



SIERRA
CLUB

VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Fall 2025

As Every Chemistry Major Knows, Plastics Don't BioDegrade, Nor Do They Fade Away... by Ross Shearer

Since 1950, global plastic production has increased exponentially to nearly 425 million tons annually and projected to double its current rate by 2040 and triple by 2060. So, where is this headed and what has the industry deliberately ignored?

The Sierra Club's Grassroots Network Single-Use Plastics Plus team recently partnered with two scientists to produce a comprehensive report outlining the environmental and societal challenges posed by plastics. (There is a link to the recording of the Microplastics Webinar at the end of this article on page 3.)

Because plastics do not occur naturally, it's a lot of bad news. The chemical bonds of plastics are locked in an arrangement forming long carbon chains rendered chemically immune to the biological chemistry of the natural world. This inert feature of polymer bonding gives plastics their resilience while presenting a threat to the natural world as plastics cannot biodegrade. Plastics only break apart physically and slowly, aided by sunlight, thus persisting in ever smaller pieces taking perhaps thousands of years to completely return to their component elements, primarily carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and additives such as one of the halogens, like chlorine.

Plastics seem so benign, because they solve a multitude of problems. They don't burn, sting, prick, shock, bite or cause instant rashes. They may appear transparent or translucent. Plastics meet many industrial and consumer needs, making cars safer, transportation of products convenient and less costly.

What could go wrong with embracing plastics for safety and convenience? Just about everything—both what we anticipated and what we never could have imagined—already has. Emerging research provides mounting empirical evidence confirming what many predicted: plastics have become one of the most insidious and far-reaching existential threats we face today.

The fugitive bits or polymers in the air, water and on the ground originate primarily from polyester clothing, tires, and paint. Textiles are a major source of microplastics, with one estimate suggesting a single wash and dry cycle of synthetic clothing can release up to 100,000 microplastic fibers. Beauty products account for 2% of ocean plastics. At the nano size, we inhale an estimated 68,000 plastic particles every day. These microscopic particles can penetrate lung tissue and enter the bloodstream.¹ Nanoparticles can also enter the human body via the digestive tract—and even through the skin. Once inside the body, these particles wreak havoc in a multitude of ways.

Plastics Accumulate...

In the bloodstream, where some nano types of plastic are recognized by the immune system's white blood cells as an invasive threat, attacking the particles fruitlessly until the white cell is exhausted and destroyed. The polymer particle remains to defeat thus destroy another white blood cell.² No one would agree to play Battleship against such a formidable opponent.

In the circulatory system, harming immune systems whereby nano size plastic exposure is linked to significant immune modulation and inflammation, indicating potential public health risks.³

Register for the Virginia Sierra Club Gathering

For many years, the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club has held an annual "Gathering," bringing together members statewide to socialize, share ideas, learn about important issues, enjoy live music, and explore the great outdoors.

**Virginia Sierra Club
Annual Gathering
November 14 -16, 2025
Caroline Furnace Camp
& Retreat Center**

This year, our Gathering will be held at Caroline Furnace Camp & Retreat Center in the George Washington National Forest, close to Mt. Jackson. (www.carolinefurnace.org) This is a beautiful area with excellent facilities we have used twice for our annual Gathering before. We hope to have a large group of Sierrans join us for a truly enjoyable weekend.

In addition to learning about important environmental issues from our volunteer leaders & chapter staff, a committee of volunteers are planning several exciting activities:

- 🌲 Massanutten Trail Hike with outing leaders
- 🌲 Friday evening Sing-a-long
- 🌲 Team-building workshop
- 🌲 Abundance of social time to share our experiences
- 🌲 Saturday night live music by Dan Layman & Friends (formerly Gabby Haze)

...and much more. (We are still looking for someone to lead a yoga session.)

Click [here](#) for details about accommodations and to register for the Gathering.

If you have any questions, please call Sierra Club's Barb Adams at 804-484-2773.

See you in November!

**John Cruickshank, Piedmont Group of the
Virginia Chapter**

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Early Voting Has Begun



Judy Gayer
Chapter Chair

As voters in Virginia, we have the opportunity to influence the outcome of critical elections this Fall. Not only will this election cycle determine what policies will be carried out in Virginia on issues we care about deeply, like air and water pollution, climate change, environmental justice, and our democracy, but it

is being watched closely across the nation as a referendum on the actions of the current White House Administration. Through your vote and your volunteerism, you can send a strong message as to whether We the People are willing to suffer the dismantling of our democracy and the values so many of us share.

The Virginia Chapter has endorsed **Abigail Spanberger** for Governor, **Ghazala Hashmi** for Lt. Governor, and **Jay Jones** for Attorney General.

We also have endorsed an excellent slate of candidates for the Virginia House of Delegates. The table linked here shows the Sierra Club's endorsed candidates in every House race. A copy of the table also appears on page 11 of this newsletter.

Basic information to help you cast your vote:

Voter Registration Deadlines

Register to vote or update an existing registration online by **Friday, October 24, 2025** using the Citizen Portal at www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal. Voters may register and vote using a provisional ballot In-Person after September 19, 2025, through Election Day. Contact your local registrar's offices for more information.

Early Voting

Early in-person voting ends at 5:00pm on **Saturday, November 1, 2025**. Contact your local registrar's offices for all early voting and satellite location information. Voter registration offices will be open for early voting on Saturday, October 25, 2025.

