Clean Water Action Council

OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

~ Celebrating 41 years of working to protect public health and the environment in Northeast Wisconsin ~

SPRING 2026

Clean Energy: Choosing Green in Uncertain Times

Introduction: The Work is the Same

By Crystal Brown

I recently gave an interview with Jess Savage of Harvest Public Media, regarding the proposed Clean Water Act changes by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Army Corp of Engineers, specifically the WOTUS Ruling (Waters of the United States), in which the definition of wetlands would be changed. This ruling would remove federal regulations from at least 4.5 million acres of wetlands in Wisconsin, per a report from Wisconsin Green Fire. That's 75% of our states wetlands.

Insane. Simply egregious.

There are many other words I could use, and I'm certain most of you would agree with this sentiment; however, I'm certain many of you may already be asking "Crystal, what does any of this have to do with the topic of Clean Energy and this newsletter issue?"

Simply put…the work is the same.

We are facing an illness of disconnect in our society in which corporations and those making policy changes do not connect their actions to the outcomes facing our health and

natural world. They are not taking responsibility for their impact on the whole of our society, and our relationship with the earth.

In the interview with Savage, I was asked "What is your organization going to do in light of these changes?" My response centered around continuing our responsibility to educate community members about what the "right thing to do" is regardless of any regulations or administrative changes. I spoke with them about our responsibility to look upstream to educate youth on the "why" behind our sustainable actions. I said to the reporter that, "I can assure you that no one making these changes ever was knee deep in a patch of labrador tea in a bog in Wisconsin, otherwise they wouldn't be doing this. We can't destroy what we love, and we love what we have relationship with."

Sometimes advocating and speaking up feels like a echo chamber with our peers, while we are simultaneously screaming into the void where leaders are not listening to the language we are speaking. We are not speaking about bottom lines and profit margins. We are speaking in a tongue of concern for future generations and our responsibilities to them.

So clean energy, what can I speak about? What can I even do if it feels like decisions are being made with disregard for what so many of us value…what I would argue the majority of Americans would value.

It's times like these that I must look within myself and community and stay centered in my own personal actions of what I can directly influence. I am a renter, so I am unable to integrate renewable energy directly into my home. I am a skeptic at times, when it comes to ethical supply chains, so I could educate myself and share that information with those that do. I could support businesses that prioritize sustainability.

Committing to biking when possible and maintaining an efficient non-electric vehicle is a part I can play with the means that I have access to. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

Like many of us, I look to how I can reduce my consumption. I pretend to play the part of a good Midwest-father, making sure I tell myself to put on a sweater when it's cold or turn off the lights when I leave to reduce my energy use. I do drive a gas-powered vehicle, and I don't have plans to switch to electric. BUT I do make sure that I maintain my vehicle to ensure its efficiency (regular oil changes, routine maintenance). I make the choice to pedal my bike around whenever I can, sporting my anti-Enbridge sticker, and engaging in conversations with community members on how we can live a little lighter, a little closer to lessen our impact.

Many of the articles in this newsletter will cover the "why" behind the choices we make, as well as provide updates on the status of clean energy use. There are solutions proposed, such as microgrids and community solar, hopeful news about increased use and affordability of clean energy, cautions about greenwashing and data centers, as well as some inspiring news about actions municipalities and a local school district are taking as they commit to clean energy and sustainability. CWAC will continue to focus our efforts of educating our community members about these issues and solutions, and focus efforts to influence our community's culture of sustainability and stewardship.

All I'm saying is, "hang in there friends." It's been a rough winter, and there are days when it feels like the hits just keep coming with environmental deregulation from our current administration, but spring is here. People are waking up along with the earth, and our persistent hope will continue to grow and root as we come together in community around these issues.

References
https://www.kcur.org/environment-agriculture/2026-02-10/clean-water-act-proposed-change-protections-wetlands
https://wigreenfire.org/federal-government-proposes-wetland-protection-rollback-wotus-rule/

The Devastating Push for Coal and Oil Production: Administration Changes Fuel Climate Change

By Charlie Frisk

In his second term Trump has gone full retro on energy, totally abandoning renewables and pushing for more coal and oil production. This should not be totally unexpected from a president that truly believes that the only thing you need to do to make coal a clean energy source is to wash it and who is dismayed that that simple solution never occurred to all those scientists and environmentalists.

This article is supposed to cover the environmental and health consequences of abandoning all green energy strategies and fully committing America's future to fossil fuels. However, that would take a good-sized book to even get started on, so I am going to focus on one aspect: how the U.S. returning to a greater reliance on fossil fuels will drive the world past the tipping points on climate change.

According to an article in the *Guardian*, "Tipping points in the Earth system pose threats of a magnitude never faced by humanity." said Tim Lento, from the University of Exeter's Global Systems Institute. "They can trigger devastating domino effects, including the loss of whole ecosystems and the capacity to grow staple crops, with societal impacts including mass displacement, political instability and financial collapse."

What are tipping points? Examples include: collapse of the big ice sheets in Greenland and the West Antarctic, melting of the Arctic ice caps, widespread thawing of permafrost, the death of coral reefs, the collapse of the major oceanic current in the North Atlantic, and the

Ice falls off an ice shelf into oceanic waters, a result of the positive feedback loop created with increasing temperatures. Photo credit: Getty Images

death of the world's mangroves, seagrass meadows, and boreal forests.

These shifts can create positive feedback loops that will heat the planet further and alter weather patterns. For example, the melting of the Arctic ice caps will result in white, reflective ice being replaced by dark water that will then absorb more sunlight thus creating a self-reinforcing cycle that will dramatically expedite the loss of more sea ice.

Every one of the tipping points I listed create these feedback loops and some have already begun. The first time I flew to Europe, about 22 years ago, I passed over the southern tip of Greenland and it was totally covered in reflective snow and ice; The last time, a year ago, all I saw was absorptive bare rock.

Coral reefs receive a double whammy from the burning of fossil fuels. The ocean warming caused by increased carbon dioxide leads to coral bleaching, which is when they expel the microscopic algae that live inside their tissues, revealing their white skeletons. Oceans absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which in the water becomes carbonic acid. A more acidic ocean means corals are less able to build skeletons and form coral reefs.

The world's largest coral reef, the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, has suffered five mass coral bleaching events in just eight years. Coral reefs can recover from bleaching over time, but only if temperatures drop and conditions return to normal. With increased fossil fuel use by the U.S. those conditions will never return to normal.

Many coral reef experts maintain that if humans do not greatly reduce use of fossil fuels that all of the world's coral reefs will be dead by 2050. This will negatively impact the entire ocean because so much reproduction of zooplankton and fish takes place in the coral reefs.

The coral reefs are also one of the world's most beautiful and spectacular sights. I have two granddaughters; the oldest at age 10, has already scuba dived in coral reefs. To think that by the time my granddaughters are in their thirties the coral reefs could be gone is incredibly sad.

The bleaching and death of coral in the Great Barrier Reef. Photo credit: The Ocean Agency

We are now in the Anthropocene, a geological epoch defined by humanity's significant, planet altering impact on Earth's systems, including climate, ecosystems and geology. It signifies a time when humans are the dominant force shaping the planet, evident in climate change, widespread pollution, massive biodiversity loss, and altered land/ocean chemistry.

There have been five major extinction events in the history of life on earth, the best known when the asteroid hit 66 million years ago and wiped out the dinosaurs and 75% of the species on earth. This sixth event, which is currently in progress, is different in that the previous five were caused by natural phenomena, while the sixth is driven by human activity, the most significant of which is climate change.

It is thought by some biologists that this present extinction event could turn out to be the largest of the six. To the readers of this newsletter an extinction event of that magnitude is exceedingly disturbing, frightening, sad, I could go on and on, but there are people, I suspect including our president who would just shrug and say, "So what, it's no big deal."

However, the same factors leading to those extinctions could also lead to a total collapse of civilization as we know it. If climate change continues unabated, which Trump's embrace of fossil fuels will almost guarantee, rising seas and extreme heat will displace billions of people by 2100. Eight of ten of the world's largest cities are in coastal regions; those people will have to go someplace else.

Climate refugees - Burmese families displaced due to climate change. Photo credit: Wikimedia

Crop yields will drop, access to water will diminish, extreme storms and weather events will become increasingly common, biodiversity will drop and global pandemics will become constant. These factors thrown together are almost sure to destroy modern civilization as we know it.

