or contact [mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org](mailto:mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org) to get started as a volunteer.

*Alec Olson is a co-editor of this Journal and Communications Team volunteer.*



# A FIELD TRIP THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

The Healthy Communities Program recognizes the need to build relationships across the movement. We asked Juwaria Jama to write a piece for the Journal so our membership could learn directly from the experiences of a youth climate leader. We hope you enjoy and are inspired by Juwaria's story.

## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES CAMPAIGN GOALS 2020/21:

- Close down the HERC garbage incinerator through direct engagement with community members.
- Empower and amplify the voices of people directly affected. We will build an intergenerational base of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) supporters and co-create a political home for environmental justice at the Sierra Club and beyond.
- Advocate for administrative agencies that serve all — Black, brown, and white — people of Minnesota. Agencies from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to the Department of Transportation must be pushed to regulate corporate polluters, provide reparations for affected community members, and to fully consider the needs of BIPOC and poor communities and the impacts agency decisions have on them.

2019 Youth Climate Strike, St. Paul. Photo credit: Mateo Trujillo

Juwaria Jama

I spent my childhood in a private school, with people who shared the same beliefs and practices as me. My family didn't have enough money to keep enrolling me in school and outside activities, so I took a leap of faith and started my freshman year in a public school. For the first time in my life I found many opportunities to get involved. Like any teenager, I wanted to catch up on all the clubs and sports I had missed out on. One club I joined was Leo's Club, which focused on service projects. We went on field trips to food shelves and other places that needed help. A trip to the State Capitol in January of 2019 changed my life forever.

That day, a group of youth organized an open conversation with Governor Walz about Line 3 and I saw for the first time what youth power looked like. Coming from a socially conservative private school where many of us didn't express our thoughts, it was inspiring to attend an event where youth unapologetically talked to their legislators. I wanted

to learn more about Line 3, about environmental justice, and about the climate crisis, so I did. I slowly became involved in the youth climate justice movement in Minnesota. One of the youth organizers recruited me into the youth climate group and I started my life as a youth organizer. I learned how to work with other people, how to de-escalate situations, what to say to the media, how to approach legislators, and much more.

But the most important lesson I learned was hope. The group I first joined in 2019 had a lot of issues regarding race relations and fell apart. Instead of losing hope in our fight, we created a new climate organization to address the issues the last group faced. We no longer focused on climate justice as a discrete issue, but as one that was intertwined with race, class and homelessness. Our work has taught me that it's important to find the similarities, instead of searching for the differences. I've learned that it's okay to fail, as long as we rebuild together. I am thankful to

have met many amazing young people and adult allies who have taught me how to be an organizer.

In the coming year, the Minnesota Youth Climate Strike plans to focus on mutual aid and community organizing. With the pandemic, we've seen a need for community volunteering and supply donations, so we want to do our best to show up for people around us.

There is so much up in the air with the world right now but I'm looking forward to organizing, creating art, and building community! I never thought that going on a high school field trip would change my outlook and interests in life, but it did, and I am grateful.

*Juwaria Jama, MN Youth Climate Strike State Lead. Her proudest accomplishment with the MN Youth Climate Strike is hosting the September 20th climate strike in Minnesota in 2019, where over 10,000 youth marched to our State Capitol. She currently does poetry commissions and accepts requests via instagram: @juwariiaa.*



Signs from a protest about Xcel Energy's 15 year plan. Photo credit: Sajin Alcid

Minnesotans — Black and white, urban and rural — want to protect our children's and our climate's future. Unfortunately, Minnesota energy companies are still pushing old,

fossil-fuel burning technology. Sierra Club staff, volunteer leaders, and activists across the state know a clean,

just energy future is possible. Together we are working for:

## A JUST TRANSITION TO 100% CLEAN, RENEWABLE ENERGY

Minnesota can change the way we generate electricity to drastically reduce climate pollution, create jobs and save ratepayers money. This transition will require big investments in our state. A just transition would ensure the benefits of those investments are seen by those affected by the shift away from fossil fuels and those most impacted by fossil fuel pollution: communities of color and low-income communities.

## NO NEW FOSSIL GAS PLANTS

Unfortunately, instead of planning for 100% renewable energy, Minnesota energy companies are still proposing to build new fossil gas plants and pipelines. There are 3 proposed plants from Minnesota utilities in Becker (Xcel Energy), Superior, WI (Minnesota Power), and Rochester (Rochester Public Utilities). We can't address the climate crisis by building new fossil fuel infrastructure, especially when clean energy alternatives pose less risk to our health, environment, and bank accounts.

## RETIRE ALL OF MINNESOTA'S REMAINING COAL PLANTS

Not only is coal a significant risk to our climate, coal pollution leads to asthma attacks, heart attacks and other health problems. And clean energy costs less! All but one of the big Minnesota coal plants are planning for retirement by 2030.

Read about our work across the state to advance this future through campaigns targeting Minnesota Power, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, Otter Tail Power, Xcel Energy, and Rochester Public Utilities.

# ENERGY DREAMS TO REALITY



## MINNESOTA POWER, 100% CLEAN, EQUITABLE ENERGY IS RIGHT FOR THE NORTHLAND

Jenna Yeakle

Minnesota Power, my investor-owned utility here in the Northland, is preparing to submit a plan that maps out how they'll power our homes, businesses, and places of worship. And with that plan, we — the people — get to weigh in and share our vision for a just transition to 100% clean energy that provides economic opportunities for our region.

Minnesota Power has an opportunity to lead, and we have an opportunity to push them to lead. Decisions made now will shape our economy, health and climate for decades to come.