Vote by Mail

Apply for a ballot to be mailed to you by **Friday, October 24, 2025**. You may apply for an absentee ballot online using the Citizen Portal at www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal.

Please share this information with your family, friends, and neighbors!

Judy Gayer, Chapter Chair

Breaking Down Cumulative Stress: How to Survive 2025 by Joshua Dewar

In 2025, America is on fire. The No Kings and Hands Off protests, two of the biggest days of public resistance in the country's history, continue a cascade of endless opposition. Opposition against the tragic rollback of our civil liberties. Opposition against the erosion of thousands of green initiatives. Opposition against roads that will cut through the last wild spaces in America. Amid this buzzing swarm of overlapping fights, it's becoming clear to many of us that the current era of our fight for a viable climate future will be an absolute slog.

Putting yourself in the ring to defend the environment in our present political reality is frightening and exhausting. To care for yourself in this context can feel selfish, unimportant, or even impossible. However, minimizing your own needs can lead you quickly down the path to burnout, stress, and anxiety. Because of my own struggle with treating the many-faced blob of stress I carry and the negative toll I see these issues taking on many of my peers and friends, I've worked to create a list of a few strategies to identify and break down cumulative stress. These practices have improved my capacity and outlook as an activist and, more generally, have made life just a bit more pleasant. I hope they help you too.

Strategy One: Be Honest With Yourself and Your Team

I'll go first. As the Summer bleeds into Fall, I feel unprepared and deeply anxious. Each day I find myself cycling through scenes of an impending calamity. What will happen if we can't protect our parks? What will happen if the path to clean energy becomes nonviable in this country? What will happen if the air and water quality in my community become compromised? These broad strokes of foreboding paint a picture of a future I don't want. When everyday marks the start of another crisis, it's incredibly difficult to sustain any mission beyond keeping my head on straight.

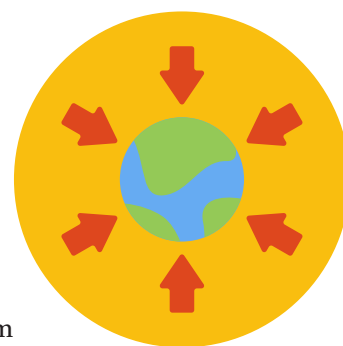
In times like these, I find myself immensely grateful for my teammates on the Coastal Virginia Group's Executive Committee. By being honest about my current limitations, I've been able to find support and limit my involvement on things I am not needed for. As a team, we've worked to build systems that can sustain downtime for each of us.

Perhaps your action may be limited at this moment. Perhaps your energy isn't being directed in a way that is sustainable for you. There are times when you, while dedicated to this work, may find yourself overwhelmed by other demands in your life. This is normal!

If you're finding yourself approaching burnout or unable to approach your to-do list with some joy, recognize it and seek support. Forcing yourself to push ever onward sets a bad example for those you hope to follow in your footsteps. After all, organizing is a team effort. If we can't lift each other up, none of us can thrive.

Strategy Two: Imagine a Brighter Climate Future

Why exactly are you choosing to spend your energy, money, and time toward environmental causes? Are you fighting for what you hope will happen? Joy and hope are absolutely essential to sustaining your capacity. The environmental movement in most people's minds seems to be wrapped up in fear. Rather than fighting for a future I want, I am all too often fighting against the future that I fear. Not only is this off putting to the less-engaged folks we are asking to get involved, it sets us up to feel absolutely miserable. Flipping the script and visualizing the good you are bringing into the world with what you



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Plastics (continued from page 1)

In the placenta (after 8 weeks) to corrupt fetal development where there is not a safe threshold for exposure to plastics by prenatal life. Toxic chemicals in plastics may cause cancer and brain damage impacting IQ, ADHD and autism.⁴

In key organs—including the brain—where they become lodged, “bioaccumulating,” to interfere with organ function and metabolism, including the exchange of gases (oxygen and CO₂) and nutrients.⁵

In the brain of those suffering from dementia, revealing an association with Parkinson’s Disease, gut inflammation, and early birth.⁴

In arterial plaque, where they contribute to the intensity of serious diseases. Nano and microplastics were detected in 58% of 312 patients who had plaque surgically removed from the carotid artery. Patients with detectable plastics had an alarming 450% increase in risk for nonfatal myocardial infarction, nonfatal stroke or death in the subsequent 3 years.⁶

In our bodies, generally leading to cancer from PFAS (polyfluoroalkyls), acting as developmental neurotoxins from bromine flame retardants and endocrine disruptors notably phthalates has been documented and widely publicized.

Larger than nano- or micro-sized pieces cause trouble, too, especially for fish and organisms comprising the global web of life including the food chain we depend on. Small fish choke on pieces, filling their bellies so they starve, larger fish and animals are ensnared by strands such as polyethylene ropes and nets or are ensnared by rings of plastic from which they cannot escape.

