



WISCONSIN'S  
**greenfire**  
VOICES FOR CONSERVATION

Summer 2020

# NEWSLETTER

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## *Race, Justice, and Inclusion*

### **Galvanizing Wisconsin's Green Fire—Values into Action**

After the murder of George Floyd sparked protests in cities around the world in an unprecedented show of support and solidarity for Black Lives Matter, many organizations, including Wisconsin's Green Fire, wanted to move beyond support to action. Environmental justice is not new to WGF—our values (see sidebar on page 2) include the right—for all peoples and groups—to clean water, clean air, and healthy natural ecosystems.

Staff and board promptly posted a message about justice on our website, describing how social justice relates to our mission and our professions: "As an organization dedicated to science and conservation, one might conclude that racial inequity and oppression, while important, are not OUR issues. However, race, racism, equity, and justice are foundational to every part of our society including conservation, so we must share in that work."

The message asks "How can we do better? How can we build meaningful partnerships and help promote environmental health and conservation for everyone? What biases affect our choices in the issues we select for our work? How can we help our professions, recruiting new generations that reflect diversity? How can we better serve residents in urban communities?" While nothing but a complicated path forward will do justice to this work,

WGF intends to engage in ways that are effective and thoughtful. Our first efforts:

(1) **Make changes to our annual meeting** (see page 5). WGF's planning team revised our roster of webinar speakers. We offer webinars addressing the original theme of conservation, policy, and science, and added a speaker (August Ball, see page 6), who could address equity and inclusion in conservation, and a webinar that includes youth voices.

(2) **Adapt the newsletter.** We provide a forum to share perspectives from and about Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to gain a deeper, more nuanced cultural understanding of conservation. We plan to continue to explore broader perspectives.

(3) **Engage in discussions on WGF email chains.** Members, staff, and board have shared links to articles and videos that give perspectives on race and equity. We've posed questions about our roles and responsibilities. We are learning in little steps from these information sources and conversations. If you find helpful links and articles, please send them our way at [info@wigreenfire.org](mailto:info@wigreenfire.org). We will feature links to these resources on our website.

We invite you to read our "Message of Justice" on the WGF website, attend our virtual annual meeting, engage with our newsletter, and join these conversations. We need your help in the challenges of increasing our diversity and infusing a stronger focus on social justice into our WGF priorities and projects.

# President's Message

Photo credit: Diane Daulton



## Stepping Beyond Our Comfort Zone for Environmental Justice

By Terry Daulton

I have been privileged to travel to beautiful places from tropical forests to arctic tundra. My most powerful experiences, however, have been cultural ones, like sharing a cup of chai in a Himalayan tea house or being

invited to join Greek women dancing with joy on a cobblestone street. Once in an Ecuadorian village, we were invited to a wedding in a Catholic church redolent with incense. I felt the eyes of the congregation on me, twice as tall as anyone in my too-colorful clothes. Unmoored culturally, I felt a glimmer of the uncertainty and risk that a person of color may experience daily in the U.S.

My mild cultural encounter cannot compare to the significant—even life-threatening—incidents minorities have all too often. But I hope it has made me more open to messages from groups like Black Lives Matter, immigrant rights organizations, and our Native American neighbors.

Wisconsin's Green Fire's founding values state, "We are dedicated to the principle that all people and groups in our society have the right to clean water, clean air, healthy natural ecosystems, outdoor recreation, and land managed sustainably to produce economic benefit to everyone. We are dedicated to the principle that a sound environment and economy go hand in hand. We are dedicated to environmental justice." In the last few weeks, we have publicly affirmed our commitment to these principles, but we know we need to follow our words with action.

We have taken a few strides, laid some groundwork. Following our 2018 annual meeting, where keynote speaker Dr. Patty Loew presented "Red Notes for Green Fire: Cultivating Relationships with Indigenous Allies," we reached out to Native American natural resource partners. Dolly Ledin led our efforts to diversify through student memberships and outreach in urban areas. Our board has sought to diversify. We have a long way to go.

To date, WGF programming has depended primarily on volunteers networked through past professional relationships. Now in our fourth year, we have the benefit of staff to help us reach out in new ways. To build meaningful programs around our founding values, we need to expand our expertise, humbly seek advice from partners, and step outside our comfort zone. Our WGF science advocacy approach should guide us, but we may have to take a few risks.