Most prognosticators seem to throw out the time frame of around 2100 for this collapse, but that doesn't mean we still have a few decades to take effective action. Most of the feedback loops and tipping points will already have passed by 2050 and at that point no changes by human society, no matter how aggressive, will be able to reverse the coming apocalypse. To make matters more worrisome, even the most pessimistic of climate scientists have consistently underestimated the speed at which our climate is changing.

Humans die a lot harder than most animals. When the great savannas of Africa become desert, all those species of antelope, elephants, giraffes, etc. will just go extinct, but humans will use every bit of ingenuity they have to move to some place habitable. Imagine a world with billions of people attempting to move to places already densely populated. That alone would be sufficient to trigger the collapse of society.

There is not a lot of optimism in this article, but I think that is what we need to hear and face up to. Climate change would have been much easier to deal with had society made aggressive changes decades ago when scientists first sounded the alarm. Here in the U.S. the federal government is taking us in the wrong direction. To have any chance of passing along a decent life to my granddaughter, we have to make major changes in the way in which we power our lifestyle, and we have to do it now!

About an hour after I finished this article I sat down to watch the news and saw that Trump had revoked the rule allowing the EPA to regulate greenhouse gases. This rule had been in place since 2009. We are now going to be moving backwards even more aggressively at a time when society must start making more progress towards combating climate change. We have arrived at a crossroads, where the only choices left are panic OR committed, organized action. Which will you choose?

The Benefits of Locally Produced Clean Renewable Energy in Our Communities

By Debra Noel

There are many reasons and benefits for communities to have locally produced clean energy systems, which are becoming increasingly attainable. We urgently need to reduce greenhouse gases and other harmful emissions and the carbon footprint contributing to climate change. It's prudent to prepare for extreme weather events by creating more grid independence with increased energy security while lowering costs. These projects create community environmental awareness and fellowship and may provide several local jobs.

A community microgrid can be a combination of locally generated power sources including wind, solar, geothermal, and other renewable clean sources. It would also include inverters, control systems, and storage capability. This micro grid can be isolated in the event of a main grid power outage and have storage to operate critical facilities such as hospitals, shelters, schools, and other necessary public and government buildings. There are many projects in over 20 states that are up and running and in process of near completion.

Solar panel installed at Leicht Park.
Photo credit: City of Green Bay Public Works Planning

Green Bay's Clean Energy Green Bay Plan (CEGB) is working to increase renewable clean energy usage in city properties, parks, and public buildings with a goal of being 100% clean/renewable sourced by 2050. This will be a challenge since Green Bay has one of the highest carbon intensity emissions in the nation per unit of energy generated as measured in 2018. This is mostly due to the type and number of industrial factories using fossil fuel energies, which equates to 72% of the City of Green Bay's carbon emissions. Fortunately, because of the CEGB plan, the city is estimated to use a total of 17.3% clean energy as of February 2026. It is advocating businesses and factories to follow guidelines as stated to help this plan be successful throughout NE Wisconsin.

Some of these changes/transitions to clean energy are already in progress. Leicht Park and GB Fire Station #5 have newly installed solar panels. Together they account for approximately 705 lbs of CO^2 reduction per month, producing 441 kWh equivalent electricity per month according to the online monitor. You can view the progress and plan details at this link: https://www.greenbaywi.gov/1233/Energy-Emissions

To achieve this goal the plan is to reduce CO^2 emissions by approximately 4% annually. The targets include reduction of energy use in municipal buildings, as well as community housing and businesses. Transition from fossil fuels/natural gas heat to electricity-powered energy needs to be eventually supplied by 60% clean electricity by 2030. The transportation emissions target plan is to reduce emissions by 15% by 2030 for municipality vehicles and community wide. Wisconsin Public Service is a key partner in this effort with its parent company WEC Energy Group committing to an 80% reduction in CO^2 emissions by 2030 from 2005 numbers. The closest WPS solar energy facility to Green Bay is the 150-megawatt facility in Manitowoc County, the Two Creeks Park. WPS is also a joint owner of 500,000 solar panels across 800 acres as shown in the photo below.

Two Creeks Solar Park. Photo credit: Wisconsin Public Service

There are six focus areas in this Green Bay Plan that are part of three central principles: cost-effectiveness, proven feasibility, and benefits to the community. Actions planned will focus on buildings, renewable energy, transportation, education, urban tree canopy, advocacy to improve public health, air quality, and reduce costs to the community. With the cuts for clean energy projects from the Trump administration, this project and its goals are in severe jeopardy, and it is unclear if progress can continue as planned.

There is no clean energy community microgrid plan for Green Bay other than private individuals' residences because Wisconsin has restrictions on shared solar installations for businesses and communities. Only utility companies are allowed to regulate, generate, and distribute power in Wisconsin. There are over 20 states that have community solar programs. Wisconsin utilities argue that because community solar subscribers have less costs for their energy use, they would be contributing less to the grid infrastructure costs, and then utilities would most likely transfer higher costs to regular customers. Advocates for community clean energy say the benefits outweigh that expense.

There is broad support from farmers, solar advocates, and legislators from both parties that are trying to remove these restrictions through Senate Bill 559, which would allow the limited development of community solar by entities other than utilities. This bill has not come up for legislation process in 2026 yet. It is undetermined if there will be any progress for clean energy projects in Wisconsin due to the Trump Administration's EPA deregulations and push for more coal and other polluting power plants instead of increasing clean energy production and incentives.

Below are a few examples of microgrids that have practical, economic, and environmental benefits.

Clean Coalition is designing and staging microgrids in California and across the nation. There are many micro grid projects installed and running on campus facilities, military bases, and a few small, isolated communities. These projects ensure power supply in case of emergencies and power outages, as well as economic and environmental benefits.

Montgomery County, MD. Photo credit: Clean Coalition

Solar panels installed on Alcatraz Island. Photo credit: Clean Coalition

In 2018 **Montgomery County, Maryland** installed two microgrids producing 11 million kWh/year. This allows the county to have emergency power during frequent major storms that cause grid power outages. They hope to reduce 80% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2027.

Alcatraz Island. Because of its isolation, power was always a challenge and its huge use of diesel fuel for generators was contributing to over 632 metric tons of carbon dioxide a year. Since 2012, a solar system with batteries has reduced fuel consumption by 45%, saving 25,000 gallons of diesel a year.

The small desert town of **Borrego Springs, California**, with 2500 residents, in addition to industrial and commercial businesses, has a very technical microgrid system. It can automatically respond to emergency main grid power outages that occur often because of the town's location at the end of a single transmission line. This has possibly saved lives. With many individual rooftops and two solar fields, the town is working towards the goal of 100% power from its own renewable microgrid.

The Trump Administration's cutting of subsidies and tax breaks incentives for clean energy will impact goals and projects, but it will be unsustainable to proceed in this direction. Most countries, prudent businesses, and science-based organizations know that clean energy will benefit the environment, climate change, and survival as we know it. Long- and short-term effects are known by scientists, environmentalists, and most of the world. Hopefully technologies will continue advancing for renewable clean energy and will not be driven by this self-destructing, short-sighted, greedy, corrupt administration and the oligarch supporters.

References

Senate Bill 559: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/related/proposals/sb559

US Microgrids: https://clean-coalition.org/community-microgrids/microgrids-across-the-united-states/

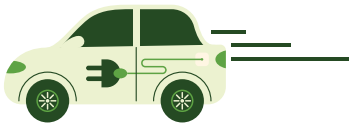
City of Green Bay Energy & Emissions: https://www.greenbaywi.gov/1233/Energy-Emissions

City of Green Bay Clean Energy 2024: https://www.greenbaywi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11383/Clean-Energy-Green-Bay - July-2024

WPR Article on Community Solar: https://www.wpr.org/news/community-solar-projects-utilities-wisconsin-bill

Canary Media Article on Community Solar: https://tinyurl.com/bdfsmwts

Wisconsin Examiner Article on Community Solar: https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2025/12/10/senate-committee-holds-public-hearing-on-community-solar-proposal/



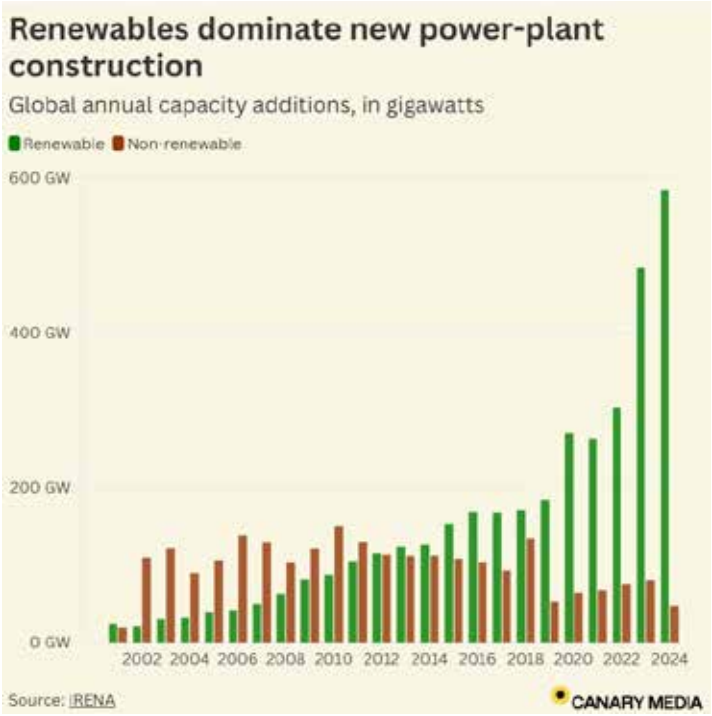
Power to the People: The Solar Storm

By David Verhagen

Most people are not going to be generating their own electricity. People living in homes, apartments and residential developments often have no available space to install a meaningful amount of solar panels. And wind generators…never mind.

