

October News from Wisconsin's Green Fire

Fred Clark Announces Retirement, Meleesa Johnson is WGF's New Executive Director!

by Ruth Oppedahl,
WGF Interim Program Director

It had to happen sometime...

[Fred Clark](#) is retiring as executive director of Wisconsin's Green Fire. Fred will remain active with Green Fire while he spends more time outdoors on land and on water.



Photo: Fred Clark

During Fred's five years as WGF's first executive director, he and the teams of researchers in our [Work Groups](#) published papers on gray wolves, PFAS "forever" chemicals, energy policy, wetlands, and other significant issues for Wisconsin's lands and waters.

He took a young nonprofit and shaped it into a statewide leader on natural resource science and policy. He leaves Green Fire in good shape and ready for the future.

Starting November 1st, our next executive director is Meleesa Johnson. Meleesa is no stranger to Green Fire as she has been deeply involved in the PFAS ("forever" chemicals) issue through the Contaminants of Emerging Concern Work Group. She presented at WGF's statewide conference ["PFAS in Wisconsin"](#) in June of this year.

Meleesa lives in Stevens Point where she served six years as city council president and on the Portage County Board where she represented the

"It's been immensely gratifying to have the chance over the last five years to help give form to the powerful vision our founders had for Wisconsin's Green Fire, and to be able to work every day with some of our state's most knowledgeable conservationists and the many talented people who share our mission. I'm looking forward to stepping back, while continuing to serve in other ways." - Fred Clark

county to the Wisconsin Legislature. She led strategic planning, created a housing task force, drafted policies and ordinances, and developed the legislative language for the County's first Diversity Affairs and Inclusion Committee. She is a dedicated conservationist.

She started college at 40 and graduated summa cum laude at 45 from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Having been a non-traditional student herself, she is committed to mentoring and building capacity in others through mentoring and developing internship programs like [WGF's Conservation Pathways](#) program.

As a member of one of Green Fire's Work Groups and the [Science Council](#), she sees firsthand the expertise and depth of our team of scientists that research our state's most pressing issues. She recognizes the value of science-informed decisions and is an excellent public speaker.



Photo: Meleesa Johnson

"I am honored to take over the reins from Fred and to follow in his leadership! I look forward to using my diverse background in environmental policy, government administration and personal passion for our natural world to advance the mission and vision of Wisconsin's Green Fire. Frankly, it is a bit humbling to walk in the footsteps of Aldo Leopold, and so many Wisconsin conservationists, to ignite the 'green fire' in all of us."
- Meleesa Johnson



Photo: Fred and Meleesa at a Wisconsin's Green Fire Event in 2021

As Green Fire moves into our next chapter, we are grateful for your support. Please consider a special year-end gift to help propel Green Fire into a productive new year.

[Support Wisconsin's Green Fire](#)

Fall Conservation Socials - Two More!

By Carolyn Pralle, WGF Communications
Coordinator & Flossie Siebert, WGF
Development Director

We've loved gathering the Green Fire community through our Conservation Socials around the state! There are **two more socials** on the calendar this season. Join us in Milwaukee on October 23rd, and in Appleton on October 25th!



□ **Oct. 23 – Milwaukee Conservation Social - [Urban Ecology Center \(Riverside Location\)](#)**, 4:00-7:00pm

□ **Oct. 25 – Appleton Conservation Social - [Bubolz Nature Preserve](#)**, 5:00-7:00pm

Come connect and socialize while enjoying local drinks and food, all in the name of preserving Wisconsin's natural resources.

- **In Milwaukee**, arrive at 4:00 to explore the two-mile loop of trails meandering through open prairie and wooded riverfront at the [Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum](#). Then, from 5:00-7:00pm, meet other guests for refreshments and great conversations at the Urban Ecology Center's Riverside Park "[green building](#)."
- **In Appleton**, we have a special presentation on **PFAS** at this social! WGF's new Executive Director **Meleesa Johnson** and Science Council member **Jim Baumann** will be sharing their expertise on PFAS, the "forever chemicals" impacting drinking water and groundwater in Wisconsin.