When the Greek woman at the street party held out her hand in invitation, I hesitated, wondering whether I could follow the steps. Later, breathing hard and laughing, I knew I had not been the best partner, but we had shared something beautiful and I was filled with appreciation. A year from now, I hope WGF can say, with regard to our social justice efforts, that we reached out our hand and created something of value and beauty.

## Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation

### Mission

Wisconsin's Green Fire supports the conservation legacy of Wisconsin by promoting science-based management of Wisconsin's natural resources.

### Vision

Wisconsin's citizens understand and support scientific and thoughtful long-term management of natural resources, and value the many benefits of clean water, clean air, and healthy ecosystems.

### Values

- We honor our strong and robust conservation heritage in Wisconsin.
- We believe that public policy, laws, and natural resource management should be informed by objective scientific understanding.
- We believe that robust and independent scientific research, knowledge, and education are necessary foundations for a fair and prosperous society.
- We are dedicated to the principle that all people and groups in our society have the right to clean water, clean air, healthy natural ecosystems, outdoor recreation, and land managed sustainably to produce economic benefit to everyone. We are dedicated to the principle that a sound environment and economy go hand in hand. We are dedicated to environmental justice.
- We support transparent governmental decision-making and fair and just treatment of all sides of issues.
- Our actions challenge policy makers to think beyond the short term and to act on behalf of future generations.

## Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation

### Board

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Jim Perry, Vice President  
Ron Eckstein, Secretary  
Bob Gurda, Treasurer  
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Fred Clark, Executive Director  
Nancy Larson, Assistant Director  
Sarah Wilkins, Science Director  
Paul Heinen, Legislative Liaison  
Ruth Ann Lee, Administration

### Newsletter Editor

Lucy Tyrrell

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## From the Executive Director

### Our Work Evolves

By Fred Clark

The support of conservation professionals with diverse disciplines and backgrounds has allowed Wisconsin's Green Fire to address important and complex issues from wolf biology to groundwater standards. Our talent pool is rich and our members' work has been the foundation for our success. However, what's present is sometimes easier to see than what might be missing.

Since inception, WGF leadership has recognized a goal of expanding our network of members and partners. By broadening the issues we take on, we may engage more communities of interest and fulfill our values around environmental justice. We're also recognizing more clearly today that growth in new directions does not always happen organically—it requires both good intentions and effective action. Now it's time for our actions to catch up with our intentions.

Our September 2020 Annual Meeting will feature a program on racial equity and explore aspects of equity and inclusion in conservation organizations. This program will be led by the Milwaukee-based conservationist August Ball of Cream City Conservation. I hope you'll find time to join us.

Two of our allied organizations, the Natural Resources Foundation and Gathering Waters, will join us in co-hosting this event. Within the leadership of our three organizations, we share a common interest in exploring ways to be of service and creating impacts in areas where we have not previously been strongly focused. That effort will require learning and listening, and we'll be sharing some of that work with our partners.

One thing we are clear about is that part of our evolution toward a more inclusive organization will involve more community-based efforts. We're not sure yet what form that work will take, but many of our most profound conservation challenges require more than policy, they require a commitment to community-level engagement. There are underserved urban and rural communities facing environmental injustices in every corner of Wisconsin. We don't know exactly what that work will look like or where it will take us, but if we choose well, it will take us to new collaborations that will strengthen our ability to be effective.

We said in the beginning of 2020, this would be our biggest year of impact ever. So far that's proving to be true. Thanks for your support and for being one of our Voices for Conservation.

I'm wishing you an enjoyable summer.

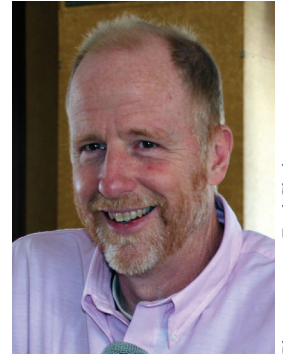


Photo courtesy Fred Clark



Art credit: Deanna Persson





Sarah Wilkins joins Wisconsin's Green Fire as Science Director.

