



# JOURNAL

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

**JUSTIN FAY**

As the 2016 session convened in March, environmental advocates approached with very modest expectations. Last year, the Legislature took a number of steps backward on the environment, rolling back protections for clean water and weakening clean energy laws, among other misguided decisions. With the same legislators coming back for 2016, simply getting out without further damage being done would have been considered a noteworthy accomplishment.

Fortunately, things were quite different in 2016.

Environmental advocates were, in fact, largely successful at preventing further rollbacks to our existing environmental laws in 2016. In a few cases, the 2016 Legislature even took a few very modest steps forward.

### **Holding the Line**

Minnesota is fortunate to have a strong network of advocates working in support of clean energy, clean water and a

healthy environment. Working alongside many partners, the Sierra Club helped to fight back against a number of proposed environmental rollbacks in 2016. Among the policies offered but not enacted in 2016 were:

- Elimination of contested case hearings over an appeal to a permit to mine decision
- Prohibition on the use of state funds toward implementation of the Clean Power Plan in Minnesota until legal challenges are resolved
- Capping contributions to the Renewable Development Fund at \$10 million lifetime per cask
- Onerous new regulations designed to impede the rollout of community solar gardens
- Prohibition on any new solar project in excess of three acres if it would require trees to be cut

- Politicizing the Public Utilities Commission by turning it into an elected body
- Removing pipelines from calculation of a utility's annual energy savings goal under the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP)



Walt Handschin, Joshua Houdek, Matt Kazinka, Metropolitan Council Member Cara Letofsky, Sean Gosiewski, Kathy Haskins, Representative Jim Davnie, Jan Lysen, Beth Wagner

**“Legislative Session Report” continues on page 7**

## TRANSPORTATION EQUITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**KAYLA GROVER**

Every day most of us will take some sort of trip - whether it is a couple blocks to a coffee shop, a short trip to the grocery store, or a 20 mile commute to work. All of this moving around requires vast networks of infrastructure, which requires long-term public investment to build and maintain. The Sierra Club, as part of the Transportation Forward coalition, gathered over 100 Minnesotans at the State Capitol in early April to ask legislators to pass funding to maintain and expand the infrastructure that accommodates our daily

movements. One sentiment was expressed loudly at this gathering: In a diverse and changing society transportation infrastructure is not yet adequate for the needs of all Minnesotans.

The Sierra Club's Land Use and Transportation campaign has been leading some rethinking of transportation in Minnesota. Green transportation initiatives including expanded bus and train service, protected bike lanes (physically separated from traffic), and pedestrian-friendly streets help us move

beyond dirty oil by making more transportation options safe and accessible for everyone. Furthermore, cars are the second greatest source of carbon emissions and reducing reliance on gasoline-burning vehicles is crucial. While green transportation options are undoubtedly a crucial part of protecting our environment, they provide other important benefits for our communities.

As workers across the state fight for a \$15 minimum wage, it is important to remember that they must also have a way

**“Transportation Equity” continuation on page 14...**

# FROM THE CHAPTER CHAIR

Katie Eukel



I'm very excited to serve as the chair of the Executive Committee for the Sierra Club North Star Chapter. As a six-year ExCom member, I have been proud to see the chapter grow, diversify and deepen its impact. I'm looking forward to carrying that momentum forward.

One of the things I'm most inspired and heartened to see happening at the Sierra Club – both nationally and at the chapter level – is the strong commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). This winter, the Sierra Club hired the organization's first-ever Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Locally, the Chapter committed to apply a racial equity lens to our decision making, and we recently hosted a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training for volunteers.

Every person deserves a healthy community, and every person deserves freedom from discrimination. These issues

are inextricably linked – they are necessary for a more just and livable future, for our planet and the people who inhabit it.

Looking ahead, I am eager to better engage and welcome volunteers from all backgrounds. I'm also eagerly anticipating summer and the chance to explore Minnesota's brilliant green forests, expansive prairies and clear blue waters. It is summer, after all, and I can't help but go outside.

This is our work, and it doesn't happen without you. Cheers to the year ahead!

*Katie Eukel is Chair of the Executive Committee.*

## MONTHLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Visit [sierraclub.org/minnesota](http://sierraclub.org/minnesota) or call the Chapter Office at 612-659-9124 for committee contacts and to confirm meeting times, dates and location. RSVP strongly encouraged, as schedules are subject to change. Most meetings are held at the Chapter Office at 2327 East Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. Participation by phone or video conference can be arranged with RSVP.

Refer to contact list on page 15 for more information.

**Beyond Oil and Tar Sands: 4th Tuesday of the month, 6:30 p.m.**

**Clean Air and Energy Committee: 4th Tuesday of the month, 6:30 p.m.**

**Executive Committee: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7:00 p.m.**

**Forests Committee: 2nd Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m.**

**Land Use and Transportation: 1st Monday of the month, 6:00 p.m.**

**Mining Committee: 3rd Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m. – Meets by phone, contact Chair.**

**Wetlands and Water Committee: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m.**



The North Star Journal

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The Sierra Club North Star Chapter, a 501(c)4 non-profit organization, is the leading grassroots voice working to preserve and protect Minnesota's environment. Since 1968 we have involved volunteer leaders to act through environmental advocacy, community organizing and outdoor exploration. We are committed to becoming an intercultural, anti-racist organization and partnering with communities and organizations to eradicate all forms of oppression.

The North Star Journal is published bi-annually by the North Star Chapter (Minnesota) of the Sierra Club, 2327 E. Franklin Ave, Suite 1, Minneapolis MN 55406. The North Star Journal has a circulation of 11,821 for the Summer 2016 issue.