But that does not mean that most of us aren't getting power from renewables already. Some areas are further along this path than others, but that is to be expected when a transition of this magnitude is rolling across the globe. Consider this:

At the end of last year, the SUN DAY campaign analyzed two years of federal energy data. "Solar has now been the largest source of new generating capacity added each month for 25 months straight: September 2023 – September 2025. During that period, total utility-scale solar capacity grew from 91.82 gigawatts (GW) to 158.43-GW," SUN DAY added.



The new construction of renewable power-plants began to surpass non-renewables in 2012. Rates of new renewable construction have long since dominated development since 2019. Photo Credit: Canary Media

During the same two-year period, wind accounted for 11.7 gigawatts while the next-most available power generation resource, natural gas, only registered 4.6 new gigawatts.

The Earth is a very large place, and building out renewable energy to power the entire planet is going to take decades. The costs to build, maintain, and operate solar, wind and other renewable energy plants are much cheaper than any fossil fuel supplied system. So much cheaper, in fact, that banks and investors who ante up to build new generating plants are simply turning away from funding new fossil fuel plants. Fossil fueled plants are far more expensive than solar, take much longer to build, incur higher maintenance costs, and require a non-stop input of expensive fuel that creates toxic wastes in the air and water harming public health and safety. No government policy can change that.

So why does our current administration want to join a handful of countries to suppress renewables and cling to fossil fueled thermal energy production? George Monbiot of the *Guardian* wrote a recent column outlining why fossil fuels appeal to Putin in Russia, Sheiks in the Middle East, and other leaders primarily interested in accumulating personal wealth and power.

Fossil fuels exist in a small number of locations where the rights to them can be owned. Most sources can only be extracted at a high cost, which prevents locals from doing it themselves. These fuels cannot be used raw as they are dug out of the ground, but must be processed and refined in huge industrial operations which require a lot of capital and technology to operate. Such fuels can be stored and traded worldwide, allowing pricing to favor the producers over the Free Market. Moreover, when you rely upon fossil energy you must come back for more, regularly.

These are conditions which do not favor consumers, but which do concentrate wealth in the owners of such assets. Fossil fuel products have been essential to economic development thus far, but in most of the world they have not resulted in lifting populations from dire poverty, environmental destruction, and exposure to unhealthy air and water.

Solar panels and wind machines are being made in factories across the world in countries large and small. Solar and batteries in particular are far cheaper to install at scale than a big, centralized coal or methane (so called natural gas) power plant. Much of the third world cannot access electricity from centralized power plants as the cost of building an electrical grid across great distances is prohibitively expensive. But microgrids, custom-designed for their location, are being built in villages across Africa and changing lives.

There is no cost for the wind or for daylight. Batteries take in and store the energy collected in real time at the point of production OR at the point of use. And they do it more efficiently than fossil fuels can do it, as well.

Bill McKibben, writing in *The New Yorker*, put it concisely: "It took from the invention of the photovoltaic solar cell in 1954, until 2022, for the world to install a terawatt of solar power; the second terawatt came just two years later, and the third will arrive either later this year or early next," McKibben notes.

"That's because people are now putting up a gigawatt's worth of solar panels, the rough equivalent of the power generated by one coal-fired plant, every fifteen hours," he adds, referencing not the old DIY solar panels of the 1970's but the modern, mass-produced engineering marvels of today.

So, the world (outside a handful of Petro-States) is

racing to leave fossil fuels behind. Many of the wealthiest families in this world made their fortunes on oil. They will resist the transition to an electrified world, but they will eventually have to concede to economic realities. It is literally a case of Power to the People.

President Trump Should Speak the Truth About Wind Energy

By Dean Hoegger

Photo credit: U.S. Department of Energy

"Errr, errr, errr," mocked candidate Donald Trump when speaking about windmills in front of his cheering and laughing fans while on the campaign trail. Apparently, his fans, and maybe Trump as well, were not aware that windmills, known as wind turbines, produced 10.4% of America's electric power, as reported by the U.S. Department of Energy in 2024.

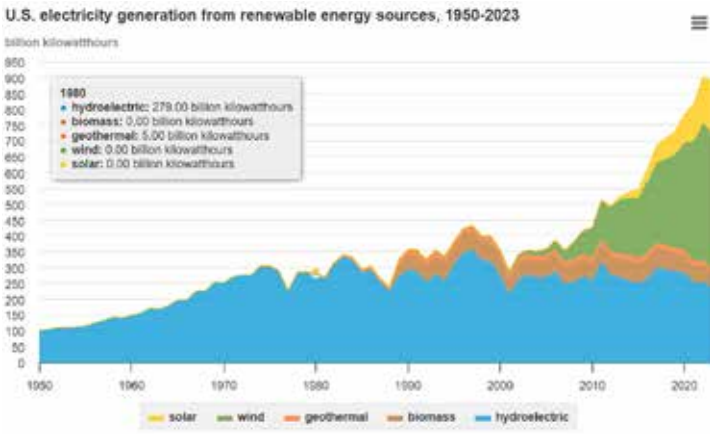
At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in January, President Donald Trump further criticized windmills and disparaged those supporting this form of renewable energy stating, "stupid people buy them." There were few fans at Davos, Switzerland where the conference was held. Rather, there were world leaders who could only wonder what happened to the America which was a leader in sustainable energy efforts. World leaders must have further wondered when Trump claimed that there was a "catastrophic energy collapse which befell every European nation that pursued the Green New Scam – perhaps the greatest hoax in history."

Trump claimed the UK's "electricity prices have soared 139%." However, since a 67% rise in 2023, due primarily to a sharp increase in natural gas, the price of UK electricity has been the lowest in decades. Wind energy contributed by producing a record 29.2% of the UK's electricity in 2024.

"China makes almost all of the windmills, and yet, I haven't been able to find any wind farms in China," claimed the president. Apparently, he did not know that China has the largest installed wind capacity of any nation accounting for nearly 10% of its total power generation. And the country continues to see rapid growth in new wind facilities.

It has been reported that Trump has a personal vendetta against wind energy after he failed to stop an offshore project near one of his golf courses in Scotland. "We will not allow a windmill to be built in the United States," he declared. Yet after he ordered a stop to five offshore wind projects in the Northeast, federal judges so far have ruled that three of the projects can continue. In the case of the Vineyard Wind project, U.S. District Court Judge Brian E. Murphy issued a stay on Trump's stop work order saying the government's action was "likely arbitrary and capricious."

The Vinyard Wind project is already producing enough electricity to power 38,000 homes and is expected to power over 400,000 homes when fully operational. Now, thousands of construction workers returned to work after spending several anxious weeks not knowing if work on the project would continue. One worker, Nick Reynolds told *USA TODAY* that he doesn't understand why the president would block an effort that would stabilize electric prices for millions.



Wind is now only 2nd to solar when it comes to generation by renewable energy sources. Photo credit: U.S. Energy Information Administration

In the Midwest, Iowa produces almost 80 percent of its electricity from wind. Ironically, not generated by power plants using Iowa produced ethanol. It has been noted that the Great Plains are like the Saudi Arabia of wind. We need to look at ways to export that energy to other parts of the country that are dependent on fossil fuel generation plants.

An increase in home energy costs is a concern for many Americans. A report from a Yale Climate Connections partner identified some of the causes and concluded that clean energy is not driving up prices but can lower costs when compared to fossil fuel powered plants. This is especially true when utilities continue to invest in aging coal fired power plants.