The pandemic has magnified existing structural inequities and illuminated the need for repair and transformation. We know that the connection between

burning fossil fuels and the impairment of public health and the health of the planet are incontrovertible. We cannot do business as usual, and neither can utilities. In transitioning to 100% clean energy, Minnesota Power can play their part in protecting our air, water, climate and health while creating quality, sustainable economic opportunities in the Northland.

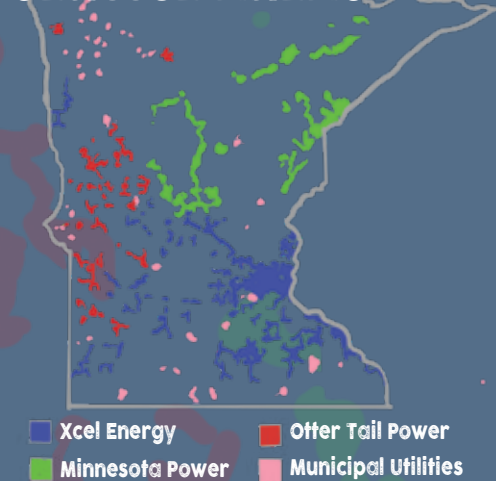
### IN THEIR PLANS TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE, WE ARE ASKING MINNESOTA POWER TO:

- Address the climate crisis by committing to a 100% clean energy portfolio, supported with storage and efficiency measures; retiring the Boswell coal plant; and stopping plans to build the proposed fossil fuel plant in Superior WI.
- Develop community and worker transition plans with communities impacted by the retirement of the Boswell coal plant.
- Provide equitable access to all of clean energy's benefits.
- Ensure fair costs to all ratepayers

- Plan for clean, smart electrification of transportation and buildings.

*To change everything, we need everyone. Want to mobilize your northwoods community? Get connected with Duluth Organizer Jenna Yeakle ([jenna.yeakle@sierraclub.org](mailto:jenna.yeakle@sierraclub.org)) and learn about our local Clean Energy Team online!*

## ENERGY COMPANY SERVICE AREAS



## RURAL MINNESOTA, BUILDING A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

Brittney Kakac

Electricity is not something you have to think about — it's just there when you flip your light switch. You pay your bill and you have electricity.

But how is that electricity generated? What company creates your electricity? Is it for-profit or a co-op? What is your relationship with your power company?

For the last year, the extent of my relationship with my electric utility company was through the bill I paid. Other than that, I rarely thought about it.

My utility is Otter Tail Power (OTP), headquartered in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Until recently, I thought OTP was "going green," that it invested in

solar and wind and was projected to exceed the state carbon reduction goals.

If you look at Otter Tail Power's website, there are plenty of photos and graphics of wind turbines, sky-blue and green background colors, and tabs titled "Sustainability" and "Environment" to click on. Surely, the company gives the perception that it intends to "go green."

Back in October 2019, I attended an OTP event called "The Power of Minnesota," which included a panel discussion and an 18-minute video about how they are going green and how customers should sign up for their TailWinds Program, which allows customers to pay a higher rate each month to essentially subsidize renewable energy.

Since I became involved in the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign, I have learned OTP is not as green as they advertise. Around 80 percent of the electricity OTP generates comes from

coal plants. And, the average OTP customer pays almost \$100 per year to big Wall Street Banks and investment firms, like BlackRock.

This means that my utility is funneling money out of our small communities, across western Minnesota, North and South Dakota, capitalizing on a product that no one can do without. OTP creates profit with dirty coal that pollutes those same rural areas.

Coal and other fossil fuels are the leading causes of climate change. We must put pressure on electric utilities and other fossil fuel burning industries to invest in renewables. Together, we can make change.

*Join us. To get involved in our campaign to retire Otter Tail Power's coal plants and get them replaced with renewable energy, contact Beyond Coal Campaign Intern, [Brittney.Kakac@sierraclub.org](mailto:Brittney.Kakac@sierraclub.org)*

## XCEL ENERGY'S 15-YEAR PLAN ISN'T DOING ENOUGH

Patty O'Keefe

Despite 100 percent carbon-free goals, Xcel's 15-year climate plan still goes big on gas while not going far enough to address racial and economic justice.

### MINNESOTA DESERVES BETTER.

Sierra Club supporters join customers from across Xcel Energy's service territory to push for serious changes to its 15-year climate plan, otherwise known as its Integrated Resource Plan. This plan details what energy sources they will use over the next 15 years.

The next 15 years are important as the consequences from fossil fuel consumption continue to manifest. During this time, we must decarbonize our economy and dismantle the systemic racism that permeates the energy system.

## THE MOST EGREGIOUS PART OF THE PLAN IS XCEL'S PROPOSAL TO BUILD A \$1 BILLION GAS PLANT AND PIPELINE IN BECKER.

### THIS GAS PLANT WILL:

- Harm our climate. The gas plant will emit 3.6 million metric tons of carbon annually (about the energy required to power 2.2 million homes for a year). The focus should be on decarbonizing our economy, not adding to an already flawed energy system.
- Pollute in communities of color. The chemicals used in fracked gas production poison the water and air of nearby communities, and fracked gas extraction sites are more likely to be permitted and constructed in neighborhoods with a high proportion of Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) and low-income households.
- Cost more than clean energy. According to Sierra Club calculations, building more wind and solar instead of a fracked gas plant would save Xcel customers \$360 million.

Community solar makes solar power more accessible to renters and low-income households and, if done right, opens the door for community

ownership. However, Xcel doesn't want anyone else to own and profit from clean energy, so community solar is severely underrepresented in their plan. Xcel's plan includes only 300 megawatts of community solar and rooftop solar for the next 15 years when 200 Megawatts were added in 2018 alone.

Xcel's plan also invests in garbage burning across the state, including a contract with the Hennepin Energy Recycle Center (HERC) burner that pollutes North Minneapolis. This is another glaring example of the environmental racism the community has been fighting for decades. Xcel's plan needs some major improvements, and together we can make it happen.