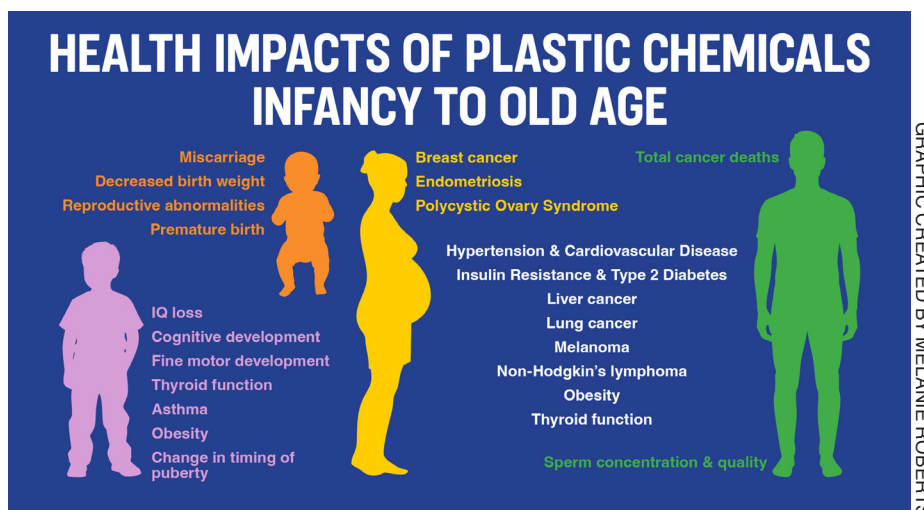
Macro size plastic bits provide a surface on which algae and bacterium accumulate, creating “bait” that waterfowl mistake for food, choke on it, or feed it to their chicks that absorb nano sizes that degrade neurological development, killing the bird. This has been documented in detail by Dr. Alex Bond for a colony of shearwaters located on an isle in the Tasman Sea.

Impacts on the Atmospheric Carbon

Under the “biological carbon pump” principle, dead organic matter—consisting principally of phytoplankton, other sea creatures and fecal matter—clump together, then sink to the ocean floor where the considerable carbon remaining inside is sequestered for centuries or longer. When these organic materials clump onto bits of micro plastic suspended below the surface, the buoyancy of the plastic slows the descent, allowing the organic material to fully decompose, thus releasing CO₂ that without microplastics in the ocean would be sequestered for a long time in the depths.

My beloved English Literature instructor Irby Brown often ended class with a salient poetic couplet from Blake or one of the Romantics. His favorite was an ominous T. S. Eliot line from *The Hollow Men*: “This is the way the world will end...not with a bang but a whimper.” It was the mid 1960s. I figured Eliot had gotten it all wrong, because he didn’t know about nuclear weapons in 1925. A “bang” was the way the world could end during the Cold War, but I pondered Eliot’s choice of two dissimilar words, “bang” and “whimper” to express an existential choice. Was he warning us about the risks of a soulless political and ecclesiastic leadership or taking poetic license to shock or confuse us?

Sixty years later, we are learning how fugitive plastics are the “whimper” which the hollow marketing folks of the petrochemical world bequeathed us. No one should be confused today by an interpretation of Eliot warning us of the hollowness inherent to many filling leadership roles unrestrained by truth or the facts and in the case of plastics, the diverse product adoptions they developed and promoted.



What You Can Do

Click [here](#) to listen to the Microplastics Webinar.

- 🌿 **Avoid single use plastics, especially when cooking or to stir hot coffee**
- 🌿 **Skip water sold in plastic bottles**
- 🌿 **Avoid microwaving with plastic containers or lids**
- 🌿 **Store foods in glass, not plastic containers**
- 🌿 **Note that food cans are lined with plastic**
- 🌿 **Choose natural fiber for clothing and bedding**
- 🌿 **When washing synthetics, use cooler water, skip fabric conditioner, and trash worn polyester, spandex, or similar fabrics instead of donating them. Wastewater treatment captures about 90% of microplastics from washing, but the sludge is often used as fertilizer**
- 🌿 **Discard frayed or worn synthetic fabrics, including upholstery and rugs; even intact ones release microscopic polymers you can inhale**

1 www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/aug/28/microplastics-in-hair-study

2 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12154010/#:~:text=Abstract,and%20to%20inform%20regulatory%20policies>

3 International Journal of Molecular Sciences

4 Microplastics Webinar

5 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38460665>

6 Microplastics Webinar: New England Journal of Medicine

FOJG | FALLS OF THE JAMES GROUP



Steve Yarus and Joe Brancoli

Tree Maintenance in Southside Richmond

Nearly three years ago, more than two dozen volunteers from Sierra Club and other organizations planted 25 trees along Warwick Road in South Richmond near a proposed park site. In August, FOJG members Joe Brancoli, Bruce Tarr and Steve Yarus returned to give those trees some loving care. Thanks to this year's generous rainfall, watering wasn't necessary. However, we still completed weeding and mulching, and provided some first aid for bark damage where needed. On a mercifully cool—though still humid—day, the three arboreal volunteers were pleased to find that, aside from one tree that went missing early on, all the others are alive and most are thriving, especially the river birches.

Joe Brancoli, Chair, Falls of the James Group



Monthly Programs

The Falls of the James Group (FOJG) holds monthly programs the first Tuesday of each month at the Science Museum of Virginia. On September 9th, we had a great turnout for our first program, "Get to Know Your Sierra Club Group." Jamie HongKham from the Science Museum discussed landscape plans to continue the greening of the museum grounds. VA Chapter Digital Communications Lead Paige Wesselink discussed concerns on the unregulated growth of data centers. Tim Cywinski, VA Chapter Communications Director, voiced the importance and successes of grassroots advocacy.