Trump remarked at Davos, "Every time that [blade] goes around, you lose $1,000." Was he talking about the loss to his much-promoted coal industry? While it may be true that coal fired power plants have competitive initial costs, their long-term viability is in question. With rising operational costs and impact on human health, we should leave coal in the twentieth century. The future is in renewable energy.

While we didn't vote for the sycophants that surround Trump in the Oval Office, we did vote for members of Congress who represent us. We need to tell them to use their branch of government to move the country forward, not backward.

Resource from Midwest Environmental Advocates:
Webinar: State-level Strategies for Environmental Protection Under the Trump Administration

Editor's note: Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin does not endorse any candidate for public office.

Corn-Based Ethanol — The Brownest Green Fuel

By Charlie Frisk

To listen to a Midwestern politician explain it, you would think corn-based ethanol is the greatest thing to come along since sliced bread. Ethanol's boosters would have us believe that ethanol will reduce greenhouse gases, support rural economies, lessen air pollution, increase our vehicle's gas mileage and decrease our dependence on fossil fuels.

An ethanol operation borders a corn field. Photo credit: Photosbyjim Getty Images

The only one of those claims that has a shred of truth to it is that ethanol production supports rural economies, but even that comes at a huge cost to American taxpayers. According to even the most optimistic studies, it requires about .8 of a gallon of petroleum to produce one gallon of ethanol. Petroleum is used to fuel the tractors, trucks, and other equipment required to raise and harvest the corn, as well as in the production of fertilizers and pesticides. To make matters worse, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, E10 (10% ethanol) causes a 2-5% decrease in fuel economy.

Just how much corn-based ethanol production is subsidized is difficult to determine because the subsidies come in many forms, but a conservative estimate would be about $4 billion annually. Because of subsidies and mandates such as the Federal Renewable Fuel Standard, which mandates increasing volumes of biofuels (primarily ethanol) be blended into gasoline, corn prices have doubled and tripled in recent years. The overall result of that has been to drive farmers to put more and more land into corn production.

Intensive corn production has a larger ecological footprint on the land than almost any other crop. Corn is a row crop, so the space between the rows is left barren and open to erosion. Corn production also requires huge amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

In the Midwest, many farmers have converted their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land and any pastureland they had into corn production. CRP is a federal program where farmers are paid to take highly-erodible land and wetlands out of production. With the increased prices for corn, CRP just can't compete financially. For example, in the Loess Hills of Western Iowa there are steep bluffs composed of windblown glacial silt that had never been plowed because they were considered too steep and erodible. With the high prices farmers are getting for corn today, much of the Loess Hills have fallen to the plow. The overall result has been uncountable tons of topsoil washing off the land. Streams in Iowa and Illinois that had run relatively clear now look like chocolate milk. The "dead zones" in the Gulf of Mexico, the Bay of Green Bay, and Lake Erie are growing by leaps and bounds due to the increased silt and fertilizer load.

An algae bloom results from increased agricultural runoff. Photo credit: J. Val Klump

Grassland nesting birds such as bobolinks, meadowlarks, ring-necked pheasants and dickcissels have had their already shrinking habitat decimated in recent years. In Central and South America, grasslands and tropical rain forests are being cleared to produce corn for ethanol and soybeans for biodiesel. Not only does this result in a tragic loss of biodiversity but also destroys one of the world's great sinks for carbon dioxide.

One of the supposed benefits of ethanol was that by reducing fossil fuel consumption, ethanol would reduce greenhouse gas production. Instead, the conversion of CRP lands, pasture, prairie, savanna and forests into cornfields has increased greenhouse gas production by over 24%. That number will continue to rise as more lands that presently are functioning as a greenhouse sink (absorbing carbon dioxide) are converted to a row crop monoculture.

Another negative impact of corn-based ethanol has been increased food prices. As of 2023, 40% of the U.S. corn crop went into ethanol production. The lands producing that corn are no longer producing anything that people can eat.

My home state of Iowa has totally changed because of the demand for ethanol. Farmers have drained their sloughs, channelized their streams, taken marginal land out of CRP and converted it into corn production. There is not habitat

for even a field mouse in some square mile sections that are now a monoculture of corn from road ditch to road ditch.

The climate for the whole state has changed due to the corn pulling water up and out of the aquifer and evaporating it into the atmosphere, what the locals refer to as "corn sweat." Iowa has gone from humid to unbearably humid for much of the summer.

Corn-based ethanol has no place in America's energy plan. We need to get serious and wean the country off fossil fuels and convert to true renewables.

How Clean Is Clean Energy? Beware of Greenwashing

By Gabrielle Schuldt, Spring Intern

The term "clean energy" is not unfamiliar to most of us by now, especially those invested in the sustainability scene. In fact, it is the aspiration of many climate activists, myself included. Call me an idealist, but I dream of the day where renewables reign supreme. The day where ecosystems rejoice in the crisp, fresh air and clean, untainted waters. The day generations will be saved from the lingering threat of inheriting a dying Earth. It may be a grand ambition, but an honorable one too. However, the term clean energy can also be misleading.

Now there isn't anything inherently wrong with clean energy. Instead, the issue lies with the systems we are establishing it within. We live in a capitalistic nation where we know phrases such as, "nothing is free," and "everything comes at a price," to hold truth. In this system, exploitation runs rampant, whether that be of resources, ecosystems, or labor. Just because clean energy is a sustainable practice doesn't mean that it suddenly exists outside this system.

If these practices can be identified as harmful and counterproductive to the sustainability movement, then why are they still in place? Simply, they benefit the same economically exploitative and over-consumptive systems that America has had in place for decades. Corporations do not want to put in the time, energy, or money to ensure a just, sustainable, and less profitable business model. In fact, they will put in more time and effort just to convince you that their practices are "environmentally healthy" and "promoting sustainability." Unfortunately, they're usually just sustaining their wallets.

The proper term for this is "greenwashing," which occurs when a company or organization deceives the public in order to present themselves or their product as environmentally friendly. For instance, a lumber company might describe themselves as having a sustainable business model since they replace the trees that they cut down. This makes sense in theory, as trees are a renewable resource, and they're replacing the ones they cut down. Unfortunately, the new growth forests will have only a fraction of the biodiversity, and the ecosystems destroyed will take hundreds of years to replenish—even then, they're never the same.

Clean energy can be just as guilty of the same thing.

This old growth forest in Maryland contains performs important ecological processes. Photo credit: National Park System

For instance, electric vehicles require cobalt for their lithium batteries. That cobalt is often sourced from high-risk areas that face hazardous working conditions and lack of a transparent supply chain. The Human Rights Research Center had brought up this concern of exploitation in the transition to sustainability. In their article, "Corporate Accountability in the Green Transition: Human Rights Risks in Clean Energy Supply Chains," they stated that, "in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), child labor is widespread in artisanal cobalt mining, with children working long hours in dangerous, unregulated conditions." Americans might be receiving cleaner energy, but there is the risk of it coming at the price of exploited labor and inhuman conditions.

Miners in the DRC lug heavy sacks of cobalt at the Shabara. Photo credit: Junior Kannah

The issue is so deeply embedded within America's systems that it seems daunting to take on. But there are ways in your day-to-day that you can make the switch from greenwashing to actual sustainability. For instance, ensure that the product you're buying has a transparent supply chain. Companies that try to hide where or how their product is produced are usually involved in shady and unethical business practices. Also, check their certifications. A product might claim to be "eco-friendly," but this term doesn't have a set standard or qualifications. You can look to organizations such as the Global Reporting Initiative

(GRI), which is a non-profit that works to develop, define, and ensure sustainability across a multitude of industries. The Cradle to Cradle (C2C) certification prioritizes company accountability for waste via assessing the circularity of materials and products across multiple categories.

- **Ensure that the product you're buying has a transparent supply chain.**
- **Check for Certifications with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and Cradle to Cradle (C2C)**

It's important to mention that one of the most impactful ways to revolt against greenwashing is to just spend less. Companies bank on our desire to buy stuff—our overconsumption runs our economy. If we stop purchasing low-quality junk that costs a company 50¢ to make, it forces them to rethink their business models. Buying from local artisans and small businesses can also help you avoid greenwashing and unethical manufacturing practices. Overall, think wisely before spending, and consider the impact that your money has on the world. It's a lot more than you may think.

Rescission of the Endangerment Finding Puts the Climate and Human Health at Risk

By Dean Hoegger

February 15th will likely go down as a day of environmental infamy. On that day, President Donald J. Trump put polluters before people when he ended application of the 2009 Endangerment Finding (EF) that set the stage for protecting future generations from global warming and climate change.