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The North Star Journal welcomes submissions and photographs on environmental and related issues. Articles of less than a thousand words will be given preference. E-mail submissions only. We reserve the right to edit all copy for clarity and concision. Photos can be color and should be a jpeg format of 5x7 size at 300 dpi. Please send all submission materials and requests to the editor.

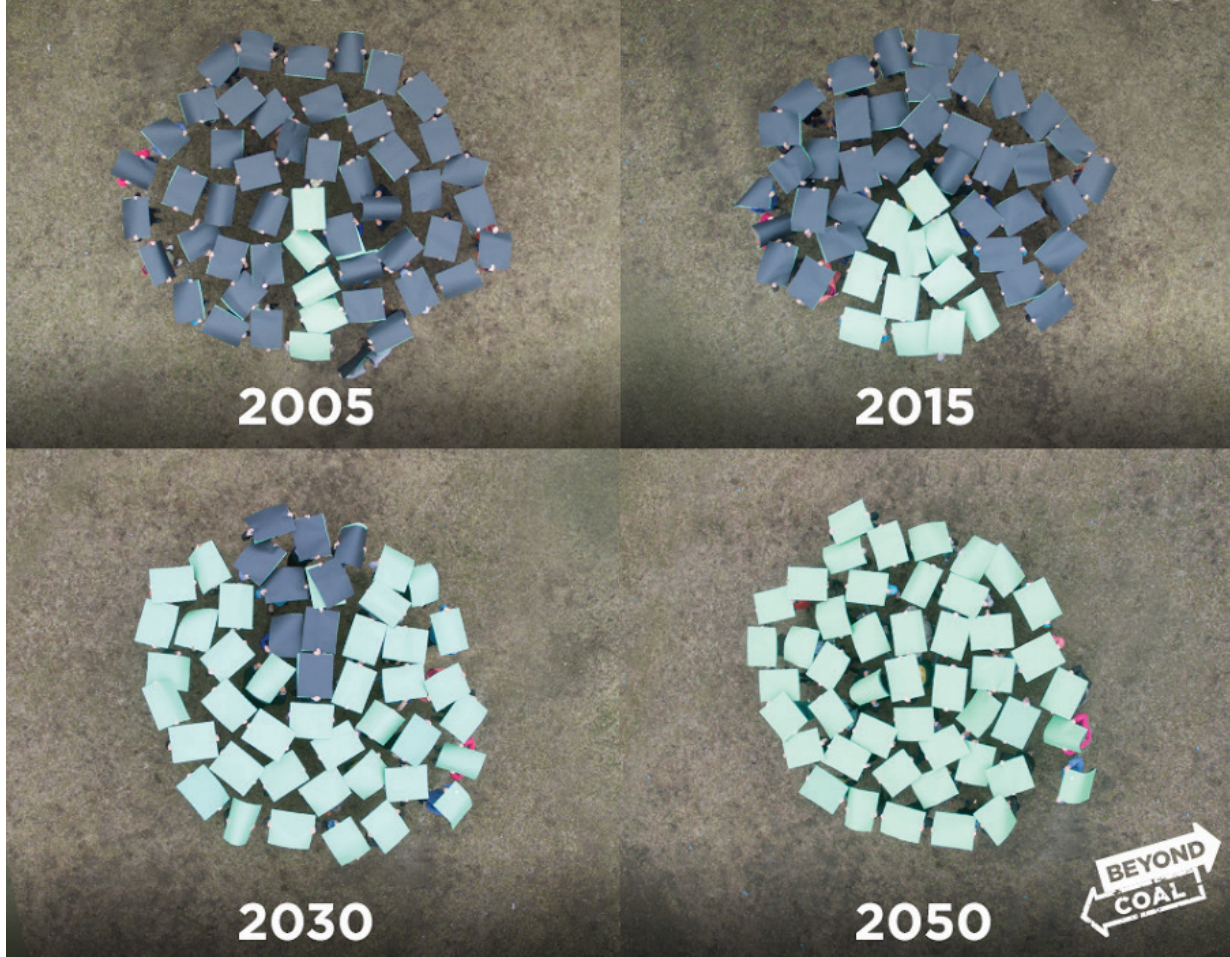
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# MAKE CLEAN ENERGY A BIGGER PIECE OF THE PIE FOR MINNESOTA!

The Clean Power Plan and state clean energy policies are steps in the right direction. Let's plan for 100% clean energy!



Day of Action volunteers created an aerial photo showing Minnesota's clean energy goal. Photo Credit: Jamie Hiner

## CLEAN POWER PLAN DAY OF ACTION: MINNESOTA'S CLEAN ENERGY EVOLUTION

NATALIE JACOBS

On March 14, Minnesotans gathered to show support for a strong, racially and economically just Clean Power Plan!

Right now, the state is developing its plan to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) first-ever limits of carbon pollution from power plants. Prior to the Clean Power Plan, existing power plants -- the largest source of carbon emissions in the United States -- could release unlimited amounts of carbon!

Thanks to past actions, Minnesota is on track to meet or even exceed the state's carbon reduction target from the Plan. However, to stay on track and continue our progress toward a clean energy economy, Minnesota needs racially and economically just implementation of the Clean Power Plan. Such a plan will yield more well paying jobs, public health benefits prioritizing those who are disproportionately impacted, and the preservation of our treasured lakes, rivers and streams.

At the Day of Action, volunteers came together to create an aerial photo urging that clean energy become a bigger piece of Minnesota's energy pie (3/14 is "Pi Day" after all). We demonstrated the growth of renewable energy from 5% in 2005 to 21% in 2015 and illustrated what our growth needs to be to meet our goals of 85% in 2030 and 100% in 2050!