*Want to be a part of it? Contact [patty.okeefe@sierraclub.org](mailto:patty.okeefe@sierraclub.org) for more information, including our plan to get 10,000 comments submitted. You can also sign up to be a Public Comment Captain.*

## ROCHESTER POWERS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Rick Morris

Here in Rochester, we felt the effects of the three crises this summer: climate change, Covid-19, and police violence against Black people. We are rising to meet each crisis through the pain.

Young leaders in the Rochester schools from Black, Indigenous, and communities of color formed a new advocacy group called Rochester Community Initiative (RCI) — check them out at [RochInitiative.org](http://RochInitiative.org). RCI held the largest rally in Rochester

history, bringing together an estimated two thousand people to protest police brutality and to work for a more just future. Kamau Wilkins, chair of our Sierra Club North Star Chapter Executive Committee, delivered a powerful address to the crowd.

At the outset of the pandemic we knew that utility bills could make or break people's budgets when so many were out of work. We worked quickly to demand Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) halt all shut-offs and provide emergency relief for energy bills and forgiveness on past due bills. RPU agreed, and provided \$20,000 in relief to Rochester families in June alone.

Over the coming year, we will continue to fight Rochester's contribution to the climate crisis by building on the city's 100% renewable electricity commitment to 1) stop all new fossil fuel infrastructure, and 2) secure a commitment to transition all of Rochester's transportation, heating and cooling to clean, renewable electricity. We've already made some small strides: Rochester is purchasing its first two electric buses, and is currently studying its vehicle fleets to plan a partial transition.

*To talk more about any of our Rochester-based work and to get involved, contact [rick.morris@sierraclub.org](mailto:rick.morris@sierraclub.org). We'd love to hear from you.*





# RECONNECTING, REVITALIZING AND MAKING RESTITUTION

Traffic on I-94 through the Rondo neighborhood. Photo Credit: Joshua Houdek

**The Land Use and Transportation team has identified four priority areas. To get involved with the team contact Josh at [josh.houdek@sierraclub.org](mailto:josh.houdek@sierraclub.org).**

- **Expand Transit Funding & Options:** We need more Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to get people where they need to go. We advocate for safe, affordable and convenient transit.
- **Support Transit Ambassadors** - Everyone -- Black, white and brown -- should feel comfortable and safe on transit. Ambassadors, uniformed, unarmed transit officials, will help improve the culture and behavior of passengers on buses and trains. They would take over fare enforcement, removing some of the dangers of over-policing.
- **Sustainable Housing for All.** We advocate for affordable, sustainable housing and mixed-use, transit oriented development, or building homes, business, and recreation opportunities that are walkable and connected to transit.
- **Clean Cars.** We advocate for bringing more electric vehicle options to all Minnesotans, regardless of their race, income or zip code.

Emilie Wille

St. Paul's historic Rondo neighborhood is a thriving, diverse community and home to many immigrant families and Black owned businesses. It's situated between University Avenue and the METRO Green Line to the north, and Selby Avenue to the south. Black churches, businesses, and schools set down roots in the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, creating a strong community. Today, the area remains a diverse cultural center with the annual Rondo Days Celebration, Rondo Commemorative Plaza, and Community Outreach Library.

But Rondo also has a history shaped by racist highway construction. Now we have a chance to right this wrong. In 1956, when ground was broken for highway I-94, Rondo was literally torn apart. Over 600 homes and 300 businesses were demolished, displacing one in eight Black residents of St. Paul.

Rondo's story is not unique. Hundreds of neighborhoods across the country, disproportionately home to communities of color, have been damaged by the interstate highway

system. This damage makes highway construction one of the largest perpetrators of environmental racism in the United States.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) reports that over 150,000 vehicles speed across I-94 every day, carrying Minnesotans to their destinations while also spewing toxic emissions and creating noise from tailpipes, wheels, and truck brakes.

MnDOT is planning for the full reconstruction of I-94 between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul. This provides an opportunity to repair some of the harm in Rondo and all the Twin Cities neighborhoods affected every day by the interstate highway.

MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 project aims to correct past injustices, "reconnect neighborhoods, revitalize communities and ensure residents have a meaningful voice in transportation decisions that affect their lives."

Sierra Club, neighborhoods, and local community organizations are heavily involved to ensure the project benefits people, not just cars and trucks.

ReConnect Rondo is a nonprofit advocating for a land bridge over I-94 in the historic Rondo neighborhood. A land bridge is more than your typical bridge. It includes possibilities to not only physically rejoin Rondo, but also to have space for parks, housing, businesses, and cultural gatherings. ReConnect's planning process emphasizes empowerment through ownership, with suggestions from Black residents helping to decide the bridge's layout.

"We have a blank canvas, and there's an opportunity to paint on that canvas whatever it is we hear articulated through the community," says Keith Baker, director of ReConnect Rondo. "We're not the first to build a structure that things can go on top of, but we are the first to really consider a way in which communities are engaged in the design."

Union Park, Sierra Club, and many neighborhood nonprofits oppose adding lanes to the highway, and support improved transit access and safer crossings for people.

These organizations also call for safer frontage roads, additional sound walls, improved vegetation, and other priorities.

Barb Thoman, Sierra Club volunteer

and transportation co-chair of St. Paul's Union Park Neighborhood, has been working to promote community priorities for I-94 — the highway that lies just three blocks away from her home of 30 years.

"The Cretin Avenue/I-94 intersection is one of a number like it along the corridor that is dangerous for families walking, people bicycling or with mobility needs," says Thoman. "There's only a sidewalk on the east side of Cretin and it's very narrow. Cretin's dedicated right turn lane onto the highway ramp puts people crossing the street at risk of getting hit by a person driving."