The EPA administrator, Lee Zeldin, stood at the podium with Donald Trump and announced that the Trump administration was removing the EF and thereby providing the single largest act of deregulation in American history.

The look on Zeldin's face after he made the announcement and Trump simply said, "this is good, this is great," suggested that maybe he had second thoughts. Maybe he was thinking, "Hell, I sold my soul to Donald Trump and all I got was good/great. And now I'll be remembered as the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency who favored corporations over the environment and human health."

The EF was created to give the federal government authority to limit emissions of global warming gases. The Clean Air Act lacked clear authority for the federal government to control emissions that would harm human health because of global warming. The EF provided that authority since 2009.

Zeldin claimed that removing the finding will provide $1.3 trillion in savings for the economy. Removing fuel requirements for vehicles and construction equipment and eliminating CO2 and methane emission standards will be some of the harmful changes. These changes will lead to increased air pollution, extreme weather events, and climate-related health risks.

What Zeldin and Trump failed to mention was the cost in dollars to human health. Greenhouse gas emissions are clearly scientifically linked to a wide range of human health impacts. Even with the EF in place, the World Health Organization estimates the "direct damage costs to health are estimated at US$2.4 billion per year by 2030." The costs will surely skyrocket without the EF.

In recent years, we have seen extreme weather events costing lives and billions of dollars in the U.S. In 2024, Hurricane Helene caused at least 108 deaths and resulted in $59.6 billion dollars in damages and recovery efforts. While California was burning in 2020, Trump stated at a wildfire briefing that the climate would "start getting colder." That year, 31 people died, over 4.3 million acres burned, and 10,000 structures were destroyed at a cost of over $12 billion. And the climate continues to warm.

California burning in 2020. Photo credit: California.gov

Hopefully, the decision to repeal the EF will face lengthy legal challenges and the Administration's plans will be put on hold for many years. If the rescission is upheld, it will likely require an act of Congress to expand the authority of the Clean Air Act. Could Congress do that after the mid-term elections? The stakes are high. Your vote will help determine whether the U.S. continues to be the "lone wolf" in a world where most leaders rely on facts and science.

Data Centers: Implications and Reflections of Advancing Technology

By Crystal Brown

In recent news, we are hearing about the pressing issue of Data Center expansion and AI technologies that are reported to have disastrous impacts on our water and energy demands. The topic has made its way even into our entertainment, as comedian Charlie Berens has traded off bashing the Chicago Bears for throwing down with data centers, like the one facing Port Washington, Wisconsin, in recent headlines.

We are learning that unbridled technology has its costs. According to Midwest Environmental Advocates, concerns with data centers center on a lack of transparency from companies that create nondisclosure agreements with municipalities and landowners in the early planning of permitting. They also report the unprecedented demand for electricity from these facilities that is not necessarily sustainably sourced. This leads to higher bills for consumers, increased air pollution, and an increased demand for water resources.

A report released from Clean Wisconsin, highlighted that energy consumption from AI Data in Wisconsin will exceed that of all homes in the state combined. This report came out in light of the data centers being proposed in Mt. Pleasant and Port Washington. Both centers would "require a combined 3.9 gigawatts of electric power, which is enough to power 4.3 million Wisconsin homes."

Recently, a coalition of environmental organizations including Wisconsin's Green Fire, Sierra Club of Wisconsin, Midwest Environmental Advocates, and Healthy Climate Wisconsin developed a set of actions in their publication "Hyperscale Data Centers in Wisconsin: Big Tech Unchecked – A Toolkit for Community Action," which gives support to community members in municipalities that are considering permitting data centers. This toolkit offers grassroots action steps to help organize and establish local ordinances that protect people and the environment. A video recording is on YouTube highlighting the toolkit: https://youtu.be/FnuADYpBg20?si=OEj3rulnWkjAxG2i

In our local area, community members from the Village of Greenleaf, and surrounding communities, organized to stave off a datacenter from the Cloverleaf corporation. Grassroots organizers, including Moms Clean Air Force lead the charge. A Facebook group called "Stop the Northeast Wisconsin Data Centers" was formed. The citizen group is currently working to advocate for local ordinances to prevent data center expansion. I would encourage you to follow the group to stay up to date on the latest organizing in our area.

As I explore the issue of data centers and AI online, reading headlines and seeing posts on social media, with claims that every generative AI image created is equivalent to wasting 16 bottles of water, I can't help but feel anger and confusion. I'll admit, I am not free of self-righteous behavior or tech-shaming, as I've given the side eye to my boyfriend when he confessed to me once that he used ChatGTP to polish up a job posting for work, on a tight deadline.

Its use is prolific, and its power is excitingly terrifying. The demands for it are increasing with the pace of our society. As I try to embrace slow tech, while learning traditional craft such as wood carving and ash basket making, I wonder if instead of using it as a tool to keep up with the pace, why we are not questioning the pace?

Yet, generative AI is not the only technology requiring the use of data centers. Communication platforms like social media have significant energy and data demands. Every time you post an article or like a reel of Charlie Berens bashing data centers, the action in itself feeds into the demand. How many gallons of water have I essentially dumped on pavement because I get sucked into a worm hole of scrolling on Instagram looking at reels of someone sharing a basketmaking or weaving technique?

Even this beautiful black ash basket rooted in traditional craft has its ties to data center usage, as I found out about the Field to Basket Program from a social media post. I have also posted this photo on social media in a post about stopping Enbridge Line 5, as the tree used to create the basket was from the reroute. Even our activism depends on technology. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

I remember when this issue first came out speaking with Board Member Jane Benson. I was resistant to using AI, and she reminded me that this technology is coming our way, and it is up to us to advocate for it to be developed sustainably. Me running away to the woods to make my baskets won't stop the demands, but engaging in thoughtful conversations with those embracing technology may offer insight into a new path.

I had a conversation recently with Board Member, Dave Verhagen, about smaller scale AI, that takes place on personal devices like iPhones that crowd source AI computing on devices, not adding to energy demands like a mega data center would, or how in some communities in Europe, there are smaller scale data centers integrated in cityscapes in abandoned buildings. He shared an article

"Honey I Shrunk the Data Centres" that I'd recommend: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd0ynenr1eno

Conversations with a friend and educator, Kelly Koller, about the use of AI technology create additional "aha moments." Focusing on using technology in innovative ways to share thought, Koller has a passion for environmental sustainability. In our conversation she had shared about data center models that incorporate renewable energy into their operations. She has made decisions from a business perspective to have hosting on servers that are committed to sustainable practices, such as Sustainable Hosting out of Belgium. There are organizations locally, such as Data Holdings out of Wisconsin, operated by the Potawatomi Community, that integrate renewable energy into their sustainability practices.

So there's hope out there that perhaps technology can advance in a good way if we as consumers and community members demand that from the companies that are responsible for these developments. Getting caught up in shaming and guilt trips does not allow room for educating ourselves on what is possible. By conversing and exploring with curiosity, we will be informed and empowered. It is only then that we may be able to ask our elected officials to be transparent with the permitting process and enforce regulations that require sustainable practices for data center expansion."

References
https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/big-tech-unchecked-toolkit-community-action
https://wigreenfire.org/big-tech-unchecked-toolkit-data-centers/
https://www.cleanwisconsin.org/ai-data-centers-in-wisconsin-will-use-more-energy-than-all-homes-in-state-combined/
https://midwestadvocates.org/issues/data-centers/
https://sustainablehosting.com/our-story/
https://dataholdings.com/

A Commitment to Sustainability: Green Bay Area Public Schools

By Cale Pulczinski, Guest Contributor

Editor's Note: Cale Pulzinski is the Green Bay Area Public Schools Chief Operations Officer and district representative for the GBAPS Advisory Committee on Clean Energy.

In April 2020, the Green Bay Area Public School District (GBAPS) formalized its long-term commitment to clean energy, sustainability, and carbon neutrality with a resolution unanimously approved by the Board of Education. Aligned with the City of Green Bay's pledge to achieve 100% clean energy, the resolution underscores the importance of community collaboration in addressing climate change and recognizes the meaningful progress GBAPS has already made through efficient building practices and reduced energy consumption.

The Board's resolution highlights the clear connection between environmental health and the well-being of students and staff. It reaffirms the scientific consensus, including findings from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, that reaching net zero emissions in the near future is essential to preventing irreversible climate impacts. In response, the Board established phased carbon reduction targets: 50% by 2035, 75% by 2040, and full carbon neutrality by 2050.