That same day, an energetic group of more than 100 high school and college students were present at the State Capitol

for a Lobby Day. Hosted by Youth Environmental Activists of MN, a program of Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy, in partnership with Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG) and MN Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC), the Youth Summit and Lobby Day was a wonderful opportunity for young people to share their perspectives in support of the Clean Power Plan with their legislators and Governor Mark Dayton. The students also delivered to the Governor over 650 letters from their fellow students calling for zero carbon emissions by the year 2050!

That evening, the action continued with more than 70 people from all over Minnesota calling their legislators encouraging support of the Plan, as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency held public hearings on the Plan across the state.

The Sierra Club will continue working to advance Minnesota's transition away from fossil fuels, like coal toward renewable energy, such as wind and solar, and increased energy efficiency. At the same time we must look for opportunities to protect our health, grow local jobs for all communities, keep energy bills affordable and find solutions for low income households to get out of energy poverty. Join us! To get involved, contact our Clean Air & Renewable Energy Committee.

*Natalie Jacobs is a Clean Energy Intern with the North Star Chapter.*

## Support the Minnesota Chapter

While your membership dollars are crucial to support the Sierra Club's local, regional and national campaigns, you also have the option to donate directly to the North Star Chapter. 100% of your additional contribution to our Chapter stays here in Minnesota -- to work locally on issues that you care about! Sustaining and tax-deductible options available.

Visit [northstar.sierraclub.org/donate](http://northstar.sierraclub.org/donate) to give online, or contact us: 612-659-9124 or [margaret.levin@sierraclub.org](mailto:margaret.levin@sierraclub.org). Thank you for your generous support!



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## Create an Environmental Legacy.



Bequests have played a key role in Sierra Club's environmental successes over the years.

Planning now may make your gift more meaningful and reduce taxes on your estate. We have many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter.

For more info and confidential assistance, contact:

**Sierra Club Gift Planning Program**  
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# EARTH DAY CONCERT SPOTLIGHTS JUSTICE

DANETTE KNICKMEIER

On April 22, the North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club partnered with Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC), the Minnesota Public Interest Group (MPIRG), Eureka Recycling and Black Lives Matter to co-sponsor a concert celebrating Earth Day with hip hop and art.

The venue, an intimate basement music club in Northeast Minneapolis called Honey, with its low dark ceilings, red and yellow painted brick walls and just-right lighting, was the perfect spot for the exuberant crowd of around 100.

Local musicians including Avalon Moon, Off 10, Malcolm Anthony, IXIV the Lily, Mike Queenz, and Madra T Rosa filled the evening with music, song and spoken word – some whimsical, some hopeful, some angry and some political, but all delivered with passion and pride. One band even snuck in a few lyrics from Purple Rain to honor local hometown celebrity Prince who had passed away the previous day.

The event started small and mellow, but as more musicians began taking the stage, some collaborating with each other as the night went on, the crowd grew. They went from their chairs to their feet, many dancing, during the last few sets. Everyone seemed to be having a great time.

The event had no entry fee, but organizers asked each attendee to sign a petition to Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency asking for a racially and economically just State Implementation Plan for clean power.

There were also opportunities to talk to representatives from each of the sponsoring groups, purchase swag and have a photo taken next to a white board with messaging and hashtags for posting to social media.

The crowd was a diverse with a mix of ages and races. As Mike Queenz put it several times during his set, “Look at this beautiful crowd!” – presumably a nod to the diversity of attendees.



Earth Day Concert at Honey – Karen Monahan and Ryan Stopera

Karen Monahan, Sierra Club Senior Organizing Representative said “That was exactly the point.” She also noted that “Many of our organizations have similar goals, and we are thrilled to be joining forces and working together to make positive change.”

Ryan Stopera, Community Organizer and member of the NOC Board of Directors not only hosted the event, but also had a collection of his photographs displayed on the walls of the club, reminding us that clean air and water are equally crucial for our environment and our communities.

The concert accomplished its purpose: to build a diverse community developing the clean power plan, to intersect environmental, racial and economic justice, and to highlight some of the most talented MC's and musicians in the Twin Cities.

*Danette Knickmeier is a volunteer leader with the Communications Team.*

## ROCHESTER EVENTS CELEBRATE CLEAN ENERGY



City of Rochester Mayor Ardele Brede, Mary Anne Hitt, Mary Idso, and Ivan Idso

The Rochester community celebrated Earth Day on Sunday, April 24 at the second annual EarthFest Expo, the culmination of the weeklong Rochester EarthFest. The seven-day volunteer-led series of events, all related to Earth Day and sustainable living, were made possible by a core group of ten volunteer leaders working with more than 60 community volunteers to prepare for and organize activities.

Mary Anne Hitt, the national Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign Director, gave the keynote address, sharing her reflections on this moment in the transition away from coal and Minnesota's leading role in the movement to address climate change. “We are in the middle of a clean energy revolution, when things that did not seem possible 10 or 20 years ago are now possible,” Hitt said. “By moving Rochester to 100 percent clean energy, you will change people's

understanding of what's possible.”

Ivan Idso, EarthFest co-founder and Rochester Sierra Club chair, said Hitt's remarks helped to highlight the event's theme: City of Rochester Mayor Ardele Brede's 100 percent renewable energy by 2031 proclamation. “Mary Anne shared what the nation is doing, and helped us learn about the path to get there,” Idso said. He added that her message “gives some of us the strength to continue the fight, while hopefully inspiring others to pick up the torch.”

In his remarks, Mayor Brede shared the factors influencing his decision to set a 100 percent renewable energy goal for Rochester. Locally, a major factor was the leadership of “bright young students who started the idea to put solar panels on three of our public school buildings,” which now power a number of classrooms. “These are the citizens who

will be moving us forward,” Brede said.

