

Sierra Club: Hails milestone in state climate leadership and need for bold action on carbon emissions

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MADISON, WI — Today, Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes released the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change Report that included 55 policy recommendations to address climate change in Wisconsin. This report comes after a year of input from the Task Force, five public hearings and thousands of comments.

In response, Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter Director, Elizabeth Ward, released the following statement:

"The Evers Administration's commitment to preventing the worst impacts of climate change and seizing this crisis as an opportunity to invest in creating an equitable and strong economy demonstrates critical leadership for Wisconsin. Throughout the last year, Wisconsinites showed up and spoke out through the Climate Task Force process. They made clear that bold, ambitious action on climate is urgent and important, and that we can create a path that tackles climate change while equitably distributing the benefits of a transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.

Now that the Task Force has released the long awaited report, it's critical that Wisconsites continue to engage in making plans and taking action, whether it's ensuring Wisconsin stops investing in fossil fuel infrastructure, applying climate science to our state's forest management, or holding utilities accountable for eliminating carbon pollution from the electricity sector. We'll need to keep working to ensure we act with the boldness this moment warrants. The work will continue, but today marks a milestone with Wisconsin's Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and their administration making clear that action on climate change is a priority for our

state.”

Sierra Club commits to continuing to work with the Task Force, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, the legislature, and other decision-makers to take action on some of the most urgent policy recommendations, including:

- **Prioritizing racial and environmental justice in all climate solutions** and addressing the root causes and impacts of racial disparities across systems.
- **Avoiding all new fossil fuel investments** including Enbridge’s proposed Line 5 re-route in northern Wisconsin and Dairyland Power Coop’s proposed Nemadji Trail Energy Center gas plant in Superior. The plan recognized the disproportionate impacts fossil fuel infrastructure has on Black, Indigenous, and other Communities of Color.
- **Managing forests for conservation and carbon sequestration**, including the acquisition of forest lands and incentivizing sustainable forest management for private landowners
- **Modernizing Rate Design** that incentivizes energy efficiency, conservation, and clean energy. Changes to Wisconsin’s rate design in the last decade have negatively impacted low-income communities and fixed-income residents.

While the plan outlines multiple concrete policies that will address the climate crisis, the Task Force missed the opportunity to ensure urgent action in the following areas, which will be continued areas of statewide advocacy for Sierra Club and its 18,000 members across Wisconsin:

- **Halting the expansion of Interstate 94 in Milwaukee**, which would have major racial and environmental justice impacts and induce more traffic and thus more fossil fuel emissions

- **Aligning Wisconsin's utility carbon reduction goals with the incoming Biden Administration**, which has called for 100% carbon-pollution free electricity by 2035 while centering equity and strong labor standards
- **Recognizing the urgent need to retire all Wisconsin coal plants by 2030**, as they produce the most carbon pollution of all utility infrastructure