Key provisions of the resolution include integrating clean energy standards into future facility planning, prioritizing energy and water efficiency, expanding recycling programs, and incorporating climate-related health considerations into the District's Wellness Policy.

To advance this work, GBAPS formed a volunteer advisory committee made up of community members, energy professionals, and district staff. In partnership with McKinstry Essention, Inc., the committee developed a comprehensive sustainability plan approved by the Board of Education in December 2025. The plan outlines strategies to reduce energy use, expand renewable energy generation, and transition district facilities and transportation systems toward full electrification. It also includes timelines, milestones, and implementation frameworks to ensure steady and measurable progress.

A central theme of the plan is adaptability. Acknowledging the rapid evolution of clean energy technologies, GBAPS intends to progressively reduce, and ultimately eliminate, reliance on fossil fuels while meeting growing electricity needs through electrification. GBAPS anticipates generating approximately 60% of future electricity needs from on-site solar arrays, adding an average of 410 kW of new solar capacity each year. Additional strategies include equipment upgrades, retro-commissioning of less efficient buildings, and converting 5% of GBAPS's vehicle fleet to electric each year. Remaining electricity needs will be met through off-site renewable sources, supporting the utility's broader goal of delivering 100% carbon free power by 2050.

East High School (left) and King Elementary (right) are two of many GBAPS Schools to install solar panels. Photo credit: GBAPS

Implementation priorities include monitoring-based commissioning for all buildings, targeted retro-commissioning where needed, and creating a phased electrification roadmap aligned with long-term capital planning. GBAPS will also expand on-site solar capacity by an additional 1.2 MW to maximize federal incentives and establish a waste reduction subcommittee to support future initiatives. Annual greenhouse gas inventories and public-facing dashboards will enhance transparency and strengthen community engagement.

Collectively, these strategies position GBAPS to meet its 2035 goal of achieving 50% carbon neutrality and reinforce GBAPS's commitment to long-term environmental stewardship. As technology evolves and new funding opportunities arise, GBAPS will continue refining its approach to maintain leadership in sustainable operations.

Consistent with the adopted resolution and sustainability plan, GBAPS has already advanced numerous initiatives over the past two years. One of the most significant achievements is the completion of the new Starr Elementary School, designed as a model for high-performance, energy-efficient construction.

Newly constructed Starr Elementary incorporates geothermal and solar to meet district goals. Photo credit: GBAPS

The school incorporates a geothermal well system for heating and cooling, with 120 wells drilled to a depth of 500 feet across four well fields. The system provides naturally cooled water in summer and warmed water in winter, dramatically reducing reliance on traditional heating and cooling. The building also features 874 rooftop photovoltaic solar panels that supply clean electricity to the school, with surplus power delivered back to the community grid. Natural gas is used only for the emergency generator system, thereby substantially reducing fossil fuel consumption.

Across the District, new solar arrays are operational at multiple schools, including Aldo Leopold Community School; King Elementary School; Lombardi, Washington, and Edison Middle Schools; and East High School. Together, these installations are projected to generate $5.7 million in positive cash flow over the next 25 years.

GBAPS has also implemented broad energy efficiency improvements across its facilities. The Facilities team has

Solar panels installed on GBAPS schools including Washington and Edison Middles Schools, Aldo Leopold Community School, and East High School. Photo credit: GBAPS

converted the majority of lighting to long-lasting LED systems, replacing outdated fluorescent fixtures. The HVAC department has optimized building operations through night setbacks, outdoor air-based setpoint adjustments, and demand-controlled ventilation. Ongoing retro commissioning will further improve system performance and uncover new efficiency opportunities.

As a result of these sustained efforts, GBAPS facilities are now performing better than average for their building type and climate zone, reflecting a long-standing commitment to responsible resource management.

The Green Bay Area Public School District has taken bold, measurable steps toward a more sustainable future. Through comprehensive planning, community collaboration, and investments in clean energy and efficiency, GBAPS is advancing its carbon-neutrality goals and modeling environmental stewardship for students and the broader community. As GBAPS continues to innovate and adapt, it is well-positioned to become a regional leader in sustainable school operations, demonstrating that educational excellence and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

Adopt A Stream: Sponsoring Stream Monitoring for Phosphorus in Kewaunee County

By Debra Noel

Stream monitoring for the Department of Natural Resources and UW Madison Extension Water Action Volunteers (WAV) program takes place May through October. This year there are no DNR funds for phosphorus lab analysis. In order for this important monitoring to occur, it must be funded by sponsors and donations.

In anticipation of this year's program changes for Kewaunee County, Board Member Debra Noel, along with Clean Water Action Council's support, will establish an "Adopt A Stream" program to raise funds to monitor phosphorus in five small county streams. Four of the five streams flow directly into Lake Michigan. Of these four streams, only Three Mile Creek has been monitored for phosphorus in recent years, through our own efforts in

Sample taken from Three Mile Creek in summer 2025. Photo credit: Debra Noel

the WAV program. Casco Creek has previous baseline data and phosphorus monitoring for the past three years and in 2018. Of note, the larger Kewaunee River and Ahnapee River will continue to be monitored by another DNR program.

We feel it is important to identify quantities of phosphorus from these smaller streams that flow through agricultural fields and carry nutrients into Lake Michigan. This contributes to pollution that results in toxic bacteria thriving on excess phosphorus causing beach closures and health concerns for people, pets, wildlife, and other aquatic animals.

Casco Creek, a Class I brook trout stream. Looks can sometimes be deceiving as this creek is impaired by phosphorus. Left photo depicts Casco Creek in the winter, on February 3, 2026. Right photo in summer 2025. Photo credit: Debra Noel

Impaired Waters Details for Casco Creek can be found at:
https://apps.dnr.wi.gov/water/impairedDetail.aspx?key=10178

The "Adopt A Stream" program will kick off at our annual banquet. Please help us fund or sponsor these five streams to make sure they are counted and recorded in the DNR database. By having this data, action can be taken to reduce agriculture run off from polluting streams and our Great Lake Michigan. There will be a report on this project's data at the end of the season to track the results. Concerns with the report will be sent to local officials and DNR if there are elevated values in lab results present. We will also be looking to engage our members in sampling efforts.

To learn more about the Water Action Volunteers program, go to: https://wateractionvolunteers.org/ or call Debra Noel at 920-655-4394

****Learn more about sponsoring stream monitoring efforts at our annual banquet on April 23!**

ISSUE UPDATE: CAFO RESOURCES

Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network Releases "Follow the Money: A Community Guide to Factory Farm Finance"

Editors Note; Our allies at Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network (SRWN), have put together this guide to help local communities understand and organize to protect their communities from the threats of the factory farm industry. To access "Follow the Money" go to: https://sustainruralwisconsin.org/follow-the-money#db85cab0-f86e-492a-ac1f-b00bb85644c7

Excerpt from Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network (SRWN):

SECRET DEALS FUEL FACTORY FARM FINANCE: Consolidation of Wisconsin's livestock industry is in full swing. Lawyers and financiers cobble together behind-the-scenes deals with factory farms and local officials. These schemes often intentionally block community input while leveraging public financing worth $10 million, $20 million, $50 million and more.

Follow the Money: A Community Guide to Factory Farm Financing, illuminates this system for communities looking to intervene in an opaque process that extracts local resources to enrich investors around the world. The guide is published by the Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network (SRWN).

"Communities want to know where the dollars are coming from that fuel the livestock industry's massive consolidation," said Lisa Doerr, a Polk County farmer. "We're seeing very big money flow into industrial-sized expansions with millions of chickens and thousands of turkeys, cows, and pigs," Doerr continued. "Oftentimes, just one county or town chair decides who gets how much money. That's bad governance!"

SRWN researchers combed through more than 1,200 pages of documents to expose publicly financed deals for three of Wisconsin's biggest factory farm players — Breeze Dairy Group, Pagel Ponderosa and Zahns Farms. Presented as three case studies, each profiles the players involved and lays out detailed timelines of their dealings.

SUSTAIN RURAL WISCONSIN NETWORK

The Action in Clean Water Action Council

By Crystal Brown

I have heard that winter is a time to slow down and go inward; however, this winter had stayed quite busy for CWAC, as the need to protect our water does not freeze. We have been working on recruiting and onboarding interns for spring and summer, as well as recruiting additional board members. We continue to share updates and action alerts with our members and have been organizing our annual banquet that will take place on April 23. This winter was also filled with membership renewals. If you have not yet renewed

your membership for 2026, please consider supporting our efforts for the upcoming year by renewing today.