EarthFest events included a forum on the Muslim and Christian response to climate change, children's storytime, the Net Zero Home Tour, a rally and march in downtown Rochester, a plant sale, a pub crawl and more. The Expo featured 35 exhibitors, 12 workshops and interactive displays and drew a crowd of more than 500 attendees.

Get involved! The Sierra Club is working for clean, healthy energy in Rochester – decisions being made right now will have an impact for decades to come. Contact Clean Energy Organizer Rick Morris: rick.morris@sierraclub.org or 908-578-5748, and visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/RochesterMNSierra](http://www.facebook.com/RochesterMNSierra).



John Doberstein and Tom Thompson at a demonstration in Duluth

The North Star Chapter Beyond Oil and Tar Sands committee continues to fight the expansion of tar sands pipelines through Minnesota and across the Great Lakes region. Tar sands oil is among the dirtiest fuels in the world -- its development jeopardizes irreplaceable water resources, accelerates climate change, exploits and endangers indigenous communities, and destroys pristine forests. Increased transportation of tar sands oil across our state threatens the quality of our lakes, rivers and streams. The potential threat of causing irreversible damage to our ecosystems is why we are working to keep dirty fuels in the ground and move Minnesota forward with clean, renewable energy.

This past year our focus has expanded to include three Enbridge, Inc. pipelines that are of immediate concern: the Alberta Clipper, Line 3, and Sandpiper:

The Alberta Clipper pipeline (also known as Line 67) pumps tar sands from Hardisty, Alberta, Canada to Superior, Wisconsin. Enbridge Inc., a Canadian company, has used a work-around scheme to nearly double the pipeline capacity since 2012 without environmental review or new federal permits. We will continue to fight for a federal environmental review of the Line 67 border crossing, which will likely extend into 2017.

Built in 1968, the Line 3 is an existing 34-inch diameter crude oil pipeline also owned by Enbridge Inc. It runs from Edmonton, Alberta to Superior, Wisconsin, transecting northern Minnesota and delivering crude to refineries and other pipelines for transport. Enbridge has now proposed increasing imports of tar sands crude oil by abandoning Line 3, leaving the old pipeline in the ground, and building a new Line 3 with a new 36-inch pipeline that would increase capacity and deviate from its current route. In order to skirt the standard scrutiny and environmental review required of all new pipelines, Enbridge plans to abandon the old

pipeline in the ground--causing long term pollution -- and label Line 3 as the replacement Minnesota has never dealt with pipeline abandonment before -- we are working hard to make sure that Enbridge cleans up these crumbling pipelines to preserve Minnesota's pristine landscapes and ecosystems.

The Sandpiper is yet another Enbridge-proposed 610-mile Bakken crude oil pipeline from Tioga, North Dakota, to Superior, Wisconsin, passing through Minnesota. This pipeline would create a new corridor, opening us up to more pipeline proposals and exposing new waters to the risk of contamination.

The past few months have brought some promising new developments:

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) determined that it will conduct a combined Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on both the Sandpiper and Line 3 proposals during 2016-2017, linking the two pipelines in the review process.

- Our Tar Sands volunteer leadership team has doubled in size and hosted a series of public events including letter writing gatherings, issue briefings and webinars.
- More than 50 people committed to attend the Line 3 and Sandpiper EIS scoping hearings as a result of our turnout efforts, and at least seven Sierra Club members gave public testimony at the hearings.
- Submitted more than 1,000 public comments collected by volunteer petition captains and via online outreach, urging a robust and thorough Environmental Impact Statement.
- We collaborated with Citizens Acting for Rail Safety to advocate for stronger safety requirements for transportation oil by rail.

This summer we'll have lots of opportunities to help out! Contact Natalie Cook: [natalie.cook@sierraclub.org](mailto:natalie.cook@sierraclub.org) or 612-259-2445 to learn more.

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE: ABBIE PLOUFF

JIM LEAVENWORTH

The North Star Chapter Tar Sands Committee recently sponsored a letter-writing event to Governor Dayton and several local newspapers urging a robust Environmental Impact Statement of the proposed Line 3 and Sandpiper pipelines, where I had a chance to catch up with Tar Sands Committee leader Abbie Plouff.

Abbie is a 2011 graduate of Hamline University and former Sierra Club intern who currently is pursuing an advanced degree at the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute in environmental policy.

Abbie points with pride at organizing a Tar Sands Resistance March last year attended by 5000 people. She hails from Menomonie, Wisconsin and gives much of the credit for her political awareness to her father, a former member of the Wisconsin Legislature.

### In Abbie's own words:

#### *Why do you do this work?*

When I found out about climate change it was a total life and career changing moment. This is a global issue and it is irresponsible not to work on it. Growing up my parents were very politically and socially active. They instilled in me the importance of engaging in your community, working to solve the problems we are facing.

#### *Why do you work on Tar Sands and moving Beyond Oil?*

When I started looking deeper into climate change it looked to me like tackling energy would be the most direct way to tackle carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. Outside of electrifying our transportation system, we have not figured out how to move beyond oil. So I found this work to be critical and interesting. Additionally, oil has always had major human rights implications. Whether you're talking about the role of oil in wars in the middle east or its impacts on Indigenous communities near the Alberta tar sands,

it leads to tragedy. It has so many toxic consequences that I responded to so viscerally, I had to work on it.

#### *Why is activism important to you?*

I think there are a lot of ways to be an activist. I'm a creative person and my activism has allowed me to bring all parts of me to the work of making change. My work with the Beyond Oil and Tar Sands Committee and other activism has allowed me to bring creativity into movement building and making change. This is also a great community to be a part of, I think I have been able to learn a lot through activism and it has set me down a path for my career that I am excited about.