## *WGF Adds to Staff— New Science Director*

*By Nancy Larson*

Sarah Wilkins joined Wisconsin's Green Fire in April as our first Science Director. In the two months she has been with us, she has helped work groups with myriad priorities, including energy policy, climate change, nitrates in groundwater, and wetland issues. She will play a key role in our next *Opportunities Now* report to highlight challenges and recommendations for conservation in Wisconsin. Sarah is greatly expanding our capacity to take on important issues. We don't know how we got along without her.

She holds a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Vermont and a M.S. in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

Prior to joining the WGF team, Sarah was Project Manager for the American Geophysical Union's (AGU) Thriving Earth Exchange Program. There, she managed and facilitated community science projects across the United States, including many with environmental justice communities.

Before working for AGU, she coordinated the Chesapeake Bay Sentinel Site Cooperative with Maryland Sea Grant Extension.

Sarah is passionate about science engagement and collaboration with all types of communities. Sarah lives in Madison with her husband Tim. She enjoys discovering new recipes, hiking, camping, and vegetable gardening.

## *A Personal Reflection— Racism, Science, and Conservation in America*

*By Sarah Wilkins*

Like so many others in our country, I have been in a deep state of reflection. I've cycled through periods of feeling broken-hearted, outraged, and paralyzed over the death of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police. The peaceful protests over his death and countless other Black lives are a wakeup call to all—especially those of us who have benefited from centuries of white privilege, an economy built on the backs of slaves, and a system designed to oppress People of Color. Now is not the time to sit idly and let others do the work. Together, we must galvanize change.

To root out racism and bigotry, we must look at how our biases and inaction play out in both our personal and professional lives. Those of us in the environmental and conservation professions must come to grips with how deeply rooted these movements are in racism. While we've often looked favorably on Teddy Roosevelt's creation of our first national parks and public lands, we may not have examined (or even know about) the racist ideologies he supported<sup>1</sup>. Even John Muir held many racist views.

A former boss once said that “science is a form of power.” All too often, white communities have the means, time, and political sway to leverage where research dollars are spent. As conservation organizations, we write grant proposals in communities that look like us, build relationships and conduct field studies with those that look like us, and hire and mentor interns that look like us. These sequences perpetuate the inequities of where money and time is spent and where it is not.

I've seen firsthand how our tents of environmentalism leave out the critical voices and leadership of underserved Black and Brown communities. These are the very people often impacted first and worst by climate change and environmental degradation. The historic “redlining” of communities (marking communities on maps in red to show where lending risk was considered too high) has pushed communities of color to places where they encounter compromised air quality and cannot access the healthcare they need. Amidst the anger and outrage and protests, Black and Brown people continue to die from the coronavirus at higher rates than their white counterparts. Communities most impacted by environmental harms and risks are referred to as “environmental justice (EJ) communities” or, as the USEPA defines them,

<sup>1</sup> [www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/environmentalisms-racist-history](http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/environmentalisms-racist-history)

# Wisconsin's Green Fire Annual Meeting

**"Age, Race, Politics, and Conservation—Addressing the Elephants in the Room"**



The historic changes of the past few months have made planning this year's annual meeting a challenge, but with every challenge comes an opportunity for growth! The goal of our annual meeting is to learn and to build relationships to be more effective in our WGF work.

This year, we need to adapt to a world where we can't meet in person. We need to listen to the concerns and ideas of a younger generation. We need to learn about the connections between conservation and social justice. We need to learn from state decision makers about their priorities and challenges. And we need to find opportunities in all of them to use our "Voices for Conservation" in a meaningful, just, and effective way.

A series of compelling programs in September will lead up to discussions of these important issues at our September 26 membership meeting. Our keynote speaker on September 25 will be Russ Feingold.

## Annual Meeting September Webinars

*Look for registration and more information on our website [www.wigreenfire.org/events](http://www.wigreenfire.org/events) after August 1.*

### Conference Welcome: Young Voices, New Members, and Opportunities with WGF

*Wednesday, September 9, 4 – 5:30 p.m.*

WGF leaders will welcome you to the annual meeting and provide an overview of who we are and what we do. This webinar will introduce student conservation groups and college students to Wisconsin's Green Fire. It's also a good introduction for new members of any age. Student leaders will share their projects and ideas on how WGF can more effectively collaborate with young, aspiring professionals and student organizations.