While the first planning phase of Rethinking I-94 had good intentions, community members are now concerned about the direction the environmental review process is taking. MnDOT's project goal statements talk vaguely about mobility and safety.

"We fear that mobility could be a code word for more lanes, more traffic, and more pollution," says Thoman. "We believe that cities' climate goals matter, and you cannot achieve climate goals with more traffic."

Elected officials are also standing with community members in supporting a

better outcome.

"The Rethinking I-94 project must place priority on the transit, environmental and public health needs of communities surrounding the interstate," says Minneapolis City Councilmember Jamal Osman, whose ward includes impacted communities along the highway such as Seward, Cedar-Riverside, Elliot Park, and Phillips. "It is important that we strive to lighten the decades-long quality of life burden these often low-income communities face as we discuss the future of I-94 through St. Paul and Minneapolis."

*Emilie Wille is a volunteer on our Land Use and Transportation, and Communication Teams. She is pursuing an M.S. in Natural Resources Science and Management at the University of Minnesota, living her dream of working outdoors and protecting Minnesota's water resources.*



# STOP LINE 3 TEAM JOINS IN CARRYING SACRED WATER



**The Stop Line 3 Campaign continues to use all means from grassroots activism to legal battles to ensure this dirty pipeline is never built. A few highlights from the past 6 months include:**

- **1,000 + Public Comments** - When the MN Pollution Control Agency decided to continue the comment period for the Line 3 permit during a pandemic (even when they halted other public comment periods) 1,764 people submitted comments calling on the MPCA to deny the permit for Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline
- **Rallies & Public Pressure** - When Governor Walz appeared uncertain about continuing the Minnesota Dept. of Commerce appeal over the issuance of a certificate of need to Enbridge, we mobilized quickly. In less than a week over 416 of us called, emailed, and rallied outside his mansion and at the courthouse calling on the Governor to stay in the legal appeal.
- **Legal Advocacy with Partners** - We filed a lawsuit at the Minnesota Court of Appeals alongside Red Lake and White Earth Nations and Honor the Earth against the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's decision to issue Enbridge a Certificate of Need and Route Permit.

The Sierra Club and Youth Climate Intervenors outside the Court of Appeals for a joint press conference with Honor the Earth and the White Earth Nation to announce the filing of their lawsuits. Photo Credit: Sophia Pechaty

Carly Rundle-Borchert

The future doesn't include more fossil fuels. No. It's not more pipelines, either.

Marcy Leussler, a longstanding volunteer with the North Star Chapter, says "We need to transition to a carbon free economy."

Leussler, who leads the "Stop Line 3" campaign, speaks passionately about the Earth, lakes, rivers, wildlife, people — all while acknowledging she hasn't always been "into environmental stuff."

Leussler is the oldest daughter in her Catholic family of 12. She attended an all-girls high school.

In 1969, Leussler began studying social welfare at the University of Minnesota. During this time, the campus was immersed in Vietnam War protests and exposed to the emerging environmental movement following Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. She was drawn to social justice issues.

"People need safety nets," Leussler said. This is what her work in social welfare taught her. "It's all connected."

Environmental activism became Leussler's purpose after her children had grown and she retired. With more time to read and learn she thought about what humans have to lose, including the resource all people rely on: water.

The Line 3 Pipeline Replacement Project was proposed in 2014 by Enbridge, a Canadian oil company. The pipeline would run from Alberta, Canada, to Superior, Wisconsin, pumping nearly a million barrels of tar sands oil per day across North Dakota and northern Minnesota, according to the campaign's website ([www.stopline3.org/](http://www.stopline3.org/)). Its path would cross Indigenous treaty lands of the Anishinaabe people, the headwaters of the Mississippi River, preserved wetlands, and Lake Superior shores.

"This isn't really a replacement project, it's an expansion," said Leussler.

According to the project summary, outlined by the Minnesota Public Utilities



The Stop Line 3 Team at Lake of the Isles in Minneapolis for their portion of the Relay for Water. Photo Credit: Alec Olson

Commission, Line 3 will be 48 miles longer and two inches wider in diameter. "Why are we building a pipeline for the next 50 years when we need to be decommissioning them?" Leussler said.

Leussler sees this project as a step in the opposite direction of a sustainable planet, economy and just future. "Enbridge is a company that builds pipelines and Alberta is not marketable for pipelines," said Leussler. "As renewable energy gets cheaper and cheaper, [tar sands oil] will turn into stranded assets. Why are we risking our water and land to transport tar sands and chemicals that we don't need?"

Economics aside, Line 3 puts cultural lands, traditions, people, plants, and wildlife at risk. Indigenous peoples have grown wild rice in northern Minnesota as a part of their traditions. This line would disturb several watersheds where wild rice is grown.

"We need to care about environmental justice. We are all connected," Leussler said. "When some suffer, we all suffer. [We] need a society that values its people above profit and money."

Stop Line 3 has partnered with Indigenous organizations, joining together in marches, events, and workshops. Together the teams aim to raise people's awareness of the dangers of pipelines and to rekindle appreciation for water.

On Sept. 25, Leussler took her turn in

"Relay For Our Water," an event planned by Anishinaabe leaders and leaders from Resilient Indigenous Sisters Engaging, MN350, MN Interfaith Power & Light and Sierra Club.

In August, water was gathered from the headwaters of the Mississippi River with prayers of honor and gratitude. The piece of river then traveled by foot, bike, horseback or car, and was poured from one vessel to another. The water made it as far south

as Winona. People all over Minnesota participated in the relay.

As of this writing, the water is making its way back to the headwaters of the Mississippi River as the wild rice harvest comes to an end.