The committee meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month. To get involved, contact Natalie Cook: [natalie.cook@sierraclub.org](mailto:natalie.cook@sierraclub.org) or 612-259-2445.

*Jim Leavenworth is a volunteer with the Communications Team.*



Abbie Plouff



# CALLING ALL FOREST LOVERS

Photo Credit: Michael Shoop

## FRED HEFTY

Do you like a walk in the woods? Would you like to give that walk a greater purpose?

The North Star Chapter Forests and Wildlands Committee is building a network of volunteers across the state to help adopt and monitor the health of State Forests in their area.

Minnesota's 58 State Forests vary greatly from one another -- they each have their own challenges, assets, and types of forests, landscapes, animals, plants, and recreational activities. We are looking for Sierra Club members who live, vacation, or are involved in activities near a Minnesota State Forest to

become Sierra Club Forest Monitors. Help us make sure these special places are protected!

The only requirements are for you to visit your adopted forest two to four times a year to observe, photograph, etc. and report what you found on your visits.

If you decide that you would like to become a Sierra Club Forest Monitor, you will be offered an education about the forest you are adopting. We will train you on what to look for, and how to fill out the forms to collect data. The questions are simple -- for example: are there coniferous trees in your adopted forest?

You can progress as fast as you like. Your observation forms will change as you develop your knowledge base. If you already have these skills you will be given observation sheets that are appropriate for your level of knowledge.

Come join us. Take a walk in the forest of your choice and enjoy!

To sign up or for more information, contact Fred Hefty at [meladean16@yahoo.com](mailto:meladean16@yahoo.com) or 612-987-4768

*Fred Hefty is a volunteer leader with the Forests and Wildlands Committee.*

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 21 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).**

“Legislative Session Report” continuation from page 1...

- Repeal of certificate of need requirement for new pipelines

### Missed Opportunity: Transportation Funding

As in 2015, the Minnesota Legislature unfortunately missed several key opportunities to invest in making our environment better for future generations. Among the highest profile setbacks was the failure of the Legislature to pass a long term dedicated funding package for transportation.

The Sierra Club joined with dozens of partner organizations to form Transportation Forward, a broad-based coalition of stakeholders working together to advance a long-term, dedicated multi-modal transportation package for Minnesota. The lynchpin of our proposal was a 3/4 cent metro sales tax for metro transit, including a set-aside for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as well as new funding for greater Minnesota transit.

At the beginning of the 2016 session, transportation funding bills had already passed both the House and Senate, and a conference committee had begun meeting already the previous spring. The 2015 transportation bill passed by the Senate was largely in line with the proposal put forth by our coalition. The House version, by contrast, failed to include any new funding for transit, biking or walking. Governor Dayton’s pre-session proposal was very similar to the package passed by the Senate.

Unfortunately, leaders from the House and Senate were unable to reach a deal on a compromise to allow a multi-modal transportation package to become law in 2016. A last ditch effort in the final hour of the session to include a provision that would have allowed Hennepin County to provide the “local match” for the Southwest LRT project was added to the bonding bill in the Senate but ultimately failed when time ran out on the session.

### Looking Ahead to 2017

Along with transportation, the failure of the Legislature to pass a bonding bill to fund capital investment projects – including a number of important environmental projects, such as the cleanup of the St. Louis River Watershed – is likely to be a prominent issue on the election trail this fall. The entire Minnesota Legislature is on the ballot this November. As a result, the partisan composition of the Legislature entering the 2017 session is very much in doubt.

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That being said, we know that important environmental decisions will continue to be made in St. Paul next year regardless of how the election turns out. Sadly, with high profile projects like PolyMet still on the horizon, attempts to weaken or circumvent existing environmental laws are likely to continue in 2017. One bright spot this year was the introduction of “Prove it First” legislation to require that companies prove an existing sulfide mine has operated and closed successfully without impairing water before a similar mine can be introduced in Minnesota. This politically challenging proposal was advanced by Sen. Chris Eaton and Rep. Alice Hausman in coordination with the Sierra Club, and we hope to continue working with these and other forward thinking leaders in 2017.

2017 will also be a budget year, and defending the resources and authority available to our state regulatory agencies will continue to be a critical need. If a bonding bill is not completed in a special session in 2016 (not scheduled as of this printing),

a new bonding bill that includes significant investment in environment and natural resource protection will also be an important priority.

The Sierra Club will continue to do the important work of fighting to defend our woods and water, clean air and communities at the Legislature in 2017 and beyond.

This report refers to the regular legislative session concluded May 22. If legislators reconvene for a special session, check out our blog for the latest updates: [sierraclub.org/minnesota/blog](http://sierraclub.org/minnesota/blog).

*Justin Fay is Senior Chapter Representative and legislative lobbyist for the North Star Chapter.*

## Volunteer Opportunities with the Sierra Club's Political Committee

Interested in regular door knocking, lit dropping or phone banking in suburban districts with your Sierra Club friends this fall?

**Contact [sierrapoliticalmn@gmail.com](mailto:sierrapoliticalmn@gmail.com) to sign up today!**

# 21ST ANNUAL SIERRA CLUB BIKE TOUR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17



2015 Bike Tour - Photo Credit Jill Boogren

Each fall, the Sierra Club organizes a bike ride like no other! This fun, leisurely tour highlights growth, development and transportation infrastructure in the Twin Cities. Each year we visit a different location, combining a scenic bike ride with guest speakers at educational rest stops along the way.