LEGAL AND ADVOCACY ACTIONS

Heims Hillcrest Dairy Public Hearing: Board Members submitted testimony in a public hearing held on January 12, in opposition of expansion of CAFOs in Kewaunee County. Written testimony was also submitted. The DNR approved the permit to double their herd size. Gilbert Farms expansion permit is pending. Updates will be provided.

El Na Farm Manure Runoff in Kewaunee County: CWAC Board Member Debra Noel connected with community members and local officials regarding a January 8 manure spread at the El-Na Farm in Kewaunee County, that resulted in a manure runoff into Rio Creek on January 9 after 0.7 inches of rainfall accumulated overnight. Noel and Board Vice President Charlie Frisk attended a public meeting with Kewaunee Land and Water on January 13. Noel is staying actively involved with local Kewaunee County officials to ensure an investigation is taking place. Updates will be provided as they develop.

Data Centers: Board Members submitted public testimony to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission against a proposal by WE Energies, that would not hold Data Centers fully responsible for their costs, and pass these responsibilities onto citizens. CWAC supports efforts to ensure that data centers are held accountable for their costs and impact on the environment, and that transparency is ensured regarding permitting and development.

Sign-On Letters: CWAC has signed-on to five letters from December 2025 to February 2026, including voicing opposition to changes being made to wetland protections with changes to the WOTUS (Waters of the United States) definition, opposition to cuts to the Toxic Substance Control Act, joining Moms Clean Air Force and other environmental organizations in asking for the resignation of EPA director Zeldin, and voicing support of the Sea Grant Program.

Board President Dean Hoegger presents on Microplastics at Brown County Library. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

Microplastic Education: On January 15, Board President Dean Hoegger delivered a presentation to 40 people at the Brown County Library Central Branch, highlighting the ways that consumers can protect themselves from harmful microplastics.

PFAS Education: On January 14, Executive Director Crystal Brown presented to the UW-Green Bay Lifelong Learning Program, on "Protecting Your Family from PFAS." The presentation was held in person and virtually, with approximately 70 individuals in attendance.

To schedule any of our educational presentations with a community group, free of charge, please contact the CWAC office at 920-421-8885 or email: contact@cleanwateractioncouncil.org

Robin Greenfield Event and Book Club: On Dec. 6, 2025, CWAC hosted author and environmental activist Robin Greenfield at the Tarlton Theatre. Over 115 people were in attendance and multiple environmental groups were invited by CWAC to participate in a community resource event prior to the talk on "Food Freedom." Groups present included NEW Leaf Foods, Oshkosh Tool Library and Sustainability Commission, Ms. Planet, Citizens Climate Lobby, NEW Land Trust, Community Waters Coalition, Aurora's Apothecary, Inspired North, The Table of Plenty, Rooted In, and NEW Cares Mutual Aid Group. The CWAC Book Club continues, with its exploration of "The Serviceberry" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. See our "Mark Your Calendar" for events associated with Book Club this spring.

ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND MONITOR WATER QUALITY

Baird Creek Water Sampling: We have committed to another year of water sampling at Baird Creek, which will commence in April with our spring intern. This summer, interns will work on analyzing previous years of data and expand our outreach to teach area youth about water sampling. We are partnering again with Baird Creek Preservation Foundation to teach their youth campers about water quality and sampling, and give them hands-on experience using equipment to take samples.

Kewaunee County Water Sampling: Board Member Debra Noel has been instrumental in ensuring water sampling takes place in Kewaunee County through the WAV program. In collaboration with CWAC, Debra is starting an "Adopt A Stream" program to ensure that phosphorous monitoring happens for five creeks in Kewaunee County, as reference in her article in this newsletter. We will be sharing more at the Annual Banquet on April 23, along with ways that CWAC members can be involved in our efforts.

OTHER ACTIONS

Packers Concessions Volunteering: We concluded another successful season of fundraising at our Packer's Stadium Concession Booth. Thank you to board member Debra Noel for leading this year's efforts in coordinating our volunteers. In addition to our board members, Clean Water Action Council would like to thank our volunteers that worked at the concession stand at home games: Gracyn Holcomb, Jim Wagner, Maya Hearden, Julie Hoegger, Peyton Zidlicky, and Rick Adamski.

Coalition Building: Executive Director Crystal Brown continues to participate in the Community Waters Coalition, a Citizen Advisory Committee for the Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern efforts. CWAC continues to be involved in the Wisconsin PFAS Coalition. CWAC also became a sponsor of the Wisconsin Environmental Health

Network's Annual Conference, taking place on March 6, in Madison, WI.

Community Roundtable: CWAC is participating in another Community Roundtable that is being headed by NEW Leaf Foods. Last summer we participated in a Community Roundtable on Climate Change. This summer the focus will be on Food Sovereignty and Sustainability. This event is a collaboration between CWAC, NEW Leaf Foods, Citizens Climate Lobby, JOSHUA, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Brown County Community Garden Program, NWTC Sustainable Agriculture Program, UW-Extension Brown County, as well as local community members focused on sustainable food sovereignty efforts. More details will be shared in late spring and the summer newsletter for the event that will take place in August 2026.

Board Member Updates:

Rick Adamski

Peyton Zidlicky

CWAC would like to recognize the departure of two of our board members, Rick Adamski and Peyton Zidlicky, as they enter new chapters in their lives. Rick has been integral part of strategic planning conversations, providing a wealth of experience from other organizations he has been involved with. His insight into agriculture has been a compliment to the work of CWAC. Peyton has been offered much in connecting CWAC with students on campus at UW-Green Bay. Her enthusiasm has been inspirational. Their presence on the Board of Directors will be missed, and we are glad they will continue to support CWAC efforts through their membership and volunteering.

CWAC'S NON-PROFIT STATUS

To learn more about our non-profit status and financials, go to the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, Credential Lookup, and then go to Credential Search for Clean Water Action Council. https://apps.dfi.wi.gov/ice/berg/Registration/CredSummaryDetails.aspx?chid=933009&h=1122515367

Please follow us on Facebook.
Click here for our page: ***Facebook***

https://www.facebook.com/cleanwateractioncouncil

Please follow us on Instagram.
Click here for our page: ***Instagram***

https://www.instagram.com/cleanwateractioncouncil/

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Meetings, Events and Happenings

Thursday, April 9, 3:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Community Waters Coalition Community Input Event and Conservation Project Tours
Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, 1660 East Shore Dr., Green Bay

Join the Community Waters Coalition for a Conservation Projects Tour and Community Input and Education Event—a special opportunity to connect, learn, and help shape the future of the Greater Green Bay Fox/Wolf Watershed. This event brings together community members, First Nations partners, conservation organizations, educators, policymakers, and anyone who cares about the health of our watershed. We will explore current conservation projects in the Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern Project, hear lightning talks, and open up space for listening and conversation about community priorities. Site tours take place from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM, and the main event starts at 5:00 PM. Registration is limited. For more information, email: greenbaycwc@gmail.com

Wednesday-Friday, April 15-17
Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention: Decades of Dedication
Stevens Point Holiday Inn Convention Center, Stevens Point, or Virtual

When tackling a monumental challenge, it sometimes takes a long time to see results. The 2026 Lakes and Rivers Partnership Convention will look back on the long-term programs and the accumulated actions of countless people that have persevered through many decades. We will also celebrate the people who will continue to carry the torch for water protection and restoration into the future. Learn from respected experts, grassroots organizers, and passionate water advocates! Engage in the pre- and post-convention workshops and 60+ concurrent sessions. This annual convention is brought to you by the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Partnership. Learn more at: https://wisconsinwaterweek.org/home/lakes-and-rivers-convention/

Thursday, April 16, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
NEW Leaf Foods: Bountiful Branches – Planning, Planting, and Maintaining Perennial Food Plants
Brown County Central Library Auditorium, 515 Pine Street, Green Bay

If you're planning to purchase a food-producing plant from New Leaf Foods Bountiful Branches Sale, this mini class is for you! Learn the basics of how to plant and care for your new plants. Taught by Dillon Weist, manager of the Bounty Garden for the Sustainable Food and Agriculture Systems associate degree program, at NWTC. The class will cover which plants homeowners should select and the related care and maintenance information needed to make your

SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday, April 23, 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

CWAC Annual Banquet: Dine and Bid for the Environment

Riverside Ballroom, 1560 Main St., Green Bay

>>> See our poster on page 19 for more details. <<<

Click here to get your tickets or send in the enclosed form.

harvests bountiful. To learn more about this event, as well as see the complete list of events for the Grassroots in the Garden program, go to: https://www.newleaffoods.org/events

Check out NEW Leaf's Bountiful Branches Plant Sale, going on now until May 7 (or when plants are sold out)! Support local sustainable food and the environment with your purchase. For more information on the sale, go to: https://www.newleaffoods.org/events/bountiful-branches-plant-sale

Wednesday, April 22, 6:00 PM

The Natural World of the Bay – Earth Day Film Premiere

UW–Green Bay Campus, 2420 Nicolet Drive, Green Bay

Mark your calendars for the premiere of Dan Larson's newest documentary, The Natural World of the Bay. The film explores the geologic history, ecosystem dynamics, and ongoing restoration efforts across the Green Bay Estuary. The premiere will take place on This film is the third in a series produced by Dan highlighting the local environment. His previous documentaries include The Great Ledge (2017), focused on the Niagara Escarpment, and The Power of the River (2023), which explored the Lower Fox River.