### Advancing Equity and Inclusion in Conservation

*Wednesday, September 16, 4 – 6:00 p.m.*

August Ball, founder and CEO of Cream City Conservation (see article page 6), will help us understand

why racial inequities exist, including in conservation, so we can do something to address this problem. August will challenge us to look at race on personal and societal levels to help us integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into our work. [www.creamcityconservation.org/](http://www.creamcityconservation.org/)

### Transformative Opportunities and New Challenges in Wisconsin Conservation

*Wednesday, September 23, 4:30 – 6 p.m.*

The COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturn, and the acutely heightened awareness of racial and environmental justice have brought new challenges and new opportunities to Wisconsin conservation. A panel of legislative and agency leaders will help us unpack some of today's biggest trends, predict what we can expect in 2021 and beyond, and help us identify opportunities for WGF to make a difference in conservation. Our panel will include Senator Rob Cowles (R - Green Bay), Senator Janet Bewley (D - Mason), and Wisconsin DNR Assistant Deputy Secretary Todd Ambs.

### Keynote: Russ Feingold

*Friday, September 25, 4:30 – 6 pm*

*"Global Conservation, Policy, and Science"*

Former U.S. Senator Russ Feingold is a member of WGF because he believes we play a critical role in conservation in Wisconsin. He will share insights from his long career as a statesman and his more recent global efforts with the Campaign for Nature. From the fight to save biodiversity in Africa to the increasingly charged politics closer to home, he will help us navigate our conservation work in challenging times.

### Summing it Up: WGF Updates, Breakout Sessions, and Brief Business Meeting

*Saturday, September 26, 9 – 11:30 am*

Meet new staff and hear about our work! We will distill and discuss what we've learned over the past year and how we can be most effective. We will share our thoughts on future directions for WGF and ask for your input using Zoom breakout groups.

*We are not charging a registration fee for these events, but we encourage you to help cover the costs. Your donation when you register will help us bring you these programs. More information on attending one or all of these events will be available August 1: [www.wigreenfire.org/events](http://www.wigreenfire.org/events).*

# ***WGF Webinar Features August Ball, Founder of Cream City Conservation & Consulting***

*By Lucy Tyrrell*

August Ball will be one of the Wisconsin's Green Fire webinar speakers in association with this year's annual meeting. She will bring to our webinar the combined passions she actively pursues for environmentalism, diversity, and equity.

It's that combination that convinced her to found Cream City Conservation and Consulting. She had led the Student Conservation Corps (SCA) in Milwaukee until its business-sponsored funding dried up. Ball figured that programs of such positive social impact should not depend financially on the largesse of big corporations that might find the programs worthy of funding. She reinvented a Summer Youth Employment Program "in service to our public green space" funded through the City of Milwaukee's Earn & Learn initiative. In addition to their green space work, participants engaged in personal and professional development throughout the program, including résumé building, job interview practice, conflict management, green career exploration, and effective communication.

Eventually, her experience and entrepreneurial skills created what she calls her "dream job"—developing and running Cream City Conservation and Consulting. She designed the consulting service to provide training and equity audits to help organizations tackle environmental racism and work toward equitable representation in decision-making positions. A percentage of the profits funds the Cream City Conservation Corps. The Conservation Corps coordinates environmental programs for youth and young adults of color in the Milwaukee area. Activities for which the youth are paid revolve around caring for the land in parks and other green spaces—building trails and maintaining biodiversity (planting native plants and removing invasive ones).

The website ([www.creamcityconservation.org](http://www.creamcityconservation.org)) describes the Corps as a program that "trains and employs young adults 16 – 25 whose social identities are traditionally underrepresented in the environmental industry."

In gathering information for this article, I listened to the interview that the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County conducted with August Ball. It was during the interview that August explained that her white mother had died at the hands of someone who didn't necessarily think she should be married to her Black father. Find this interview at: <https://www.unitedwaygmwc.org/Speak-United-Blog/Podcast-Meet-the-P5-August-Ball>.

While Ball wishes that she might have gotten to know her birth mother better, the circumstances of losing her mother have fueled her dedication to have a social impact, and she has chosen to make this impact in the area of environmental justice.



Photo courtesy August Ball

Originally from Madison and Racine, her father moved the family to the Philippines, where her step-grandparents had a corn and coconut farm. They stayed for more than a decade. August has "always looked for ways to promote a more just world." She thought she might join the Foreign Service, but shifted her focus to advancing diversity in conservation.