**SAVE THE DATE:** This year's 21st Annual Bike Tour is Saturday, September 17, 2016.

We will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary of our National Parks by highlighting the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) along our route. This year is also special -- it's the inaugural season of Slow Roll Twin Cities, a movement started as a group bicycle ride in Detroit that has expanded into a national network of community rides. Details of the Sierra Club Bike Tour are at [sierraclub.org/minnesota/tour](http://sierraclub.org/minnesota/tour). For questions, email [joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org](mailto:joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org) or call 612-259-2447.







# THE INJUSTICE OF POLYMET'S POLLUTION

Photo Credit: EPA

LORI ANDRESEN AND ELANNE PALCICH

On February 27, 2016, Governor Dayton hosted a Water Summit, at which he urged us to establish an ethic of clean water practices. "This should be our ethic and every Minnesotan's responsibility, and anything less is unacceptable." Five days later, on March 3, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner Tom Landwehr declared the PolyMet Environmental Impact Statement for Minnesota's first ever sulfide mine, as "adequate."

If the goal for the state of Minnesota is to protect our water resources, then the DNR's determination is neither ethical nor adequate.

The DNR has minimized the fact that water from PolyMet's proposed mine site would need to be treated for at least 200 years post closure, and the plant site for at least 500 years. It is irresponsible of the DNR to place this kind of burden upon the next 25 generations.

The DNR has failed to consider the value of water as a natural resource, and is instead giving a foreign mining company/conglomerate free access to an unknown quantity of water, and allowing them to pollute both surface and groundwater over the course of mine operations.

After 10 years of environmental review, water modeling for the proposed PolyMet mine is still questionable. Instead of addressing public and Tribal concerns regarding significant environmental impact inconsistencies, the DNR has chosen to declare the EIS adequate. Despite the massive amount of paperwork, the DNR still doesn't know whether contaminated groundwater would eventually flow into the Lake Superior or

Rainy River (Boundary Waters) basins –ultimately polluting both internationally important watersheds.

The DNR is choosing to ignore the health impacts of sulfates, mercury, arsenic, lead, and other toxic metals that would pollute our watersheds. Already 10 percent of babies born on Lake Superior's North Shore have high levels of mercury in their blood. There are fish advisories on most northern Minnesota lakes, advising people to eat fewer fish due to mercury contamination. Mining pollution impacts all of the aquatic organisms in the watershed, and all life that depends on those organisms for food, including fish, birds and wildlife that feed on fish, and ultimately, the human population. Also of concern is the loss of wild rice as a food source. Cumulative impacts upon our health and our environment have not been addressed, while everyone living downstream would be affected.

## **PolyMet Mine Would Be Disastrous for Minnesota's Arrowhead Region**

The pollution trail that would be left behind by PolyMet, and possible future sulfide mines looking to use the excess capacity of PolyMet's crushing plant, becomes an environmental justice issue. First, the land being impacted by proposed mining is part of ceded treaty rights given to Native American Tribes in the Treaty of 1854. Second, the first to be impacted as pollution travels down the St. Louis River would be the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Tribes traditionally depend upon both fish and wild rice as a significant source of high quality protein.

The next to be impacted by pollution would be the citizens of Duluth and Superior, the area with the largest population within the St. Louis River water shed.

On March 11, former Vice-President Walter Mondale told the Minneapolis Star Tribune, "...we have learned much about the catastrophic consequences of sulfide-ore mining. Above all else, we have learned that sulfide-ore mining has never—never—been undertaken without serious environmental consequences. Sulfide-ore mining is dangerous everywhere and most dangerous in wet environments... The consequences of such mining are perpetual. They will surely outlive all of us and will just as surely outlive the mining company's pledges..."

The real issue at stake in permitting the first sulfide mine in Minnesota is not jobs, or metals, or the vagaries of the international market. The real issue is the health of our citizens, and the water and healthy environment upon which we depend. The real issue is not just about us—it's about the legacy that we wish to leave for the generations to follow. All life depends upon water. Water is a human right.

## **Take Action**

Contact Governor Dayton at (651) 201-3400 and urge him to reject PolyMet. Ask the Governor to protect all of Minnesota from "highly toxic sulfide waste" and please don't permit PolyMet's sulfide mine on the headwaters of Lake Superior.

*Lori Andresen is Chair of the Mining Committee. Elanne Palcich is a volunteer leader with the Mining Committee.*



# GET OUTDOORS WITH US!

## LOCAL OUTINGS

The Sierra Club Club's mission to explore, enjoy and protect the planet reminds us that conservation comes from a personal relationship with nature. Our volunteer-led Outings Program gets people of all ages outdoors on local educational outings.

The North Star Chapter Outings program includes year-round excursions—hiking, biking, kayaking, camping and more—to parks and public lands and waters across the region. Past activities include hikes at State Parks and nature centers, geocaching, and a weekend trip to the National Forest Lodge in Isabella.

Check out our schedule at [www.meetup.com/MN-Sierra-Club-Outings](http://www.meetup.com/MN-Sierra-Club-Outings) or search for the MN Sierra Club Outings page. For more information on our schedule or to find out how you can become an Outings Leader, contact Chair Greg Allison at [greg.allison@northstar.sierraclub.org](mailto:greg.allison@northstar.sierraclub.org).

Hike Outing in Duluth - Photo credit Tom Thompson





# OLDER, WISER, LIVELIER SIERRANS (OWLS)

The OWLS are an active group of older members of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter who regularly seek to keep the synapses working and the body exercised, while also developing long-term relationships and ways of contributing to worthwhile endeavors. This group of retired Sierrans meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month in the Twin Cities area during the late morning/early afternoon.