Members discussed upcoming outings and the annual Big Yard Sale we organize every year in May. Glen Besa gave a talk about our fight against the proposed gas plant in Chesterfield County. We awarded raffle prizes and ended the evening with refreshments.

Visit [Get to Know Your Sierra Club Group](#) for a video of the proceedings.

Upcoming Programs

All events take place at the Science Museum of Virginia
2500 W. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220

October 14 | 7:00pm-8:30pm

Richmond City Commissions: Their Work and How You Can Help

Our October program will feature three speakers highlighting excellent work on commissions in the City of Richmond. Learn what they do and how you can help.

Speakers:

- 🌲 Daniel Hart, Chair of the Sustainability and Resilience Commission
- 🌲 Trieste Lockwood, Vice Chair of the Public Utilities and Services Commission
- 🌲 Steve Marzolf, Chair of the Clean City Commission

November 11 | 7:00pm-8:30pm

Go With the Flow—Mapping Urban Flooding Through Community Science

Urban flooding—caused by intense stormwater runoff—is a growing yet often overlooked threat to safety, property, and infrastructure in our communities. Despite the availability of regional and state-level flood maps, a critical gap remains in localized, street-level data that accurately reflects the true impact of pluvial flooding.

To address this issue, Southside ReLeaf and the University of Richmond launched Go With the Flow, a community-science flood mapping initiative that empowers residents to report and document flood-prone areas. The community-sourced data is used to train a GIS-based flood model, enhancing its ability to predict where flooding is most likely to occur. This presentation will highlight how collaborative mapping efforts and the power of local knowledge can be used to fill data gaps and inform more effective urban planning and infrastructure investments.

Speakers:

- 🌲 Sheri Shannon, FOJG Executive Committee Member, and Co-Founder of Southside ReLeaf
- 🌲 Dr. Todd Lookingbill, University of Richmond Professor of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability with a joint appointment in Biology, where he coordinates the Environmental Studies Program.

December 9 | 6:30pm-8:30pm

FOJG Green Giant Awards and Potluck Dinner

Advocacy Updates

by Lee Williams

Our Electrify RVA Beyond Methane team has recently completed a one-year study focusing on RFD (Richmond Fire Department) 911 responses to gas leaks. Data was obtained from Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services reports via PulsePoint from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. Our report provides a detailed analysis of the total number of gas leak reports received through the 911 system, shedding light on trends and patterns in emergency calls. We also documented the number of emergency vehicles deployed and the specific number of Richmond firefighters assigned to conduct safety inspections for each reported gas leak incident.

In our efforts to disseminate this information, we have formally presented our findings to several key stakeholders, including the Richmond City Council's Public Safety Committee, the Richmond Emergency Management team, the Public Utility and Services Commission Gas Subcommittee, and key professional staff of the Department of Public Utilities. Our goal is to shed light on threats to public and firefighter safety, and determine the economic burden of these responses to both taxpayers and the RFD and ultimately improve the response protocols related to gas leaks in our community.

Electrify RVA is a community-led working group created to ensure the timely and equitable implementation of energy-policy goals outlined in the Richmond City Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution passed in 2021. Stay tuned for information about a new energy efficiency ordinance being presented by the city council this fall.

Beyond Methane RVA is a natural gas and nitrogen dioxide detection project of Electrify RVA that is raising public awareness about the health and safety risks, as well as the economic and hidden costs of natural gas use.

Lee Williams, Advocacy Chair



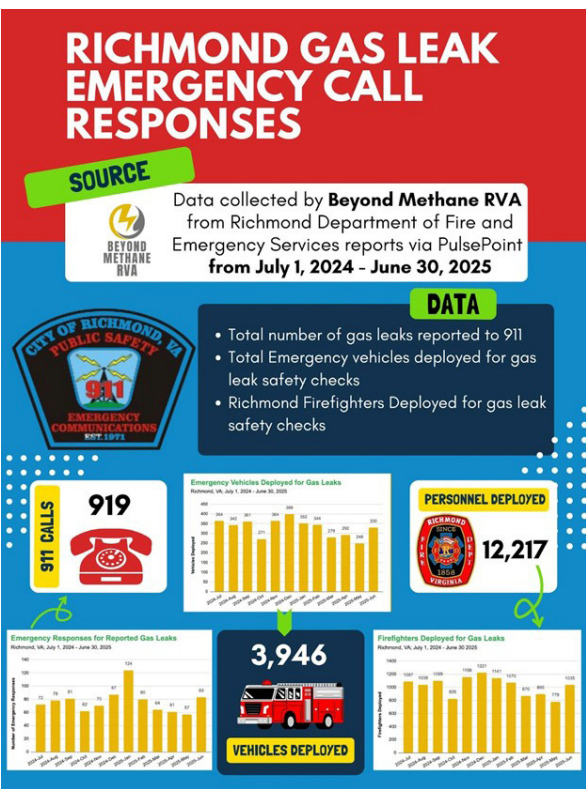
LISA ATKINSON-AFFUL OF SOUTHSIDE RELEASE

Joe Brancoli and Lisa Thompson

Tabling at New Student Orientation at the University of Richmond

On August 22nd, representatives of the FOJG participated in the University of Richmond Sustainability Fair for a third consecutive year. At this event, non-profit organizations and departments of the University present displays and information to incoming first-year students in a relaxed outdoor setting on campus. This year, Joe Brancoli, Linda Redmond and Lisa Thompson spoke with students from all over the world about their thoughts and concerns, and shared our local group's role in sustainability efforts.