Working with AmeriCorps proved life-changing. She switched her major from political science with a minor in international studies to sociology and community education. After graduating in 2006 from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, August started her career designing service-learning curricula for AmeriCorps and then served two terms as a Youth Volunteer Corps team leader.

August says, "Because segregation, environmental racism, and racially homogenous leadership have all been intentional, what we do to rectify these circumstances must be very intentional as well." That's why she's working so hard to create equitable "green career pipelines." During its first decade, through partnerships with local and national organizations, Cream City Conservation has helped "engage thousands of Milwaukee youth and young adults in hands-on service to the land."

August Ball offers a welcoming smile, and a vision and tenacity born of her personal experience with racism. I for one, will be sure to listen to her upcoming webinar, to hear what messages she shares with WGF about ways we can be actively involved in supporting green justice.



# My Indigenous View

By Shyanne Eustace

Member, Cochiti Pueblo Nation in New Mexico

Student, Northland College

Student Member, Wisconsin's Green Fire

Photo courtesy Shyanne Eustace



She is my teacher, provider, doctor, and so much more. She is Mother Earth. Growing up on the reservation of Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico, I was taught the importance of taking only what I need from the Earth and to share her gifts with my people. Most importantly, I was

always taught how to take care of our Mother. From a young age, I was shown that Earth Day is every day.

As humans, we are the most dependent beings on Earth. As time has gone on, the lockdown mandated for the current pandemic has shown us that the Earth would be fine without humans. As we fight over rolls of tissue and illogically discriminate against certain race groups, Earth is thriving. The animals are readapting, waters are becoming clear again and the air is the cleanest it's been in over ten years!

This pandemic is nothing new to my people. We had been threatened by unknown diseases many times before. Today, Indigenous people make up less than 5% of the U.S. population. However, we still stand on the front lines for all environmental crises: from stopping illegal pipelines to peaceful protests—we are there. Every day we are searching for resources to clean our waters from toxins, restore forests, and save animals from extinction. We are constantly working to protect the environment.

I ask you to please reflect on your actions and how it will affect the next Seven Generations.

I also encourage you to learn more about Indigenous people and how you can support them. Due to the COVID-19, most tribes are limited in resources such as food, water, electricity, and medical supplies. If the virus enters into a tribal community, it could easily erase that community.

I thank you for taking the time to learn about my values. I can't speak on behalf of all Indigenous people but I hope this provides some insight on an Indigenous view.



Art credit: unknown artist in Tomsk, Russia

## WGF Member Honored as 2020 Udall Scholar

*excerpted from Northland College website news article*

On May 11, 2020, Northland College announced that sophomore Shyanne Eustace had been selected by the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation as a 2020 Udall Scholar. This scholarship will provide up to \$7,000 for her junior year of academic study in natural resources. A sixteen-member independent review committee selected this year's group of fifty-five Udall Scholars from among 429 candidates.

As a member of the Cochiti Pueblo Nation, Shyanne comes to Northland College from New Mexico. She has interned at Cochiti Pueblo Department of Natural Resources for the past two years where she led a group of high school seniors to examine toxins found in the Rio Grande. During Northland College's May term, through a sustainable agriculture practicum, she worked with Cochiti Pueblo to create a program to restore traditional farmlands.

"Most tribal communities are still heavily impacted by settler colonialism and western technology. Most of these affect human rights," she said. "My tribe has major health problems due to toxins in the streams and wildlife—another example is the impact of commodities on our food systems." She is very interested in assessing the needs and interests of Indigenous peoples and working to make their voice and knowledge a part of environmental decision-making.

This summer she hopes to intern with the Department of Agriculture while working with the Inter-tribal Agriculture Council to continue focusing on traditional agriculture and restoring her tribe's ancestral farmlands. Shyanne is an active member of the Society for Range Management. As a student member of Wisconsin's Green Fire, she wrote an Earth Day post for the WGF webpage (reprinted in the previous column).

# The Crises of Expertise

By Jennifer Daryl Slack

Distinguished Professor of Communication and Culture  
Director, Institute for Policy, Ethics, and Culture  
Michigan Technological University



In May 2020, Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson dismissed the advice of Dr. Anthony Fauci on how and how not to open the economy in the presence of SARS-CoV-2.