During each social, you can learn about WGF's impactful work, chat with conservation experts, and **discover how you can get involved**. Students and early-career professionals are welcome, as is anyone who cares about conservation. Bring a friend and neighbor!

Visit our [Events page](#) for the full event details and register today. These events are open to the public and completely free, but we recommend registering for the Conservation Socials ahead of time to secure your spot.

Let's come together, support conservation efforts, and make a positive impact on Wisconsin's beautiful natural environment. **See you at the Conservation Socials!**



Photos: Athens Conservation Social at Stoney Acres Farm (by C. Pralle); Eau Claire Conservation Social at The Brewery Projekt (by F. Clark)

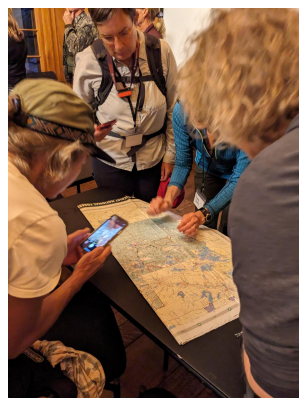
Update on TWA Wolf Ecology Weekend

It's **Wisconsin Wolf Awareness Week** October 15-21, 2023!

Wisconsin's Green Fire sponsored the [Timber Wolf Alliance \(TWA\) Wolf Ecology Weekend](#) in August. **Melanie Michaels**, TWA Coordinator, provided this summary about the event:



The Timber Wolf Alliance Wolf Ecology Weekend is an annual event that takes place the third weekend in August. This year, nineteen participants from five different states joined together at the historic Forest Lodge in Cable, Wisconsin, to learn about wolf ecology, the Ojibway connection to wolves, and wolf management in Wisconsin. During the three-day workshop, participants found signs of a wolf pack and even heard one wolf howling in the distance.



Photos by Melanie Michaels.

\$1000 Scholarship Opportunity - Madison College

Madison College students can apply for **\$1000 scholarships and mentoring** through WGF's [Conservation Pathways](#) program. This program is funded by the [Evjue Foundation](#) and [Forest County Potawatomi Foundation](#). WGF's Conservation Pathways program seeks to engage and support **young people from all backgrounds and abilities** in conservation and environmental careers.



This new scholarship program is **centered on inclusion**, with an emphasis on

creating equitable learning environments that support students. We built this program to allow all students - particularly those who have been historically excluded or underrepresented in conservation and environmental fields to feel that they belong and can succeed in these fields.

The deadline to apply is **October 25th**. Learn more and apply at <https://wigreenfire.org/our-work/launching-conservation-careers/>.

[Apply Here](#)

Fall is a Season of Giving - Our 2023 Fall Appeal

Fall is the time of year when **your support as a Green Fire member** makes all the difference. Support from individuals like you is the largest source of revenue for WGF and makes all of our work together possible.



Your contribution of \$1000, \$500, \$250, \$125, or **any amount that is meaningful for you**, will help us meet our goals and assure that we can respond to emerging issues in 2024. Our fall print issue of [Confluences](#) and information about [our fall appeal](#) will be arriving soon in your mailbox!

We're excited to launch our **Wisconsin's Green Fire Stewardship Society** to recognize members who make annual gifts of \$1000 or more. Members of the Stewardship Society will receive preferred access to WGF events and activities, and special recognition for such generous support.

Thank you for being a supporter of Wisconsin's Green Fire!

Photo by T. Daulton: Green Fire members working on today's "pressing" conservation issues! Washburn Conservation Social at the Oppedahl Homestead, Sep. 2023

[Visit Our Giving Page](#)

Aspiring Conservation Professionals

By Isabelle Bieser, Aspiring Conservation Professionals Work Group Chair. In the photo Isa checks wood duck nesting boxes.

Join members of the Aspiring Conservation Professionals Work Group on **October 25th at 5pm to discuss plans for the annual winter retreat!** To attend the planning meeting (or support the event), contact ACP Workgroup Chair, Isabelle Bieser at isabieser@gmail.com.