"Hopefully the pipeline will never get built, but we're planning for every contingency," said Leussler. Stop Line 3's Watch the Line committee serves as a last resort call-to-action. In the event that Minnesota issues construction permits for Line 3 on Nov. 14, Leussler and her team are prepared to monitor the building process, reporting any violations and ensuring accountability.

She's always looking for help — for others to raise their voices and take a stand.

"Get involved and help elect climate champions in all levels of government. Find an area within the environmental movement where you feel passionate and help out. Let's rebuild our world the way we want, for our children's grandchildren," she said.

*Carly Rundle-Borchert is a Communications Team volunteer and recent English graduate from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, where she worked as photojournalist for The Racquet Press, the student news source covering environmental issues and events.*



# WILD RICE TRIES TO REBOUND AS POLYMET VIES FOR SULFIDE ORE METALS



The author on the St. Louis River Estuary in wild rice beds. The metal container in her hands holds nibi (water) from the Mississippi River headwaters. Photo Credit: Deanna Erickson

Libby Bent

It was one of those perfect mid-August days in the northland, and three of us with Duluth for Clean Water were honored to have in our possession a container of water from the headwaters of the Mississippi that was traveling across the state by foot, bike, and paddlecraft on a water protectors' relay. This relay, called Relay for Water, was inspired by Mother Earth Water Walkers and brought water from the Mississippi River headwaters throughout Minnesota on a journey to build community and bring attention to the threat faced by our waters by Line 3.

The water's destination this day: the St. Louis River estuary which collects 12,000 acres of water from the St. Louis River just before it enters Lake Superior.

Our paddle took us to North Duck Hunter Bay, where manoomin (wild rice) has been reseeded since 2014. The complex ecosystems of the estuary once supported some of the richest wild rice stands in the region. They now have been nearly wiped out, largely as a result of human activity.

The Manoomin Restoration Partnership, led by Fond du Lac Resource Management staff, has in some years reseeded 11,000 pounds of wild rice. Manoomin, central to the Anishinaabe cultural identity, traditions and livelihood, grows only in clean waters, indicating a high-quality, biodiverse ecosystem.

As we glided into the bay, we saw that the geese had had their fill, as many plants were browsed. Behind fenced areas, however, healthy stalks of

manoomin greeted us, waving gently in the wind.

We saw the first healthy stand in this bay. It was a victory, even as we knew these fragile gains were threatened not just by geese and climate change, but also by upstream sulfide-mining proposals that would discharge sulfates and heavy metals toxic to wild rice and to our drinking water.

PolyMet Corporation, at the headwaters of the St. Louis River, is the first sulfide-mining company in the region, and will set precedents for every other mine proposal that follows. If approved, Polymet alone would create a massive industrial mining zone requiring over six billion gallons of our fresh water every year and polluting water that will require active cleaning for 500 years. PolyMet

Corporation can not be trusted with our most precious resource -- our water.

Duluth for Clean Water stands in solidarity with water protectors across the state as we support moving on to better, safer alternatives for Minnesota. As we paddled back across the estuary, the wild rice gave us hope, as did water from the Mississippi headwaters on its journey to build community and support for protecting our water.

*Libby Bent is a volunteer leader with Duluth for Clean Water. Please explore their work at [duluthforcleanwater.org](http://duluthforcleanwater.org). The Sierra Club is proud to partner with Duluth for Clean Water in this fight and grateful to Libby Bent for writing about the importance of this work.*

**In Duluth and across the state,** North Star Chapter volunteer leaders are involved in local advocacy to block PolyMet and Twin Metals through letter-writing and virtual actions and events.

**At the State Legislature,** we work to defend and strengthen protections from the threat of sulfide mining proposals, and from attempts to further weaken standards for clean water and public health.

**In the courts,** we are joining other environmental groups in legal challenges to PolyMet's air permit, and participating in the lawsuit against PolyMet's dam safety permit which are both being heard by the Minnesota Supreme Court.

**The Sierra Club engages in the regulatory process at all levels,** currently collaborating with partners on technical comments on the state and federal environmental review of the Twin Metals proposed mine near the Boundary Waters.

**In Congress,** we are fighting efforts to fast-track toxic mining permits and supporting Rep. Betty McCollum's Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 5598), which passed the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee in September of this year.





# HOW YOUR PLASTIC IS ENDING UP IN KENYA'S WATERS

## A U.S.-Backed Trade Deal Encourages Plastics To Persist

Conrad enjoys a healthy snack of Keifer, but it is unlikely this bottle will actually be recycled in the United States. Photo Credit: Mary Blitzler (Conrad's mom)

Lori Olinger

Kenya and the United States are engaged in talks over a trade deal that encourages plastic consumption at the expense of public health and environmental protection. The American Chemistry Council (ACC) submitted comments to the U.S. International Trade Commission, urging Kenya and the U.S. to:

1) Prohibit limits on the production and consumption of plastic; 2) enable trade in plastic waste; and 3) promote the valuation of waste, including plastic.

This puts Kenyans in a difficult spot because they are interested in a trade deal, but they also have massive health and environmental problems from plastic pollution.

In 2017, they passed a stringent plastic bag ban and are working on a single-use plastic ban as well. The American Chemistry Council is attempting to use the deal to weaken Kenya's effort to control plastic pollution and instead expand plastic production and waste exports.

Kenya is a member of the Basel Convention, a group of 187 countries that governs hazardous waste. The group just unanimously passed an agreement that would severely limit the export of plastic waste to member countries.

Although the U.S. is one of the few countries not part of the Convention, the U.S. and the American Chemistry Council argued against the agreement, which goes into effect in January 2021.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In 2019, American exporters shipped almost 1.5 billion pounds of plastic waste to 95 countries. Under the Basel Convention this would now be prohibited. Plastic trash is building up in U.S. warehouses, and this agreement will severely restrict where this trash can be legally shipped in the future.