Carlson challenged Fauci's expertise: "How does he know this exactly? Is Tony Fauci right about the science? Do we have any particular reason to think he is right?" Carlson offered his own vague version of the science, in which unnamed "other doctors" hold "other views." Fauci is "silly," a "buffoon," one who is "apt to say some stupid things," and a "bad scientist." "When it comes to making long term health recommendations, this guy may be more off base than your average epidemiologist."

The criticism asserts that scientists and science should not play a significant role in policy-making. Fauci has "too much power," because he "has not been elected to anything," and "no appointed doctor should make the call on what our federal policy is. We elect leaders for that because we are supposed to be in charge, because it is a democracy." This moment illustrates what is at stake in the growing crisis of resistance to the role of expertise in American politics, policymaking, and culture.

Expertise—the deep knowledge, skill, and competence gained through education, training, apprenticeship, certification, and ongoing assessment—is under attack in American culture. Tom Nichols' *The Death of Expertise* (2017) claims that "the United States is now a country obsessed with the worship of its own ignorance" and that "we're proud of not knowing things." While healthy skepticism of experts is warranted, Nichols fears that we have gone too far: "we actively resent them, with many people assuming that experts are wrong simply by virtue of being experts."

We don't elect experts by popular vote. Expertise is attained in discipline-specific ways designed by previously designated experts with the goal of maintaining the integrity of different skill sets. Experts are "grown," cultivated by other experts in processes

of self-governance and self-regulation. Scientific self-regulation has built-in processes designed to move knowledge forward, correct errors, and offer the best assessments of what is true and what is not. Scientists are never always right and knowledge changes; but recognizing that fact is the source of the informed skepticism integral to the disciplinary oversight of the scientific process. When someone like Fauci offers advice based on science, he does so with decades of knowledge cultivated and recognized as worthy of being taken seriously.

The growing disregard for scientific expertise, notably in climate science and virus science, has been promulgated by inexpert political resistance, aided by the proliferation of magical thinking, and amplified by opportunistic media.

When scientific knowledge is politically inconvenient and personally challenging, people are easily persuaded to disrespect expertise in favor of the magic of delusion. While many are surprised by the success of delusion, a close look at culture makes this more understandable. "Magical thinking," thinking and acting as if it is so makes it so, is actively at work in this moment, cultivated by a president who has built his coalition on telling stories "as if it is so" and taking actions "as if it is so." We are witnessing a struggle between scientific expertise and politically expedient delusion, played out publicly and spectacularly in climate change denial, in the live presentations of the Coronavirus Task Force, and in the movement to "open up" the economy as if all is well again.

Opportunistic media easily spread professionally appearing misinformation. Fox News; anonymous social media posts; bots operating from undisclosed locations; and politically motivated broadcasts, films, videos, podcasts, articles, and books feed the resistance to expertise and often drown out legitimate voices. In contrast, the rigorous debates and decisions that characterize science take place primarily in laboratories and academic journals. When Fauci speaks publicly, we see only the end result of expertise at work, whereas politically motivated and uninformed speech, like that of Carlson, is more prevalent, easily digestible, and expert at manipulation. It is tough for science to compete with that.

The mistrust of expertise has infiltrated everyday life and demands our attention. Coupled with political expediency, magical thinking, and opportunistic media, it has become a danger to us all.



“overburdened communities.” I have worked closely with half a dozen EJ communities across the country from Cicero, Illinois to Goldsboro, North Carolina to Port Arthur, Texas. During those years, I grew to understand the deep, systemic, and interconnected nature of racism and environmental issues.

Two examples illustrate these connections. In one highly successful project<sup>2</sup> for a Houston community group, our team secured a grant of \$2.5 million in flood bonds to improve drainage infrastructure in low income, under-represented Black and Brown neighborhoods. That part of Houston had been heavily flooded during Hurricane Harvey (2017), yet the community was shut out of conversations with local elected officials on flood infrastructure improvements. In another project<sup>3</sup> in New Orleans’ Lower 9th Ward, we worked with a community group and engineering students at Louisiana State University. We co-designed bioswales (low-maintenance nature parks to treat stormwater) for areas of “blight” across the community. I had no idea that this blight (abandoned houses and overgrown lots) caused by the destruction of Hurricane Katrina was so deeply connected to increased cases of PTSD, depression, drug dealing, and chronically flooded streets.