Thursday, April 23, 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM

CWAC Annual Banquet: Dine and Bid for the Environment

Riverside Ballroom, 1560 Main Street, Green Bay

Saturday & Sunday, April 25 & 26

Every Day is Earth Day Festival 2026 - The Healing Power of Plants

Kress Pavilion, 7845 Church Street, Egg Harbor

Visit the CWAC booth at the 2026 Every Day Is Earth Day Festival, celebrating the 9th year of honoring the people and organizations working to protect Door County's natural beauty. This year's theme—"Healing Power of Plants: Herbs, Flowers, Mushrooms and Trees"—celebrates how connecting with the land restores both people and planet. Saturday features Kids Earth Care Day, with hands-on activities, a show by Open Door Bird Sanctuary, and nature-inspired art. Sunday offers herbal and foraging presentations and a pollinator plant sale. Get your copy of the Door County Green Zine, a 32-page guide to local earth-care groups and seasonal plant wisdom. Join the celebration of the healing power of nature and our shared home. Learn more at: https://www.everydayisearthdayfest.org/

Wednesday, April 29

Green Bay Conservation Partners Spring Roundtable

UW–Green Bay Campus, 2420 Nicolet Drive, Green Bay

Join us for an exciting event to share information and foster collaboration among conservation practitioners, researchers and stakeholders working in the bay of Green Bay, Lower Fox River watershed, Green Bay's west shore and Door Peninsula. The morning includes an opportunity for networking, regional and legislative updates, lightning talks, and student posters. Don't miss this great opportunity to hear from partners involved in exciting restoration, monitoring, and other conservation projects around the region. If you have questions about this event, please contact: gbconservationpartners@gmail.com, or go to their website for more details: https://www.gbconservationpartners.org/events/

Saturday, May 2, 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

CWAC Book Club Presents: The Serviceberry Outdoor Readings and Serviceberry Plant Identification

UW–Green Bay Campus Student Union, 2420 Nicolet Drive, Green Bay

Join members of the CWAC Winter Book Club for outdoor readings from "The Serviceberry," by Robin Wall Kimmerer. We will meet outdoors in front of the Student Union and enjoy some discussion regarding the book. After the readings, we will go for a short walk to meet the serviceberry plants on campus, to better understand the role of this plant in a sustainable foodscape. To learn more, email the office at contact@cleanwateractioncouncil.org

Wednesday, May 6, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

CWAC Presents: Do-It-Yourself Zero Plastic Waste Laundry Soap Making and Microplastics Education

Join Executive Director Crystal Brown and Spring Intern Brie Schuldt for an afternoon of learning to make a zero plastic waste laundry soap, that was featured in the Summer 2025 Newsletter: Surviving a World Filled With Microplastics. This event will bring campus students and CWAC Community Members together for a hands on activity, while also learning about the health impacts of microplastics. Registration is limited. All ages are welcome and students are encouraged to attend. Contact the office to register at contact@cleanwateractioncouncil.org

Meet CWAC's New Spring Intern: Gabrielle Schuldt

Hello! My name is Gabrielle Schuldt, but I go by Brie for short (although I'm not a very big fan of the cheese). I'm a student attending UW - Green Bay and majoring in Environmental Policy and Planning. I enjoy gardening, crafting, and simply being outside. I don't think there's anything much better than 70° weather with a slight breeze. It is one of my strongest held beliefs that we as people have a moral responsibility to care for the planet the same way it cares for us. I aspire to help create a world where sustainability and environmental stewardship are at the forefront, where communities are based in resiliency and collaboration, and where equality and equity are a rigid standard in every society.

Thank you to...

Ann Lindolm, Dave and Chris Kellems
for supporting our newsletter publication

~

Thomas Bice-Allen, Gary Austin, Kent and Kristin Powley, & Dean and Julie Hoegger
for supporting our internship program

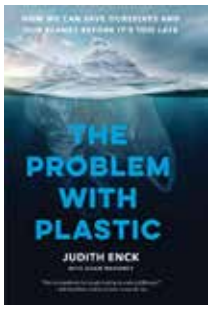
~

Aria Foundation and Bonnie Raitt
for supporting our educational and outreach efforts

~

Packers Concession Volunteers and Debra Noel
for a successful season of fundraising

SPRING BOOK CLUB: *The Problem with Plastic – How We Can Save Ourselves and Our Planet Before It's Too Late*



Information Session: Tuesday, May 12, 1:00 PM

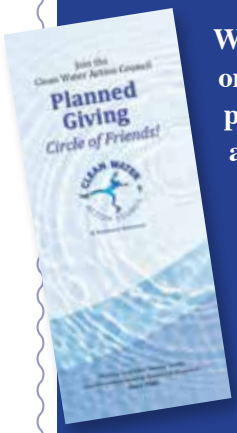
Location: Grounded Café – ADRC of Brown County, Green Bay, WI

Join Board Member John Hermanson and Executive Director Crystal Brown for a book club examining a "powerful investigation into plastic's impact on human health and the environment, and how we can fight back." The Problem with Plastic, by Judith Enck, has recently been shared by our affiliate partner, Beyond Plastics, as a call to action to make changes in our lives to reduce our consumption and address this pervasive problem.

Did you know we are an Affiliate of the Beyond Plastics network?
Beyond Plastics offers resources, education, and advocacy tools to help reduce the effects of plastic pollution in our communities. Check out their website at: https://www.beyondplastics.org/

BEYOND PLASTICS

Join Our Planned Giving Circle of Friends



Without planned giving donations or legacies, our organization would not be able to do the work of protecting human health and the environment at its current level. Please consider supporting our endowment fund at the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation with a gift in your will or bequest.

Contact us for a Planned Giving Brochure

Wondering what to do with your required minimum distribution?
Make a qualified charitable distribution from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to Clean Water Action Council

What is a qualified charitable distribution?
Starting at age 70 ½ you can choose to gift up to $108,000 annually directly to a qualified charity from most IRAs, with the distribution being tax free. This type of gift is called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). It's not only a powerful incentive for charitable giving, it also has tax benefits. QCDs count as IRA distributions, so they can be used to satisfy all or some of your required minimum distribution (RMS) for the calendar year.

What type of organization qualifies for my donation?
A QCD must be made to a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization (a charitable organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions). Clean Water Action Council of NE Wisconsin is a 501 (c)(3). *Contact your financial advisor to learn more about making a qualified charitable distribution!*

SADLY MISSED: We are saddened to report the death of Andrea Beryl Iwen who passed away on February 8, 2026. Andrea and her husband William, who preceded her in death, were longtime members and major contributors to the work of Clean Water Action Council. ***Obituary: Andrea Beryl (Deters) Iwen - Door County Pulse***

Office location:
310P Rose Hall, UW-Green Bay, 2420 Nicolet Drive
Green Bay, WI 54311

www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org

Find us on Facebook or updates on hearings and current or upcoming events.

The newsletter, "Clean Water Action Council of N.E.WI" is published quarterly by the Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin, Inc., P.O. Box 9144, Green Bay, WI 54308, a registered non-profit charitable, educational organization.
Contributions may be tax-deductible.

To become a member of CWAC, go to https://www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/membership/

CONTACT US

By phone: 920-421-8885
By mail:
Clean Water Action Council
P.O. Box 9144, Green Bay, WI 54308
By e-mail:
contact@cleanwateractioncouncil.org

CLEAN WATER ACTION COUNCIL OF NE WISCONSIN
PO BOX 9144
GREEN BAY WI 54308

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
ECRWSS
US POSTAGE
PAID
STURGEON BAY, WI
PERMIT #31

PLEASE RENEW if your mailing label does not say 2026.

in this issue...

Clean Energy: Choosing Green in Uncertain Times

For previous newsletters, go to: www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/newsletter/