

Environmental Newsletter

JOIN US OCT 8TH

ORGANIZING AT THE CROSSROADS

A Hands on Workshop:
Rural + Environmental = Democratic Victories.

Wednesday, October 8th · 7 PM CT Zoom

Hosted by WisDems Environmental & Rural Caucuses · Town Road Talk · Democratic National Committee Council on Environment & Climate Crisis



Wis. Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez



DNC's Michelle Deatrick



County Exec. David Crowley

To sign up go to mobilize.com



Podcast Host Rebecca Powell



Caucus Chair Gloria Hochstein



Caucus Chair Vik Verma

Questions? Text 414-690-5060



Conservationist Fred Clark



Former Rep Dave Considine



Communications Strategist Joe Zepecki

Use this link to sign up on Mobilize:

<https://www.mobilize.us/dashboard/wisdems/event/844505/>

Dear Environmental Caucus Members and Allies,

In the next few weeks we kick off a series of hands-on trainings, town halls, and message drives to mobilize our communities and lift up Wisconsin environmental leadership—from our farm roads to our lakefronts. This is part of a larger strategy to build a people-first climate and conservation agenda that connects with every Wisconsinite. And, we're kicking it off with our first monthly WisDems Environmental Caucus newsletter.

In recent years we've watched extreme politicians and special interests try to roll back protections for clean water, public lands, and public health—while families shoulder higher costs from polluted wells, PFAS cleanups, flooding, and climate-driven weather swings. Those harms don't check party lines. They hit rural and urban neighbors alike.

Our north star is simple: When we protect Wisconsin's air and water, everybody benefits.

When farms earn with conservation practices, everybody benefits.
When we cut energy waste and grow good-paying clean-energy jobs, everybody benefits.
And when our kids can safely hunt, fish, and swim in waters that run clear—everybody benefits.

To save our democracy and our natural heritage, we have to lead with facts, listen first, and organize for action. Environmental Wisconsin Democrats are ready to lead.

You can help right now by:

Joining us for Organizing at the Crossroads, a hands-on workshop where rural + environmental strategies turn into wins. Featured guests include Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, Milwaukee County Exec David Crowley, DNC climate chair Michelle Deatrick, communications strategist Joe Zepecki, and former legislators Dave Considine and Fred Clark. We'll sharpen messages together and leave with immediate actions—Wed, Oct 8, 7 PM CT on Zoom.

Thank you for standing up for clean water, healthy communities, and a Wisconsin where rural + environmental = victory.

With gratitude and grit,

Rebecca Powell & Nancy Stencil, Co-Editors

Legislative Update

- Local Gov Veto of Solar/Wind, SB 3, Sen. Marklein, In Utilities Committee
- 2025 State Budget, SB 45/AB 50, Governor Evers, Signed into Law as WI Act 15
- Sandhill Cranes, SB 112, Leg. Council, Sen. Sporting Heritage
- PFAS Liability, SB 127/AB 131, Sen. Wimberger, Sen NR Committee
- PFAS Program, SB 128/AB 131, Sen. Wimberger, Sen NR Committee
- Great Lakes Erosion Loans, SB 207, Sen. Jacque, Sen NR Committee
- Stewardship Program Reauthorization, AB 315, Rep. Kurtz, Assembly Forestry Committee

Use Wisconsin Greenfire's Legislative Tracker to learn more.



KNOWLES NELSON

Subject: Reauthorize Knowles–Nelson the Wisconsin way—practical, bipartisan, on time

Dear [Senator/Representative] [Last Name],

With two Knowles–Nelson Stewardship reauthorization proposals on the table, we urge you to work with colleagues across the aisle to deliver a compromise that keeps this vital conservation program in place before it expires in 2026. This is about clean water, public access, and the rural-urban outdoor economy that sustains communities statewide.

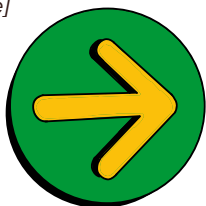
As you negotiate, please prioritize:

- *Balanced investment: Fund land acquisition and land management on equal footing with separate, dedicated streams so new acres and long-term care both get done.*
- *Constructive oversight: Create a clear, time-limited review process that brings stakeholders and legislators to the same table, improves transparency, and keeps projects moving—not bottlenecked.*
- *Outdoor economy infrastructure: Invest in the trails, boat landings, habitat, and park facilities that families, hunters, anglers, and visitors rely on—jobs and main-street revenue follow.*

For decades, Knowles–Nelson has been a bipartisan Wisconsin success. Let’s honor that legacy now with a practical reauthorization that protects our lands and waters and strengthens local economies.

Thank you for your leadership.