Joe Brancoli, Chair, Falls of the James Group



LEE WILLIAMS



Group Directory

Groups are organized to conduct the work of Sierra Club in local areas, cities and towns. The information listed below is for the chair of each group. Information for each groups' geographical area can be found on our website under [Find a Group Near You](#).

Coastal Virginia

John Luker
757-337-4092
4solar@gmail.com

Falls of the James

Joe Brancoli
804-502-9502
joebsierra@gmail.com

Great Falls

Douglas Stewart
douglasbstewart@gmail.com

Piedmont

Donna Shaunesey
434-996-0392
shaunesey@hotmail.com

Potomac River Group

Dean Amel
571-327-9799
dean.amel@verizon.net

Rappahannock

Cindy Hodges
540-220-8145
grapesrgud10@gmail.com

Natalie Loeffler
253-381-1062
nloeffler36@gmail.com

Roanoke

Daniel Crawford
540-343-5080
dbcrawford@cox.net

Shenandoah

Pete Bsumek
540-421-4105
pkbsumek@gmail.com

Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO)

Vicky Hsu
240-370-7011
hhueichi@gmail.com

York River

Tyla Matteson
804-275-6476
tmatteson1@mindspring.com

How to Survive 2025 (continued from page 2)

do is nourishing and can make this work energizing. Here are a few sources of inspiration I've found:

- 🌲 *What If We Get it Right? Visions of Climate Futures* by Ayana Johnson is a must-read for anyone struggling with climate anxiety. In the book, Johnson speaks to climate-conscious experts in a variety of fields that provide contrast to the doom and gloom narrative we find ourselves wrapped up in.
- 🌲 Johnson's book comes with recommended tracks for an "Anti-Apocalypse Playlist" to hype you up on the way to your next tabling session or clean-up event. I recommend the audio book for this one, the interviews are excellent.
- 🌲 Alaina Wood, @Itsthegarbagequeen on Instagram, is an influencer known for climate optimism. On her page, she highlights good climate news across the globe and encourages us to find ways into this work that brings us joy.

Look, I get it. Things are not great. But if we can find ways to show up smiling, it certainly won't hurt us.

Strategy Three: Take a Break. No, Seriously. Do it.

3 The Sierra Club has been working to protect the environment for a long, long time. To carry the torch and continue the work, we need to harness a type of energy capable of long, consistent effort. Enduring passion for any effort is dependent on knowing and honoring your need for rest. Speaking as a young-ish member, I am constantly impressed by the leaders around me who have shown up for this community for decades. One of the patterns I recognize in these individuals that allows them to sustain this type of involvement is simple: they have a life outside of their work that allows them time to de-stress and enjoy life!

Visualizing the good you are bringing into the world with what you do is nourishing and can make this work energizing.

For me, taking a threefold approach to relaxation helps to break down cumulative stress and enrich my life. Mental practices like meditation, games with my friends, and gardening help me to better understand my relationship to thought and reduce the amount of time I spend ruminating on things outside of my control. Physical exercise like skateboarding with my dogs, yoga, and hiking is uplifting in an entirely different way and keeps me feeling balanced.

Lastly, and perhaps most challenging, is the practice of doing NOTHING. Resting without a plan or a goal is something essential to a healthy head that feels alien to most of us. Go touch some grass, sit on a beach, just be. I encourage you to find at least one way that you can show up for yourself in each of these areas!

The fruits of our work are delicate and difficult to grow. Where bad habits grow like bamboo, small groups like ours grow more like a bonsai. It takes months of careful, steady effort to move the needle. Everyone's contribution is incredibly valuable and, without each of our attention, things can easily start to fizzle out. We need each other to continue creating vibrant and healthy communities. To make sure that your group can continue the fantastic work you are doing, make sure to take care of yourself and each other. Be well.

Joshua Dewar, Vice Chair, Coastal Virginia Group

GFG | GREAT FALLS GROUP

Sierra Club PRO and GFG Engage Public at the Appalachian Trail Festival

by Glenn Gillis

On June 7th, the Annual Appalachian Trail Festival was celebrated on National Trails Day in the charming town of Hillsboro in Loudoun County. The AT (Appalachian Trail) is probably the most well-known long-distance trail in the US, winding over 2,000 miles from Georgia to Maine, attracting hikers of all levels. The first Festival was organized by Jody Brady and other hard-working volunteers in the now officially-designated AT Community town of Round Hill in 2019. The annual event moved to the Old Stone School Event Center in Hillsboro in 2023 after Mayor Roger Vance declared the town an AT Community. This year, SCPRO (Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings) and the GFG engaged with many attendees at a tabling event.

The popular festival included outdoor skills demonstrations, activities for children, roundtable discussions from AT thru-hikers, outdoor equipment sales, food vendors, and live music. To broaden their mission, many leading outdoor organizations in Northern Virginia hosted information tables to engage attendees. Alongside Sierra Club, groups included the Appalachian Mountain Club Potomac Chapter, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Old Dominion Land Conservancy, Piedmont Environmental Council, Potomac Heritage Trail Association, Loudoun County Parks and Recreation, and staff from the new Sweet Run State Park.