China stopped accepting plastic waste in 2018, and that decision revealed what was happening with plastic recycling. In the U.S., we were feeling good about putting our plastic in the recycling bin and wondering why so much plastic was ending up in the ocean. We now know that the U.S. and Western Europe were sending the bulk of their recycling to China and other developing countries that didn't have the infrastructure to handle it.

Petrochemical companies that create plastic feedstock are experiencing a renaissance, not because there is demand for more plastic but because there is a glut of ethane, a byproduct of fracked gas used to produce plastic.

As demand for fossil fuels drops, the oil industry wants to fill that gap with an increase in plastic production. If current growth rates continue, plastic production will double in 15 years.

This is a racial and environmental justice issue, globally and here at home. Petrochemical plants are being built or expanded in low-income neighborhoods, and communities of color in Louisiana and Texas are already burdened with some of the highest toxic pollution rates in the country.

If the ACC is successful in influencing the U.S.-Kenya trade agreement, Kenya will reverse its strict limits on plastics and continue importing plastic garbage. This agreement could also restrict attempts to limit plastic production in the U.S.

More than 40% of the plastic produced is for packaging and used for a short period of time. We need to reduce the amount of plastic we create, and we should handle our waste here in the U.S. and not dump it in developing countries like Kenya.

### ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY:

1. Reduce, Refuse, and Do Without. When you purchase less plastic, you reduce the demand and market for plastic. Limit the demand for plastic that you create.
2. Ask Congress to support the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act, which would cut back on plastic production and put a moratorium on petrochemical plant expansions.
3. Put pressure on the U.S. to join the Basel Convention. The overarching objective of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes.

*Lori Olinger is chair of the Zero Waste Team and is a regular advocate for zero waste at the Capitol in Saint Paul.*

# SPEAKING UP FOR WOLVES

Photo Credit: FlickrCommons Dalliedee

Lois Norrgard

The Forests and Wildlife Stewards are an all volunteer team that shows up in ways big and small. Their work over the last few months has included encouraging Minnesotans to speak up for wolves and tracking little known projects like the proposed Border to Border Trail in Minnesota's northwoods.

### ADVOCACY FOR WOLVES:

Gray wolves once roamed the United States from coast to coast, but extensive trapping and hunting nearly eradicated them from all of the lower 48 states except Minnesota. Now there is a chance to learn from past practices and create a balance between wolves and humans.

This year, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is updating the state's 2001 Wolf Management Plan. This important document guides the state's actions on wolf regulations, including wolf killing policies, which are critical now that the wolf was removed from the Endangered Species List and has lost federal protection.

This fall, the Forests and Wildlife Stewards encouraged Sierrans to attend open houses and comment on the DNR's wolf management plan. The Sierra Club is also working to restore federal Endangered Species protections for the wolves in Minnesota.

### PROTECTING TROUT STREAMS:

A new project is proposed that threatens some of the most pristine waters in Minnesota.

The proposed Border-to-Border Touring Route is for off-highway vehicles and runs along paved and unpaved roads through northern Minnesota.

The project plan has mischaracterized and misstated important facts about its scope for the project's. For example, the proposal states that the proposed route would cross several trout streams. But in Lake County, the proposed route would cross 27 designated trout streams 61 times on unpaved roads with minimal buffers.

The route repeatedly passes some of the most pristine waters in the state. It's critical to maintain their quality as more people recreate on this route using all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). This means the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and other governing organizations must take every measure they can to preserve these ecosystems.

There is a litany of impacts that must be addressed before the damage is done. A few of them are:

- Alternative routes and designs must be considered with less potential for harm.
- Monitoring plans must be established

that include measurable thresholds of impact that trigger preventive rather than remedial actions along the entire 764-mile route.

- The route must include setbacks or buffers from surface waters.
- Professional staff for monitoring and enforcement must be assigned and allocated the proper resources to keep our natural areas and waters safe.

With Representative John Persell, the House Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee, and coalition partners, we've sent a letter to the DNR strongly urging further review of the impacts to the environment and potential alternatives. We will be vigilant and alert you when to contact the DNR and how to help preserve this land.

*Lois Norrgard is the co-chair of the Forests and Wildlife Stewards and a member of the Chapter's Executive Committee.*



# Poetry & Art

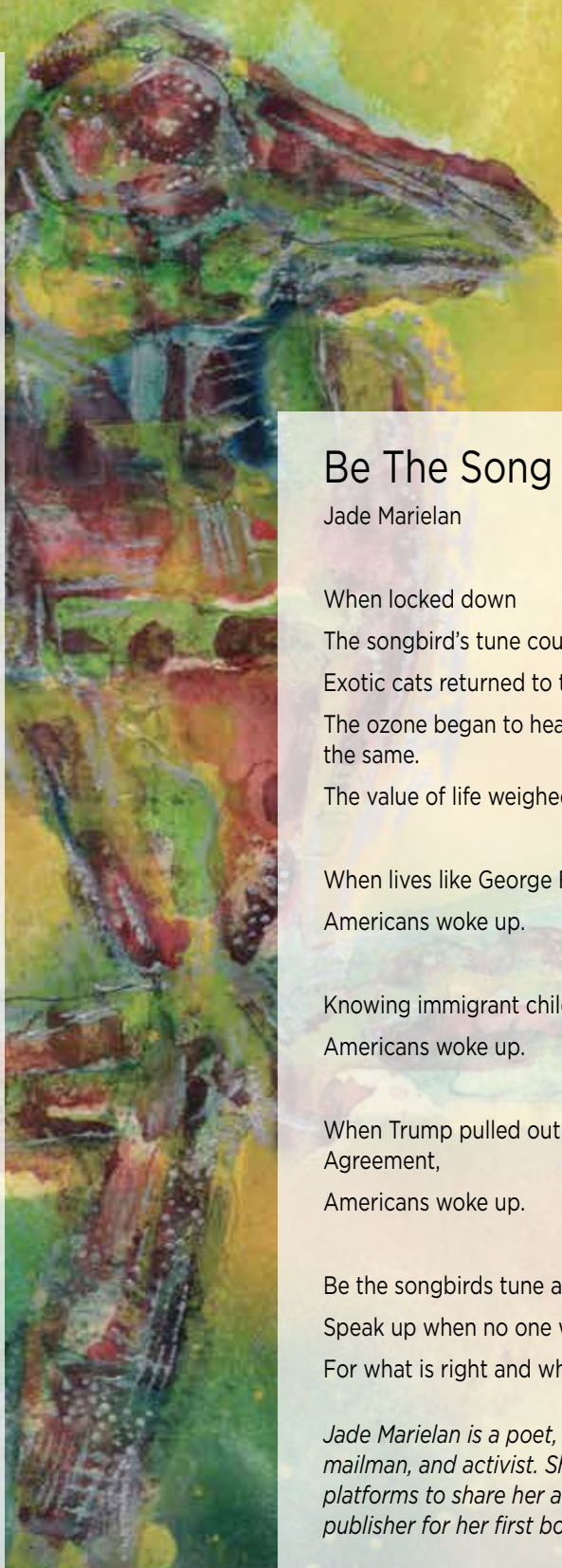
Artwork by Carla Hamilton.  
Carla is a BIPOC artist and  
activist based in Duluth. You  
can find more of her work on  
instagram @ch\_artbych.