After returning to Wisconsin, I read a report by COWS<sup>4</sup> (formerly Center on Wisconsin Strategy), that illuminated how hard it is to be a person of color in America’s Heartland. Wisconsin earned the sad distinction of ranking worst or near-worst among neighboring states in poverty, unemployment, educational attainment, and incarceration. The Wisconsin-specific report<sup>5</sup> provides a suite of policy recommendations for combatting discrimination and creating equal opportunities in education.

As a conservation organization mainly comprised of middle-class white people, we must do better in advancing social justice in our everyday work, empowering and amplifying diverse voices, and facilitating equal opportunities for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) in conservation and science-related fields. Even after the protests quiet, we must not lose momentum. We have a long road ahead. Let this be an invitation to remain vulnerable and open to difficult conversations with each other, and humble enough to admit and grow from our inevitable mistakes. Personally, I am going to use this time to listen, reflect, learn, unlearn, vote, and speak out. I invite you to join me and all of us at WGF in doing the same.

<sup>2</sup> <https://thriveearthexchange.org/project/northeast-houston-tx/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://thriveearthexchange.org/project/neworleans-9th-ward-la/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.epi.org/publication/race-in-the-heartland/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cows.org/\\_data/documents/2030.pdf](https://www.cows.org/_data/documents/2030.pdf)

## *Profiles in Conservation*

### Champion for Air Quality

*By Jon Heinrich, Wisconsin DNR for 36 years*

When I graduated from the U. of Minnesota with a degree in forestry, I never imagined that my interim year with the Wisconsin DNR’s air management program (while I waited for frozen forestry positions to open) would transform into more than three and a half decades with the agency until I retired in 2010.



Little did I know, when I began as an engineering technician conducting stack emission testing around the state, that what I learned in Wisconsin addressing air quality concerns would be used beyond Wisconsin too. A career of supervising policy development for ground level ozone, particulates, sulfur dioxide, hazardous air pollutants, and acid deposition gave me a foundation for representing the state on numerous regional and national air quality groups. When I addressed emerging issues, such as climate change, mercury contamination, and air toxics and health risk, that also carried over into my international involvement.

I was part of a group in (then) Czechoslovakia (see photo) that proposed a regional air quality management organization for Northern Bohemia, where most of the country’s electrical energy was produced. Mining and combustion of high sulfur-content brown coal produced rainfall the acidity of vinegar.

Our project in Mariupol, Ukraine, a heavily industrialized city on the Sea of Azov, involved environmental audits at major iron and steel enterprises. We identified low-cost air pollution control strategies, designed and installed an air quality monitoring network in the city, and recommended training and equipment needs for local authorities.

In Romania, I assessed their management of air quality. To help local officials improve their program, I implemented training tours for them to the United States, to showcase local and state air quality agencies.

My interest in travel and global health issues evolved through my career in air quality. I became involved in the Wisconsin Medical Project, a non-profit providing humanitarian assistance to Cuba and several African nations. As part of earning a Global Health Certificate at U.W. Madison after I retired, I spent five weeks in Uganda learning how the country addressed important health issues such as malnutrition and infectious disease. I have traveled to Cuba many times, with the Madison Camagüey Sister City Association, the Wisconsin Medical Project, and the International Crane Foundation.

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Not a member?  
Please join  
Wisconsin's Green Fire

Please visit:

<https://wigreenfire.org/make-a-difference/>  
to join or renew on-line or to download  
a membership form.

Thank you for supporting  
the conservation legacy of  
Wisconsin.

Art credit: Terry Daulton



Art credit: Terry Daulton



Art credit: Lucy Tyrrell / Raven Moon design, On the Trail Creations



Art credit: Terry Daulton



Art courtesy Chequamegon Food Co-op



2020



WISCONSIN'S  
**greenfire**  
VOICES FOR CONSERVATION

**Annual Meeting**



**Webinars**

**September 9, 16, 23**  
**September 25 – 26**

**See page 5 for details.**

Information after August 1 at  
**[www.wigreenfire.org/events](http://www.wigreenfire.org/events)**