The AT Festival drew over 2,000 participants, including thru-hikers with shuttle service from Keys Gap. Virginia Senator Tim Kaine was the featured guest this year at the popular festival. Along with years of public service to Virginia and the nation, Senator Kaine has a lifelong passion for the great outdoors. His book *Walk Ride Paddle: A Life Outside* tells the story of his year-long journey of hiking, biking, and paddling across the state of Virginia. Senator Kaine spoke at the Festival about his outdoor adventure and demonstrated his musical talent, singing Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" in front of an enthusiastic crowd. With this year's Festival a major success, the outdoor community looks forward to next year's on June 6, 2026, at the Old Stone School in Hillsboro.

Glenn Gillis, Parks & Trails Adviser to SCPRO



Appalachian Trail Festival Chief Organizer Jody Brady flanked by Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance and Senator Tim Kaine

GLENN GILLIS



Left to right: Glenn Gillis, Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, with Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance (far right)

Virginia Sierran

Virginia Sierran is the official newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter and is published quarterly.

[Sierra Club Virginia](#)

Virginia Sierran Editor and Graphic Designer:

Melanie Roberts

editorvirginiasierran@gmail.com

The editor welcomes editorial contributions, photographs and art work. Submissions should pertain to Virginia's environment and/or climate change. Email the editor with questions on submissions.

Please contact member.care@sierra-club.org for membership and mailing issues and address.changes@sierra-club.org to change your mailing address.

PG | FROM THE PIEDMONT GROUP

News Briefs

We added a new ExCom member, Shelby Cuthriell, who has been working with Kirk on biosolids issues. We're so lucky to be recruiting younger ExCom members.

Our great fundraising Chair, Audrey Dannenberg, worked with the local running shop to help us earn \$800 as part of a campaign to recycle/reuse hiking boots and running shoes.

Early this summer, we participated at KIdVention, a great hands-on science fair for children. Our volunteers did a marathon tabling event at TomTom Festival and UVA's EcoFair, recruiting some new members and a prospective ExCom member.



DONNA SHAUNESEY

Our two summer interns—both UVA students—have been tabling twice a week at public events. Their efforts helped us recruit and add people to our weekly email about environmental events. Popular at the table is our list of great places to spend time outdoors.



DONNA SHAUNESEY

We hosted a fun caterpillar walk at a local natural area with our favorite caterpillar expert, Courtney McLaughlin. Courtney is a former teacher who can ID all kinds of bugs and generate enthusiasm for various larva.

Earth Flags Galore

Our group was very busy awarding Earth Flags this summer! We're making a conscious effort to reach out to people and groups in the surrounding communities, since—historically—we tended to focus on Charlottesville and Albemarle Counties. The following individuals and groups were recognized for their impact(s) on the environment.



Charlottesville Litterpickers

We awarded a flag to the Charlottesville Litterpickers for picking up nearly 700 bags of trash in just one year across Charlottesville and Albemarle Counties. This wonderful group recruits lots of adults and kids for their pick-up days. Local news station WHSV coverage helped spread the word about their environmental impact. Founder Matthew Dick says he's grateful for the award, but his priority is always making the community look better.



Fluvanna Master Gardeners

We recognized the Fluvanna Master Gardeners for their outstanding contributions on multiple fronts—from creating an expansive native plant garden in the county park and planting native trees throughout the area, to educating schoolchildren about the wonders of nature. We got great coverage in the local news for presenting this award.

PG | FROM THE PIEDMONT GROUP

Louisa County Data Centers

More than two years ago, AWS (Amazon Web Services) and the Louisa County Board of Supervisors agreed to allow construction of two data centers in the newly created Technical Overlay District. The Northeast Creek Reservoir Data Center (the larger of the two) was approved by the Board for construction, and the North Anna Data Center is currently being built.

Our Conservation Chair has spoken at county board meetings to express concerns over environmental impacts, water usage and increased demand for electricity. We sent a formal letter to the Board of Supervisors asking them to pressure AWS to provide renewable energy sources to power these data centers. The Board seems uninterested in discouraging the corporate giant from building data centers, preferring instead to collect tax revenue as a source of County funding.

We held a well-attended public meeting in March to present information on data centers. Speakers included Rob McGinnis from the Piedmont Environmental Council, Ann Bennett and Paige Wesselink.

Recently, AWS proposed building another data center in Louisa County. Local residents do not support the presence of another data center due to concerns over water usage and preserving the rural nature of the county. The company later withdrew their plans. We continue to monitor developments.

Biosolids renewal applications in Albemarle County

In early 2025, Synagro submitted an application to DEQ for a "reissue" permit. If approved the permit will allow the company to spread biosolids (sewage sludge) on properties belonging to eight different owners in Albemarle County. The Total Area includes 5,770 acres in Albemarle County. This practice represents a threat to nearby water resources and could introduce pollutants such as heavy metals to the local environment.

The renewal applications are subject to review and approval by DEQ. Our Conservation Chair is reviewing the applications and gathering input for submission to DEQ. Currently, we are waiting for DEQ to officially open the public comment period for the applications. When that happens, we will provide assistance in sending requests to DEQ for a public comment meeting.

Kirk Bowers, Conservation Chair



DONNA SHAUNESEY

Blue Ridge Life Magazine and The Nelson County Times published stories about the Earth Flag we awarded to Susan McSwain, a one-woman leader and outstanding environmentalist in Nelson County.