*Sincerely,
[Your Name]*



Find Your
Legislator maps.legis.wisconsin.gov
Here

If we don’t speak up, Knowles–Nelson will go away. Send a message to state legislators to let them know how crucial it is to be a conservation champion by continuing to protect Wisconsin’s land, water, and wildlife by funding the Stewardship Program.

Democrats in the Legislature just released a plan to keep the Knowles–Nelson Stewardship Program from expiring next year—and there’s real bipartisan interest in a deal.

This program is how Wisconsin protects public lands, trails, boat landings, forests, and habitat—the places we hike, hunt, fish, and ride. A small group is trying to block it. Let’s make sure they don’t.

Why it matters: your hidden swimming hole, your morning bike route, the forest where you hunt—they exist because we invest. Knowles–Nelson is that investment.

What to do (today):

1. Write your State Senator & Representative—ask them to reauthorize Knowles–Nelson before 2026.
2. Say what to include: balanced funding for land acquisition + management, clear, time-limited oversight with stakeholders at the table, and infrastructure for our outdoor economy.
3. Share the message—post our graphics and invite three friends to act.



Visit our Facebook Page and Share This Post



www.facebook.com/WisDemsEnvironmentalCaucus



Join WisDems Environmental Caucus by Clicking Here.
We meet the second Sunday of the Month at 5 p.m. for one hour.

Contact Environmental Caucus
Chair Vik Verma
v2aggie2@gmail.com
for more information

LINE 5!

Enbridge's system moves oil and liquids from northern Alberta through Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, then back into eastern Canada.

Line 5—in service since 1953—runs about 645 miles from Superior, Wisconsin to Sarnia, Ontario. It carries roughly 545,000 barrels/day of light crude, synthetic crude, and natural-gas liquids (which are refined into propane).

Enbridge also operates other oil pipelines across the Midwest/Great Plains, and separate gas/liquids lines from the Gulf Coast through the South and into New England.

What's proposed now: Enbridge has advanced a reroute that would skirt the western boundary of the Bad River Reservation and reconnect with the existing line in northern Michigan, avoiding a crossing of the reservation. The segment that crosses Michigan's Upper Peninsula currently supplies about 65% of the region's propane demand (per Enbridge).

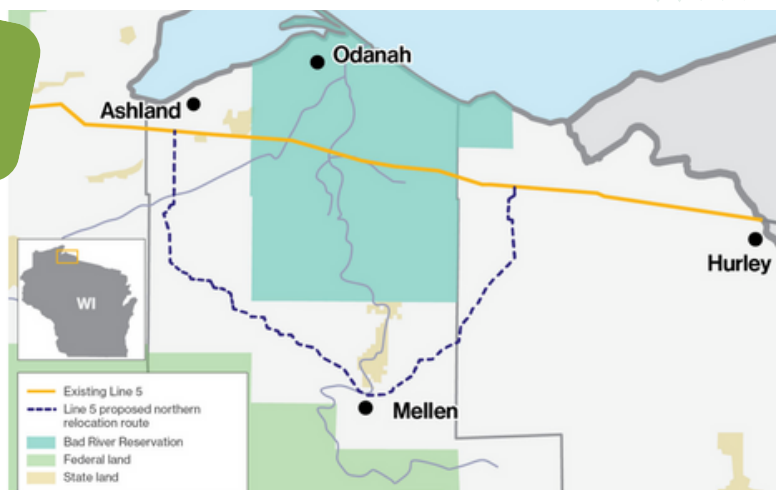
Our lens as the Environmental Caucus

WE CENTER CLEAN WATER, COMMUNITY SAFETY, TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY, RURAL ECONOMIES, AND PRACTICAL ENERGY NEEDS. AS POLICYMAKERS WEIGH OPTIONS, WE SUPPORT A PROCESS THAT:

- PUTS PUBLIC HEALTH AND LOCAL WATERS FIRST.
- ENSURES MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION WITH TRIBAL LEADERS AND AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.
- USES TRANSPARENT, TIME-LIMITED OVERSIGHT AND PUBLIC INPUT.
- ACCOUNTS FOR PROPANE RELIABILITY WHILE EVALUATING ROUTE ALTERNATIVES AND SPILL RISK.
- BALANCES LAND ACQUISITION AND LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP WHEREVER STATE PROGRAMS ARE INVOLVED.

OUR GOAL: FACTS FIRST, COMMUNITIES FIRST, AND SOLUTIONS THAT KEEP WISCONSIN'S PEOPLE AND PLACES SAFE.