## Identity

Cheryl Townsend

Change yourself to fit in with everyone  
else,  
Don't speak your mind, because  
Someone might feel threatened  
By your intelligence  
Because someone like you,  
Someone like me,  
should know my place,  
And stay in it.  
Because people like me are different  
And anything different should be feared.  
Well you know what?  
You should fear me, because I am done.  
I am done being afraid.  
I am done being silent.  
I am done believing that I am what you  
made me.  
I am a Woman.  
The female form of human,  
No less than any man.  
I am the product of both black and white  
The dawn of a new Generation  
A generation that will be heard.  
Because I won't accept the fact  
That humanity only comes  
In one color.

*Cheryl Townsend is a full time student at  
North Hennepin Community College for  
Graphic Design and Communications.  
When she has extra time, she likes to  
spend it with friends and family playing  
games or listening to music.*



## Be The Song Bird's Tune

Jade Marielan

When locked down  
The songbird's tune could once again be heard,  
Exotic cats returned to the streets of India.  
The ozone began to heal, people yearned to do  
the same.  
The value of life weighed heavy on our minds.  
  
When lives like George Floyd's were taken,  
Americans woke up.  
  
Knowing immigrant children are in cages,  
Americans woke up.  
  
When Trump pulled out of the Paris Climate  
Agreement,  
Americans woke up.

Be the songbirds tune and  
Speak up when no one will  
For what is right and what is true.

*Jade Marielan is a poet, pianist, teacher,  
mailman, and activist. She is always looking for  
platforms to share her art and is in need of a  
publisher for her first book.*

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NORTHSTAR  
**JOURNAL** 



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

A PROUD MEMBER OF



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](mailto:margaret.levin@sierraclub.org).



# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES

The Executive Committee (ExCom) is the governing body of the North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, with responsibility for overall activities, budgeting, and strategic planning.

There are fifteen members of the ExCom, elected by members of the Sierra Club in Minnesota for rotating three-year terms. Members reflect a diversity of backgrounds and talents, brought together by their common interest in environmental

protection, and a commitment to help the chapter thrive and grow in its work as the leading grassroots voice for Minnesota's environment.

Please take the time to read the statements and mark and return a ballot. Your vote is important regardless of your level of involvement in Chapter activities.



**Kate Brauman**  
Minneapolis

I am delighted to have been a member of the Executive Committee for the past three years and to have served as vice-chair

for the past two years. My day job is in academic research - my doctorate is in water resources, and I have done research on water sustainability at the University of Minnesota for the past ten years. Throughout my career, I have focused on evaluating how we impact the world around us and on how we can thrive as part of the environment. I particularly enjoy my role as a member of the Northstar Chapter's Executive Committee as a way to express my passion for protecting our water, air, and climate, for all people. I am honored to have been a part of the Northstar Chapter's efforts over the past three years to engage with a broad range of communities in a more thoughtful and substantive way through our focus on environmental justice. I see inclusive efforts to ensure that everyone has access to the best environment possible as the only way forward.



**C. Scott Cooper**  
Saint Paul

I've been an active volunteer with the North Star Chapter for over a decade, serving on a

variety of different committees including the ExCom and serving for two years as Chapter Chair. I bring to the Chapter not only my time and energy but also nearly thirty years of experience serving on nonprofit boards, managing progressive political organizations and running successful issue campaigns. I resigned from the ExCom two years ago to focus on the 2020 elections through my volunteer service on the national Sierra Club Political Team, which I joined in early 2019. Now that the 2020 elections are behind us, I'm hoping to refocus my volunteer time and rejoin the ExCom. I'm excited about where the Chapter is headed as we grow to meet the challenges and opportunities of our new political landscape. I'm particularly excited about helping increase our financial resources and our political power, about growing and diversifying our membership and about increasing the

Chapter's commitment to include racial justice considerations in all our work. The Sierra Club is needed now more than ever, and I'm committed to building the kind of Chapter that will be able to achieve our important and ambitious goals in the years to come.