Preservation of Ragged Mountain Natural Area

After years of legal disputes over jurisdictional authority, the courts ruled that Albemarle County has jurisdiction over Ragged Mountain natural area. Part of the dispute was over bicycle use on existing trails at Ragged Mountain.

Initially, the County did not support bike use of trails. After the court decision, County Supervisors reversed their original position, and were reconsidering allowing bike use after lobbying from a local bike club.

In February, our group held a well-attended public meeting to present our position. We lobbied County supervisors to continue the policy of bike use restrictions on existing trails and successfully persuaded the County Board to continue prohibiting the use of bicycles at Ragged Mountain.

Virginia Chapter Email Lists

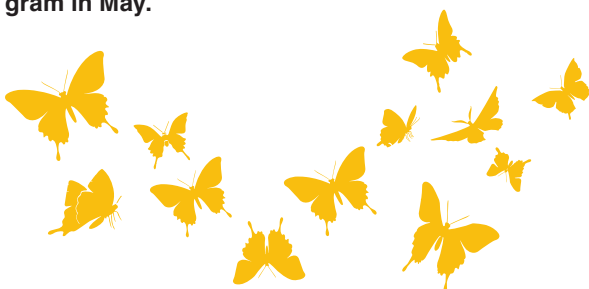
Virginia Climate Movement: Join this list of people active in the Virginia climate movement to receive and send emails on climate-related news, events, webinars and actions going on across the state. Bi-weekly call on Thursdays at 10am. ☎ Contact **Mary-Stuart Torbeck** at mary-stuart.torbeck@sierraclub.org

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Equity, Inclusion and Environmental Justice: Join this list to work towards achieving environmental justice in Virginia. Our purpose is to identify environmental justice communities across the state, to develop EJ leadership, to provide room at the table for these organizations in statewide policy discussions and to share resources. This space is also for asking questions, voicing concerns and sharing ideas as we move forward in our work to create a more equitable environment and chapter. Contact **Robin Van Tine**, EJ Chair at 8greatblue@gmail.com ☎

Richmond: Join this list to get updates about actions, events and ways to get involved in the Richmond metropolitan area. Contact **Tim Cywinski** at tim.cywinski@sierraclub.org or click [here](#).



Fort Monroe National Monument Supervisor Jaci Wells, YRG Chair Tyla Matteson, and Head Ranger Aaron Firth at the Butterflies and Pollinators program in May.



Sierra Club YRG member and presenter Lori Cash (left), and YRG member Katy Marchello

YRG | YORK RIVER GROUP

2025 Programs

The YRG (York River Group) began 2025 with the famous “Bob and Connor” show. Chapter Legislative Director Bob Shippee and Connor Kish, Chapter Director, talked about our priority bills in the General Assembly. Legislators are evaluated on clean energy legislation and other categories for a Sierra Club “scorecard” (see link at the top of facing page.)

Weather and Climate

In March, we hosted local meteorologist Sean Sublette who gave a presentation about the difference between weather and climate. We are only beginning to feel the effects of cuts to the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and NWS (National Weather Service.)

In April, Lynn Godfrey presented “The Impact of Environmental Protection Rollbacks on Vulnerable Communities.” Lynn served as the Chapter’s Just Transition Program Manager and Pipeline Organizer for the Stop the Pipelines campaign.

Butterflies and Pollinators

Our May program was held in person at our “old” meeting spot at Sandy Bottom Nature Park. The theme was Butterflies and Pollinators, presented by nature photographer and active member Lori Cash. The program attracted butterfly enthusiasts from the Hampton Roads area who shared a delicious butterfly cake after the presentation. The event was also a happy reunion with leadership at Fort Monroe—the National Monument Supervisor, Head Ranger, and the new CEO for Fort Monroe Authority.



Maintaining and enhancing Fort Monroe’s natural beauty has been a priority of the YRG for more than 15 years.

Climate Solutions

Our Fall Programs began with the Sixth Annual Virginia Peninsula Climate Solutions Roundtable on September 17th, where localities presented recent initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases.

The Fourth Annual Southside Hampton Roads Climate Solutions Roundtable is a joint program with the Coastal Virginia Group. Participants learn from what their neighbors are doing, and are currently working together on their first Climate Action Plan—led by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission.

Microplastics and PFAs

Our upcoming program in November features speaker Dr. Rob Hale. A scientist and professor at VIMS, Dr. Hale will give a presentation on microplastics and PFAs (the forever chemicals that persist in the environment and in our bodies). Fiber can help get rid of the chemicals before they hit our bloodstream, so eat your fruits and veggies!

Current Initiatives

The YRG is currently working on several initiatives:

- 🌲 Stopping the unpopular huge cruise ships from polluting the York River;
- 🌲 Opposing planned gas plants in Virginia;
- 🌲 Addressing potential harm from interbasin transfer of water in Caroline County from the Rappahannock to the Mattaponi River; and
- 🌲 Restricting the over-harvesting of menhaden which is causing a crash in the osprey population.

Tyla Matteson, York River Group Chair

November Elections

There are critical elections in Virginia this November. The Sierra Club has endorsed **Abigail Spanberger** for Governor, **Ghazala Hashmi** for Lt. Governor, and **Jay Jones** for Attorney General.

In addition, there is an excellent slate of candidates running for seats in the Virginia House of Delegates Sierra Club has endorsed. Below, you'll find a table where you can match your district number to see the Sierra Club's endorsed candidate in your House race.

