FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, September 13, 2011

Sierra Club Decries Assembly’s “Dirty Air and Water Day”

Madison, WI – The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is dismayed to see the Wisconsin State Assembly slated to vote on a raft of bills that, if enacted, could seriously degrade our state’s air and water resources.

Legislation under consideration includes AB 159, AB 160, and AB 195, which wipes out protections from carbon monoxide emissions from road projects, dangerous soot particulate pollution from coal and other industrial sources, and hazardous air contaminants associated with factory farm waste. “These bills do nothing to create jobs and everything to jeopardize public health,” said Caryl Terrell, Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter Legislative Chair. “We are disappointed to see the majority of Assembly members using their only session day this month to focus on rewarding special interest groups rather than responding to broad constituent needs for policies that will create and sustain family-supporting jobs,” added Terrell.

Water protections are also under attack, with AB 177 up for a vote today. This bill would lead to automatic approval of permits after a designated time period- even if incomplete – and it reduces the public’s ability to weigh in on certain shoreland building or water withdrawal projects. “This bill hampers the DNR’s ability to properly review permits needed to protect sensitive habitats and neighboring properties, and it increases pressure on limited staff to rubber stamp applications,” said Shahla Werner, PhD, Director, Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter. In addition, the Assembly Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on AB 165 tomorrow, which would allow for the retail display of lawn fertilizer containing phosphorus, restricted in Wisconsin due to the potential for this product to runoff into lakes, rivers, and streams and cause massive algae blooms. “Just last session, the clean lakes bill passed the legislature with unanimous bipartisan support. Displaying phosphorus fertilizer will make this new law meaningless and lead to declines in lakefront property values and reduced tourism and recreational opportunities,” added Werner.

Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club’s mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives. The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters working to promote clean energy and protect water resources in Wisconsin.