Individual members plan events, which offer both an opportunity to learn about the physical world in which we live, as well as some sort of physical activity—be it on skis, in a canoe, walking through a woodland seeking to identify the plant species, or finding wonder in the various museums in the area.

There is a small annual mailing fee for each member, and on some occasions there may be an admittance fee or other cost for attendees. All members of retirement age are welcome.

For further information about the OWLS and their meeting plans, contact the North Star Office or Judy Germann at [judy.germann@northstar.sierraclub.org](mailto:judy.germann@northstar.sierraclub.org).



## INSPIRING CONNECTIONS OUTDOORS

Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) is a North Star Chapter program that helps get young people outdoors, who may not otherwise have the opportunity to do so. ICO promotes social, physical, and mental health, builds the next generation of conservation leaders and outdoor enthusiasts, and supports community leadership.

From simple day hikes to multi-day service trips, ICO offers a range of age-appropriate activities to help communities under-represented in the traditional environmental movement to explore, enjoy, and experience connection with natural places near their homes and across the country.

With a strong legacy of community service, the Minnesota ICO program is currently growing, with new leadership and partners. In recent years we have served hundreds of youth on dozens of outings in collaboration with numerous agency partners, including schools, extracurricular learning programs, and behavioral rehabilitation centers.

Our outings are relevant across all socioeconomic backgrounds and are built around hiking and exploring, with occasional bouldering, geocaching, and camp-related activities. All ICO

outings contain environmental education as a primary focus and are designed to spark the curiosity of youth participants.

In addition to conducting events, ICO recruits and trains volunteers, develops leaders, raises and manages funds, and cooperates with community agencies.

To learn more, visit us at [www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/inspiring-connections-outdoors](http://www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/inspiring-connections-outdoors). To get involved, contact us via email at [mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org](mailto:mnico@northstar.sierraclub.org).

Inspiring Connections Outdoors partners with Neighborhood House in St. Paul - Photo credit Greg Springer



# MEET NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## KIRSTEN JOHNSON AND REGINA MUSTAFA



Kirsten with her husband Craig and son Maxfield at Open Streets in Minneapolis

### Kirsten Johnson

Kirsten Johnson is the Community Initiatives Manager at the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation where she manages a portfolio of community-driven projects aimed at creating racial equity. Johnson's work focuses on engagement, collaboration and systems change addressing complex challenges. Johnson brings the lenses of emotional intelligence, intercultural competence and network weaving to all of her work. Johnson studied Political Science and Women's Studies at the University of Minnesota and has worked in the nonprofit sector on collaboration and community development for over fifteen years. Prior to coming to the Wilder Foundation, Johnson's work supported a variety of nonprofit organizations including the StreetWorks Collaborative, VEAP, and Arc Greater Twin Cities.

"The North Star Chapter has acknowledged the interconnected nature of racism and climate destruction. In the coming year, I hope to help advance the Chapter's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work drawing on my experience as a racial equity advocate, by building people's capacity to navigate cultural differences, and applying a racial equity lens to policy and decision making," said Kirsten.

### Regina Mustafa

Originally from Philadelphia, Regina and her husband have been living in Rochester for 9 years. She is a stay-at-home mother of two and also works at Rochester Public Schools in the School-Aged Child Care (SACC) program. Regina joined the Editorial Advisory Board for the Post Bulletin in 2016. In 2015 Regina was the recipient of the Diversity Award by the Diversity Council of Rochester. She was also honored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with the Bridge-BUILDER Award. In light of the atrocities committed by ISIS along with the rise in Islamophobia in the West, Regina formed the interfaith dialogue non-profit organization, Community Interfaith Dialogue on Islam (CIDI) in 2014. She hosts the monthly Faith Talk Show at the Rochester Public Library.

"Being on the Executive Committee is an opportunity for me to educate myself on environmental issues," said Regina. "I feel that working with the Sierra Club can further help me serve my community, by helping to protect the planet we all share. My goal is to help the local Rochester Sierra Club leader in spreading this message of inclusively inviting all to take part in Sierra Club causes."



Regina hosting the Faith Talk Show with a guest from the Hindu tradition, Dr. Suresh Chari of Hindu Samaj Temple in Rochester

# BEYOND COAL: XCEL ENERGY & CENTRAL MINNESOTA



Clean Air and Renewable Energy at May Day Parade

## ALEXIS BOXER

Last fall we reached an important milestone when Xcel Energy announced that its preferred plan would include the retirement of Sherco 1 and 2 coal units and significant investments in clean energy. Since the announcement in October, Sierra Club volunteers have continued work in their communities across the state to hold Xcel accountable to this plan, and to educate their friends and neighbors about what lies ahead. Since the decision isn't yet finalized by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) we have continued collecting public comments, launched an organizational sign on letter and called on Xcel and our local leaders to develop and support a just transition plan for the coal plant and its employees. We have been working to build relationships in the Becker, Minnesota area to ensure that as the coal plant transition begins we are able to provide further support to the community. Moving forward we are looking to build momentum toward influencing a positive decision on the Xcel plan by the PUC in the fall.

Our Central Minnesota and St. Cloud clean energy team has been working hard to start building support and partnerships around the development of Community Solar Gardens in communities across the region. As we start to build out

solutions to climate change and alternatives to coal, it is important that Minnesotans know that there are choices for clean energy and that solar is a viable option for our state. The Community Solar Gardens program is relatively new to Minnesota but is already taking off in a major way. Sierra Club members and volunteers are excited to see how much support and momentum solar gardens have received locally.