How we got here



Opponents say the new plan carries the same risks

The Wisconsin DNR's environmental impact statement (Sept. last year) says most harm would come during construction—tree clearing, trenching, blasting, and drilling under streams—with lasting risks like invasive plants, altered hydrology/wetlands, and forest edge damage. Citing those risks, the Bad River Tribe and environmental groups are urging a full shutdown of Line 5, arguing the environmental costs outweigh promised jobs.

Legal proceedings over whether Enbridge energy can move forward with the construction of its Line 5 pipeline will continue in Madison and Ashland, Wisconsin, through Oct. 3. Visit <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/line-5> for more information



Republican lawmakers aims to prevent local governments in Wisconsin from enacting "rights of nature" ordinances

Recently the WISDOM affiliate, Joshua, (Justice Organization Sharing Hope & United for Action) brought a Rights of Nature resolution to the Green Bay sustainability committee. The plan is to use this as a time of educating, such as the damage to the Fox River and the cost of \$1.5 billion that was used to clean it up. Imagine what that money could have been used for. While the commission is trying to be environmentally conscious, it appears the group also poked a hornet's nest with several on the council feeling it might open them up to unintended consequences. Representative Joy Goeben (R-Hobart) and Steve Nass (R-Whitewater) have introduced LRB 3436, a bill to make it impossible to pass any type of resolution regarding Rights of Nature in the state of Wisconsin. Read more here: <https://www.rightsofnaturewi.org/news.html>

Climate Concern Is High—But Millions of Pro-Environment Voters Sat Out 2024

The Environmental Voter Project estimates that ~11.2 million registered environmentalists did not vote in the 2024 general election—despite razor-thin margins in key states.

In a July 2025 national survey, EVP found Americans think about climate change more often than issues like abortion, immigration, or gun violence, yet don't view it as a political problem—seeing it more as a personal-behavior issue. That's why EVP focuses on turning pro-environmental nonvoters into consistent voters, not persuasion.

Why it matters: If even a fraction of those 11+ million voted, it could decide close races up and down the ballot.

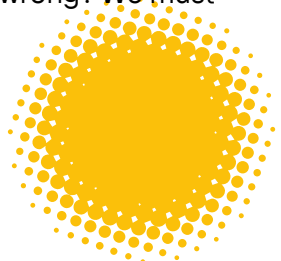
Do one thing this week: Nudge three friends who care about climate to check their voter registration



A Canadian mining company, Greenlight Metals, began work on an exploratory drilling project in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Taylor County in July. "Wisconsin is open for business," the company's CEO Matt Filgate. This triggered concerns of local activists who say the project could harm groundwater and the nearby north fork of the Yellow River. The State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hands are tied since the Wisconsin legislature (Tom Tiffany) did away with the Prove it First law. If permitting is submitted correctly, the exploration company must be allowed to drill. Regulatory processes are to be frequently checked by the DNR and U. S. Forest Service for compliance to keep the environment safe. Sadly, the DNR staff is already stretched thin. The North Fork of the Yellow River is a river within the Chippewa Basin. Over 3,000 stream and river miles flow within the Chippewa River basin and with 156,200 acres of freshwater lakes, 22,711 acres of flowages and more than 150 acres of freshwater springs. What could go wrong? We must remember that water is life.

Mark Twain

**REMEMBER, A MINE
IS NOTHING BUT A
HOLE IN THE GROUND
WITH A LIAR
STANDING OVER IT.**



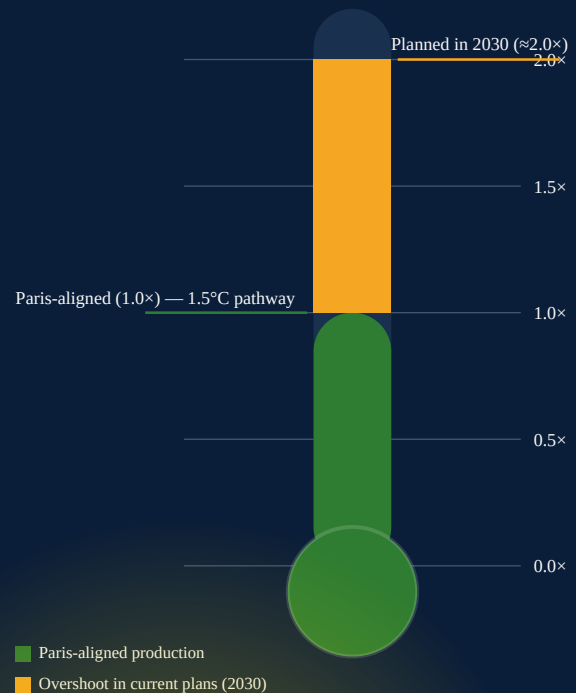
New research released on Sept. 22, 2025, shows the world is still sprinting in the wrong direction on fossil fuels. The Stockholm Environment Institute's Production Gap Report 2025 finds that governments collectively plan to produce about 120% more coal, oil, and gas in 2030 than is compatible with limiting warming to 1.5°C, and 77% more than is compatible with 2°C—a wider gap than the last assessment two years ago.

