



# Sierra

September  
2008

*Newsletter of the Coulee Region Group*

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

### Speaker: Pat Wilson

R. M. Patterson wrote the book "Dangerous River: Adventure on the Nahanni" about his experiences in 1927-1928 on the Northwest Territories' South Nahanni River. The South Nahanni was also Canadian paddler Bill Mason's favorite northern river. Mason took Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on a canoe trip there in the early 1970's to advocate its preservation as a National Park. Nahanni National Park was created two years later. In 1978, Nahanni National Park was in the first group of sites identified by UNESCO under the new World Heritage List program. UNESCO said, "This park contains deep canyons and huge waterfalls, as well as a unique limestone cave system. The park is also home to animals of the boreal forest, such as wolves, grizzly bears and caribou. Dall's sheep and mountain goats are found in the park's alpine environment."

Pat Wilson and eight other Wisconsin Sierra Club members had their own adventure on the Nahanni in July. They spent three weeks paddling the entire length of the Nahanni River - one of about six groups a year to do so. Pat will present a program on the experience. During the trip, he talked to the Dehcho First Nations people, and found a surprising link to the trip Pat and Bobbie did on Utah's San Juan River in April.

**Adventure on the Nahanni**  
**Tuesday, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>**  
7 pm at the  
HoChunk Three Rivers  
House at 8<sup>th</sup> & Main  
(6 pm: ExComm  
meeting)  
**Sierra Club members  
& non-members all  
welcome!**

### FROM THE CHAIR:

It's September and time for the Coulee Group meetings to begin again for the fall. I hope you had an enjoyable summer. I know I did!

The Sierra Club has continued to work on the top conservation issues identified nationally: Smart Energy Solutions to Global Warming; Safe and Healthy Communities; and America's Wild Legacy. You can see some of the work on energy solutions and safe, healthy communities in this newsletter. I encourage you to participate in the September 29 public hearings on Alliant's new power plant, described in this newsletter.

The other major issue that bears heavily on all three conservation issues is the upcoming fall elections. The National Sierra Club has endorsed Barack Obama for President and Ron Kind in our local Congressional race. I encourage you support these candidates and also to support other candidates at the local level who will aid the Sierra Club's conservation agenda.

**Pat Wilson**

### **Fall Natural Step Study Circles**

Coulee Partners for Sustainability is setting up two The Natural Step Study Circles which will start in September. The Natural Step is an approach initially established in Sweden that promotes environmental sustainability. In 2007 both the City and County of La Crosse voted to become eco-municipalities and adopt The Natural Step framework.

TNS Study Circles consist of up to 12 participants and 1 facilitator. They meet weekly for several weeks to discuss readings from the book "The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices". This is a great way to meet diverse members of our community and to have stimulating discussions.

If you'd like to participate, contact Vicki Miller at [vicki@vsm5.com](mailto:vicki@vsm5.com).

*Clean Energy Coalition is proud to announce a public forum:*

### **"Is More Nuclear Energy in Our Future?"**

**Thursday, September 25, 2008, 7:00 pm, Ho-Chunk Building**

Featured speaker is John LaForge, resident of Luck, WI, and editor of *Nukewatch Quarterly* since 1992. Last year, he was invited to advise a Dutch Parliamentary committee in The Hague on nuclear issues—a year after offering similar consultation to the British Parliament. Who would believe that from northern Wisconsin comes a world-class expert on radioactive munitions and nuclear reactor malfunctions?

In recent weeks both major presidential candidates have suggested an end to the 39-year moratorium—initiated after the near catastrophe in 1979 at Three Mile Island, near Middletown, PA—and the construction of new nuclear reactors in the United States. Who better than John LaForge to educate the La Crosse community about the costs and dangers of the United States increasing its reliance on nuclear energy?

For more information, contact [billkatra@hotmail.com](mailto:billkatra@hotmail.com).



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### **Sierra Club Opposes new Cassville Power Plant**

Alliant Energy has proposed building a new coal-fired power plant at its Nelson-Dewey generating station on the Mississippi River near Cassville. They have chosen to use inefficient Circulating Fluidized Bed technology to burn the coal, and this will result in emissions of 3.294 million tons of global warming pollution annually. This proposal will make it nearly impossible for Wisconsin to meet recommended greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. After a PSC Environmental Impact Statement determined that a new coal plant would not be an optimal generation choice or the least cost choice under any scenario, Alliant tried to greenwash the project by modifying their plans. Alliant's new proposal includes the retirement of one small coal plant, the addition of more wind to their energy portfolio, and the ability to burn up to 20% biomass in the plant. Unfortunately, this does little to mitigate the huge contribution to global warming pollution or other toxins related to constructing the Cassville coal plant. Interestingly, just across town from Alliant's proposed coal plant, Jo Carroll Energy is planning to build a power plant using 100% biomass for fuel. This project will provide a clear dichotomy for the public of one company that is choosing to invest in a cleaner energy future, while the Alliant plant plans to burn a token amount of biomass to take the focus off their choice to invest in the dirty energy of the past.

The John Muir Chapter applied for and received a \$5,000 grant to prevent the approval and construction of this new plant. The Sierra Club is promoting cleaner alternatives to coal for meeting our energy needs. Specific objectives are:

1. Educate the people in southwestern Wisconsin about coal's significant contribution to global warming, mercury, SOx and NOx pollution.
2. Increase awareness of renewable energy options, including biomass and wind, which will create a clean energy future and stimulate the stifled local economy.
3. Increase alliances with public health groups and area farmers who will be affected by increased pollution and toxic ash.
4. Use mailings, website, press releases, newsletter articles, and email action alerts to recruit volunteers and counteract Alliant Energy's spurious claims about the Cassville project in its public relations campaign.
5. Turn out at least 100 local Sierra Club members and the general public to each public hearing, including the September 29 hearing in Cassville and the December 12, 2008 PSC final hearing on construction of the Cassville plant. See note below.

#### **PSC Public Hearings on the Proposed Alliant Power Plant Monday, September 29, 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. (two meetings) Cassville Elementary School Gym, Cassville, WI**

Wisconsin Public Service Commission is holding public hearings on the proposed Alliant coal-fired power plant in Cassville. Generating a large turnout to these hearings is extremely important - Sierra Club and Clean Wisconsin would like to get big turnouts, and may sponsor buses to the evening hearings. We'd like to see good Coulee Region Group participation in this local issue. Please add these dates to your calendar now.

The Public Service Commission Staff issued their comments on the project last week and from our perspective they are very good. One of the economists at the PSC identified Alliant's proposal as the most expensive coal plant proposed in the country and identified several better alternatives. The testimony from PSC staff is very helpful, but it is only one part of the plan to defeat Alliant's proposal. Now we need to put the political pressure on the PSC to show them the public will not tolerate another coal plant. The best way to do that is to get a lot of people to the hearings and start making this thing public.

For more information on the hearing or for car pooling or bus information, contact Pat Wilson 608 788 8831 or pbwilson@centurytel.net.