**Dawn Goodwin**  
Gaagigeyaashiik-Dawn Goodwin, Anishinaabe/White Earth

Protector and advocate for the environment and the

Anishinaabeg traditional lifeways. She is a lifelong resident of northern Minnesota and has lived next to Lower Rice Lake on the White Earth Reservation since 2001. Dawn graduated from Bemidji State University in 2009 with a B.A. in Visual Arts and is near completion of a B.A. in Native American Studies. In 2009 she began to learn about the tar sands industry and climate change. This knowledge and concern for the health of our waters has led her into advocating for the protection of the lands, plants, animals, people and nibi/water for the next seven generations. She is a board member of the 1855 Treaty Authority, a trained Climate Reality Leader and a presenter at the 2019 Climate Reality Leadership Corp Training. Dawn was the expert witness for the White Earth Reservation during the Line 3 MN PUC hearings. Her work centers around networking with other nonprofit environmental organizations and building community. Dawn works as a representative of the Indigenous Environmental Network, and is a co-founder of RISE Coalition; an indigenous led group of women calling on others to "RISE TO PROTECT ALL THAT IS SACRED"



**Filsan Ibrahim**  
Saint Paul

Peace- My name is Filsan Ibrahim and I'm a new addition to the Executive

Committee. I'm a proud resident of the Midway neighborhood in St Paul. I am extremely passionate about environmental justice and hope to use my resources on the ongoing effort to build a more just world for each and every single one of us, especially BIPOC folx across

the globe. I'm an organizer who believes in the beauty of our collective voice and power. You can always find me dreaming and scheming throughout the Twin Cities with loved ones. I'm humbled to serve on the Executive Committee as Sierra Club is intentionally moving towards a brave new path of creating a more sustainable and racially-just world for us to freely exist in.



**Michelle Hesterberg**  
Minneapolis

Thank you for considering me for the Executive Committee!

I currently volunteer on the Sierra Club North Star Chapter's Political Committee, and I have 15 years of political organizing, environmental advocacy, nonprofit leadership, and fundraising experience. I've worked as a fundraiser and organizer for Quinn Nystrom for Congress, OutFront Minnesota, Save the Boundary Waters, Environment Minnesota, Friends of the Boundary Waters, and MPIRG. I am also currently a member of the YMCA Camp Menogyn Board and Out After Carleton Board. I've rallied for racial justice, fundraised to protect the Boundary Waters, organized events on climate change, lobbied to protect clean water, canvassed on public health issues, and much more. As an LGBTQ+ woman, I am dedicated to fighting for those in our community who are most marginalized, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. I am a passionate advocate for environmental protection and would be honored to be part of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter's Executive Committee to continue working towards a sustainable and equitable future.



**Kristel Porter**  
Minneapolis

I am a resident of North Minneapolis. Home of some of the worst environmental and racial disparities

in the country. I have spent over the past 20 years advocating for better environmental practices and policies for my community. This summer I worked with some amazing people to plant 3,000 trees in and around North Minneapolis. I founded the Clean City Youth Project which engaged Northside youth around

## ELECTION BALLOT FOR NORTH STAR CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021

Please vote for up to five candidates:

	MEMBERS VOTE HERE	JOINT MEMBERS VOTE HERE	
<b>Kate Brauman</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>C. Scott Cooper</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Dawn Goodwin</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Michelle Hesterberg</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Filsan Ibrahim</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Kristel Porter</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Kamau Wilkins</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Write-ins:</b>			
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## PLEASE VOTE FOR 5 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, DEADLINE FOR VOTING IS JANUARY 4, 2021.

### VOTING INSTRUCTIONS:

#### To vote by mail:

- Your member number is printed above your mailing address on the back of the ballot. This will be used to verify membership; however, your vote will be kept confidential.
- Please read the candidate statements provided.
- Vote for up to five candidates of your choice by clearly marking "X" in the box next to their names on the ballot, or by writing in a non-listed candidate's name on the line provided. Joint memberships are allowed two votes. Multiple votes for one candidate will disqualify the ballot (except, of course, for a joint membership in which each member votes for the same candidate).
- Place your ballot in an envelope and mail it to be received by January 4, 2021 to:

**Elections Committee**  
Sierra Club North Star Chapter  
2300 Myrtle Avenue, Suite 260  
St. Paul, MN 55114

#### To vote by email:

- Locate your 8-digit membership number which is printed above your mailing address on the back of the ballot. Your vote will be kept confidential, but this number is required to verify membership.
- Please read the candidate statements provided.
- Vote for up to five candidates of your choice by listing them on an email message to ballot@northstar.sierraclub.org. You may write in one non-listed candidate's name. Joint memberships are allowed two votes. Multiple votes for one candidate will disqualify the ballot (except, of course, for a joint membership in which each member votes for the same candidate).
- Send your email message to ballot@northstar.sierraclub.org before January 4, 2021 at 5 p.m.
- The chapter plans to send an electronic ballot to current member addresses within our system. If duplicate votes are received, the most recent vote will be considered valid.

### Current members of the North Star Chapter ExCom:

TERM EXPIRES 2020	TERM EXPIRES 2021	TERM EXPIRES 2022
KATE BRAUMAN	MARTY COBENAIS	LUTHER DALE
JOHN DOBERSTEIN	DREW DAVIS	LOIS NORRGARD
FILSAN IBRAHIM	KATIE EUKEL	SAMMIE ARDITO RIVERA
LYZ JAAKOLA	HANNAH SMITH	TOM THOMPSON
KAMAU WILKINS	SARAH WOVCHA	ALICIA UZAREK





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 safe.**

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

**Stop Line 3**, 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 PM  
nancy.vezner@northstar.sierraclub.org  
marcy.leussler@northstar.sierraclub.org

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

**Zero Waste**, 2nd 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.  
Events on hold, planning ongoing, greg.allison@northstar.sierraclub.org

**Inspiring Connections Outdoors:** Plan and lead activities for youth new to the outdoors. Outings on hold, plan and organizing with partners ongoing,  
mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org