Last year, the ACP partnered with UW-Oshkosh Senior Lecturer, Shannon Davis-Foust, and



Wisconsin's Green Fire to provide professional development and networking for WGF student members. Students learned about limnology, forestry, and became certified in the Project WILD curriculum. They networked, went cross-country skiing, and howled at the moon.

Save the date for the retreat on January 2nd-4th, 2024 at Lowenwood.

Here are a **couple exciting opportunities** for students and early-career professionals:

1. Call for presentations at [Wetland Science Conference](#) Feb 20-22, 2024. The Wisconsin Wetlands Association seeks proposals for oral presentations and posters on wetland research, restoration, and management projects from the Midwest region.

- Contact Ginny Carlton at conference@wisconsinwetlands.org.
- Deadline to apply/submit abstracts is **Nov. 15, 2024**.

2. Grad school funding opportunity! [Water Policy and Science Communication Fellowship](#): 2-year funded position at UWM Center for Water Policy to conduct research with Prof. Melissa Scanlan beginning in fall 2024.

- Qualified women and members of underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.
- \$21,420/academic year, health insurance, graduate tuition waiver, and possibility of summer student hourly work.
- **Email Erin Cross at crosse@uwm.edu with questions or to apply.** Deadline to apply is **January 15, 2024**.

Read More about WGF's ACP Work Group

Get Involved in Wisconsin Conservation

- Wisconsin's Green Fire is a **leader co-sponsor of [the Agriculture and Rural Resilience summit](#)** at the W.R. Davies Student Center in Eau Claire on Oct. 21st. Join in the pre-Summit social at the Brewing Projekt on Oct 20th.
- **View the Oct. 25th [Natural Resources Board](#) meeting [live on YouTube](#)** or in-person in Madison. The [2023 Wolf Management Plan](#) is on the Oct. 25th agenda.
- **Celebrate at the [Crandon Mine Purchase 20th Anniversary Celebration](#) on Oct. 28th** at 8:30am at the former Mine Property - 9713 Sand Lake Road, Crandon (meet at the Mole Lake Lodge Conference Center if weather is below 34F). **Celebrate with the Sokaogon Chippewa Community** with songs, history, and stories at the former mine property then a Mini-Powwow at the Potawatomi Community Center!
- **[Register](#) for the Health and the Environment Series: Making the Connection Conference** on Nov. 10th, 11:00-5:30pm at the UW Madison Health Sciences Learning Center.

Wisconsin's Green Fire in the News

Price County Review - Oct. 12 - Fred Clark's Op-ed [Where are the future leaders for Wisconsin's natural resources?](#) also available on [WGF's blog](#).

Ashland Press Gazette - Oct. 11 - Fred Clark's Op-ed [It's fourth quarter for climate](#) includes a hopeful message for action on climate change.

WI Public Radio - Sep. 29 - Danielle Kading quoted Fred Clark, WGF Exec. Dir. about NRB members' qualifications in article: [Environmental groups accuse GOP lawmakers of politicizing board that sets policy for the DNR](#).

WUWM - Sep. 25 - Susan Bence referenced WGF's and TNC's projections on potential wetland loss in Wisconsin in article: [Supreme Court decision threatens natural wetlands around the country, including Wisconsin](#).

Books:

WGF members Adrian Wydeven and Jim Heffelfinger are co-authors of the "[North American Wolves](#)" chapter in [Wild Furbearer Management and Conservation in North America](#). The book is **free** to read and download [here](#).

WGF member Bob Martini is quoted several times in [Ripple Effects: How We're Loving Our Lakes to Death](#) by Ted Rulseh.

Wisconsin's Green Fire needs your support. Your donation assures that conservation issues around the state are addressed with the best scientific information available.

**Give Today to Support Conservation
Tomorrow!**

Wisconsin's Green Fire 715-203-0384 | info@wigreenfire.org | www.wigreenfire.org

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