The report analyzes 20 major fossil-fuel-producing countries—including the United States, China, and India—and concludes that most still intend to increase production to 2030, even as they submit new climate pledges. In fact, several producers are now planning more extraction than they were two years ago, pushing global climate goals further out of reach.

Why it matters: every additional dollar sunk into new fossil projects deepens "carbon lock-in" and makes the eventual transition more disruptive and expensive. The authors call for aligning national energy strategies with Paris goals, explicitly integrating production decline plans and ensuring a just transition for workers and communities.

THE PRODUCTION GAP

Governments plan to produce ~2× more fossil fuels in 2030 than a 1.5°C pathway



Source: Stockholm Environment Institute • NPR (Sept 22, 2025)

A Message from Our Chair – Vik Verma

We're excited to share that the DPW Environmental Caucus has adopted a bold 2025–2027 Strategic Plan, guiding our work through the 2026 midterm elections and beyond.

Our plan focuses on:

Electoral Power – Supporting Democratic victories statewide, including the Governor, Legislature, AG, and Supreme Court races.

Environmental Messaging – Equipping candidates and county parties with clear, localized talking points.

Issue Advocacy – Defending the Inflation Reduction Act, supporting renewable energy, and spotlighting GOP rollbacks on environmental protections.

Environmental & Climate Justice – Building partnerships with BIPOC caucuses and frontline communities across Wisconsin.

Rural & Agricultural Engagement – Reaching rural voters with messages that connect stewardship, sustainability, and shared values.

Partnerships & Outreach – Collaborating with nonpartisan environmental orgs, allied caucuses, and community leaders to strengthen our impact.

We invite you to review the full plan and find ways to plug in:

[2025–2027 Environmental Caucus Strategic Plan](#)

Let's organize, educate, and win—for the earth and for Wisconsin's future.

We welcome you to join our environmental caucus. There is no cost, no fundraising, just working together for a cleaner, healthier earth. To join email me @ v2aggie2@gmail.com. We welcome you!

In solidarity,
Vik Verma
Chair, DPW Environmental Caucus
v2aggie2@gmail.com



I'm grateful to the incredible board members leading this work:

David Shorr – Initiative Development

Rebecca Powell & Nancy Stencil – Newsletter

Rebecca Powell – Rural Outreach

Kejuane Jennings – Environmental & Climate Justice

Chris Gordon – Political & Candidate Outreach

Howard Landsman – Messaging

Dean Sauers & Howard Landsman – Letters to the Editor Program

Bruce Beck – Platform & Resolutions

Russell Jay Novkov

In Memoriam

We are saddened to remember Russell Jay Novkov, 69, who passed unexpectedly of natural causes on July 15, 2025. A tireless volunteer, spirited advocate, and devoted friend, Russ made Madison his home in 1991 and worked 31 years with Cintas before retiring in 2022. Whatever Russ did, he gave it his all—rising before dawn for work, showing up for his First Baptist Church community, and never missing a birthday or Friday night family dinner. He was the friend with a ride, a helping hand, and a steady kindness.

Russ poured his heart into service and environmental action—donating blood 168 times, volunteering with Second Harvest, WPT, Brat Fest, Special Olympics, Taste of Madison, Art Fair on the Square, and countless civic and political efforts including Dane Dems and the Madison Teal Team, and WisDems Environmental Caucus

He is survived by his sister, Janice (Lawrence) Bensky, a large extended family, and many dear friends. May his memory be a blessing—and a call to keep doing the work he loved.



Russell Jay Novkov
May 2, 1956 — July 15, 2025

Robert Redford: Artist, Advocate, Earth Defender

In Memoriam

"We've come to understand that protecting the environment is not a luxury—it's a necessity." — Robert Redford

Robert Redford didn't just play heroes on screen — he was one in real life. Through decades of activism, filmmaking, and advocacy, he elevated the fight for clean air, clean water, public lands, and climate justice.

He helped found the Redford Center to support environmental storytelling that sparks change. His legacy reminds us that protecting the planet takes courage, creativity, and relentless hope.

 Dive into this powerful tribute:

<https://www.redfordcenter.org/films/robert-redfords-environmental-legacy/>

Let's carry the torch forward.



I think the environment should be put in the category of our national security. Defense of our resources is just as important as defense abroad. Otherwise, what is there defend?