The City of St. Cloud is a great example of a municipality capitalizing on the chance to save money, support clean energy and bring jobs to its community. St. Cloud has committed to a build-out of more than five megawatts of community solar over the next year, seizing an opportunity to position the city as a leader on sustainability and clean energy. The project is expected to save the city more than \$5 million over the life of the gardens and engage more than 6,000 households for subscriptions. We are seeing amazing support for a new energy system that allows people to choose where their energy comes from and to work with their neighbors to create alternatives to coal and fossil fuels.

Our Central Minnesota team met with the Mayor of St. Cloud, Wastewater Treatment Plant employees and Assistant Director of Public Utilities to discuss St. Cloud's Community

Solar Gardens projects, energy efficiency efforts and city-wide sustainability programs. It is exciting to see how much is happening locally and how we can support continued development of projects in our communities.

We have also started doing more outreach to potential partners and allies to build relationships locally, bring in new leaders and expand our support for other important work that is happening in Central Minnesota.

The Central Minnesota clean energy team meetings are the first Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the Good Earth Coop in St. Cloud. If you would like to get more involved locally please contact Alexis Boxer: [Alexis.Boxer@sierraclub.org](mailto:Alexis.Boxer@sierraclub.org) or 612-259-2452.

*Alexis Boxer is Associate Organizing Representative for the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign in Minnesota.*



to get to the jobs they need. For those living in poverty the economic investment of a car and its recurring expenses may not be feasible. For the disabled, the undocumented, the young, and the elderly procuring a driver’s license may not be possible. We all need to go places, but infrastructure that does not incorporate multiple options for transportation leaves many people stranded.

The Land Use and Transportation campaign works to address both the environmental and equity sides in its work. Through working to secure funding for bus shelters and better connections to the light rail in low-wealth communities as

part of an Equity Commitments Coalition with several partner organizations we have been able to highlight equitable transit development as an essential component of sustainable urban planning. In addition to providing a viable low-impact means of travel for those who most need it, this transit development can serve as a tool to boost local economies.

Through the work of dedicated individuals with the Sierra Club and throughout the state, voices are being heard expressing their need for green transportation and local development that accommodates everyone regardless of age, ability, race, gender, or class. This campaign has served as a voice for

environmental and economic equity, and as the conversation around transportation and development moves forward, we will continue to do so as well.

To learn more about the North Star Chapter’s green transportation campaign, contact Joshua Houdek: [joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org](mailto:joshua.houdek@sierraclub.org) or 612-259-2447. We invite you to join us at a committee meeting, generally the first Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

*Kayla Grover is a Land Use and Transportation Intern with the North Star Chapter.*

## PROTECTING THE BOUNDARY WATERS: TWIN METALS UPDATE

On June 13, the U.S. Forest Service announced it is considering withholding consent for lease renewal for Twin Metals leases on the edge of the Wilderness. This will kick off a public input period through July 20 when people can urge the U.S. Forest Service to protect the Boundary Waters and urge them not to renew the leases, including a listening session on July 13 at the Duluth Entertainment

Convention Center. Visit [sierraclub.org/minnesota](http://sierraclub.org/minnesota) to add your name to the petition!

Award-winning explorers Dave and Amy Freeman continue their Year in the Wilderness to Save the Boundary Waters. Follow their journey on social media (#WildernessYear) and at: [www.facebook.com/FreemanExplore](http://www.facebook.com/FreemanExplore)



Dave and Amy Freeman's Year in the Wilderness to Save the Boundary Waters Photo Credit: Dave Freeman



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For the schedule of committee meetings and other volunteer opportunities, please check our calendar at [sierraclub.org/minnesota](http://sierraclub.org/minnesota) or call the office at 612-659-9124.

# Chapter Executive Committee - Call for Nominations

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

**Nominations Accepted for Terms Beginning 2017**

The ExCom is made up of fifteen at-large elected Sierra Club members in Minnesota. Any current member is eligible to run. Members are elected for a rotating three-year term, and those elected at the end of this year will begin their terms in January 2017. The Nominations Committee invites you to submit names for consideration for ExCom election. Members who are not nominated by the Nominations Committee can petition for candidacy with the signature of 25 members submitted by the petition deadline.

**Election timeline:**

- July 15, 2016 – Deadline to submit names to Nominating Committee for consideration
- August 16, 2016 – Nominating Committee reports nominees to Executive Committee
- August 30, 2016 – Deadline to submit petitions to Secretary
- October 10, 2016 – Week of ballot mailing
- October 18, 2016 – Elections Committee appointed to count ballots
- January 4, 2017 – Closing date of election

**If you are interested in running for the ExCom or for more information, please contact Nominations Chair Sarah Wovcha at [sarah.wovcha@northstar.sierraclub.org](mailto:sarah.wovcha@northstar.sierraclub.org) or the Chapter office at 612-659-9124.**

**List of current at-large ExCom members**

See photos and bios online at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/minnesota/executive-committee>

Name	Residence	End of term
Louis Alemayehu	Minneapolis	2018
Marty Cobenais	Bagley	2018
C. Scott Cooper	St. Paul	2017
Luther Dale	Shoreview	2016
John Doberstein	Duluth	2017
Katie Eukel	Minneapolis	2018
Mat Hollinshead	St. Paul	2016
Kirsten Johnson	Minneapolis	2017
Javier Morillo-Alicea	Minneapolis	2016
Regina Mustafa	Rochester	2017
Lois Norrgard	Bloomington	2016
Bruce Snyder	Mendota Heights	2017
Tom Thompson	Duluth	2016
Sarah Wovcha	St. Paul	2018
Preeti Yonjon	Alexandria	2018



**SIERRA CLUB**  
NORTH STAR CHAPTER

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Photo credit Greg Springer



**Earth Day Highlights Page 4**

Photo Credit Tom Thompson



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