You can also view the candidates here:

www.sierraclub.org/virginia/endorsements

District Number	Endorsed Candidate	Geographic Area
HD 1	Patrick Hope	Arlington
HD 2	Adele McClure	Arlington
HD 3	Alfonso Lopez	Arlington, Alexandria
HD 4	Charniele Herring	Alexandria, Fairfax
HD 5	Elizabeth Bennett-Parker	Alexandria
HD 6	Rip Sullivan	Fairfax (part)
HD 7	Karen Keys-Gamarra	Fairfax (part)
HD 8	Irene Shin	Fairfax (part)
HD 9	Karrie Delaney	Fairfax (part)
HD 10	Dan Helmer	Fairfax (part)
HD 11	David Bulova	Fairfax (part)
HD 12	Holly Seibold	Fairfax (part)
HD 13	Marcus Simon	Fairfax, Falls Church
HD 14	Vivian Watts	Fairfax (part)
HD 15	Laura Jane Cohen	Fairfax (part)
HD 16	Paul Krizek	Fairfax (part)
HD 17	Mark Sickles	Fairfax (part)
HD 18	Kathy Tran	Fairfax (part)
HD 19	Rozia Henson	Prince William, Fairfax
HD 20	Michelle Maldonado	Manassas, Manassas Park, Prince William
HD 21	Joshua Thomas	Prince William (part)
HD 22	Elizabeth Guzman	Prince William (part)
HD 23	Candi King	Prince William, Stafford
HD 25	Briana Sewell	Prince William (part)
HD 26	JJ Singh	Loudoun (part)
HD 27	Atoosa Reaser	Loudoun (part)
HD 28	David Reid	Loudoun (part)
HD 29	Marty Martinez	Loudoun (part)
HD 30	John McAuliff	Loudoun, Fauquier
HD 34	Andrew Payton	Harrisonburg, Rockingham
HD 38	Sam Rasoul	Roanoke
HD 41	Lily Franklin	Montgomery, Roanoke County
HD 52	Rise Hayes	Lynchburg, Campbell
HD 54	Katrina Callsen	Charlottesville

2025 Legislative Scorecard

Each General Assembly session, the Chapter Legislative Committee takes positions on bills that affect our environment. Afterwards, the Committee reviews how lawmakers voted on our most important bills. Please visit the link below to view resulting "scorecard." Review how your legislator performed this year and reach out to thank them or urge them to improve, as you see fit. Special thanks to our three 2025 Legislative Leaders: Sen. Creigh Deeds, Sen. Ghazala Hashmi and Del. Candi Mundon King, and Honorable Mention Del. Rip Sullivan!

<https://img.vasierra.club/2025ScorecardFinal.pdf>

Bob Shippee, Legislative Chair

District Number	Endorsed Candidate	Geographic Area
HD 55	Amy Laufer	Albemarle, Louisa, Nelson, Fluvanna
HD 57	May Nivar	Henrico, Goochland
HD 58	Rodney Willett	Henrico
HD 59	Scott Konopasek	Hanover, Louisa, Henrico
HD 64	Stacey Carroll	Stafford
HD 65	Joshua Cole	Stafford, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania
HD 66	Nicole Cole	Spotsylvania, Caroline
HD 69	Mark Downey	York, James City, Gloucester, Newport News
HD 70	Shelly Simonds	Newport News
HD 71	Jessica Anderson	James City, Williamsburg, New Kent
HD 73	Leslie Mehta	Chesterfield
HD 75	Lindsey Dougherty	Chesterfield, Prince George, Hopewell
HD 76	Debra Gardner	Chesterfield
HD 77	Michael Jones	Richmond, Chesterfield
HD 78	Betsy Carr	Richmond
HD 79	Rae Cousins	Richmond
HD 81	Delores McQuinn	Henrico, Chesterfield, Charles City
HD 82	Kimberly Pope Adams	Petersburg, Prince George, Dinwiddie, Surry
HD 84	Nadarius Clark	Suffolk, Isle of Wight, Franklin, Chesapeake
HD 85	Cia Price	Newport News
HD 86	Virgil Thornton	Hampton, York, Poquoson
HD 87	Jeion Ward	Hampton
HD 88	Don Scott	Portsmouth
HD 91	Cliff Hayes	Chesapeake, Portsmouth
HD 92	Bonita Anthony	Norfolk, Chesapeake
HD 93	Jackie Glass	Norfolk
HD 94	Phil Hernandez	Norfolk
HD 95	Alex Askeew	Virginia Beach, Norfolk
HD 96	Kelly Convirs-Fowler	Virginia Beach
HD 97	Michael Feggans	Virginia Beach

The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club is over 20,000 members strong. We are your friends and neighbors working to build healthy, livable communities and to conserve and protect our climate and environment. The Virginia Chapter is part of the national Sierra Club, the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

Information about our staff, executive committee and environmental action chairs can be found on the Virginia Chapter website under "About."

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Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

100 W. Franklin St, Mezzanine
Richmond, Virginia 23220

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RG | RAPPAHANNOCK GROUP



Meet surprise "Microplastics in Humans" program guest Toxicina, living proof that plastic looks better in landfills than in your bloodstream.

Microplastics in Humans

We kicked off our fall programs with "Microplastics in Humans," featuring John Tippet, adjunct professor at UMW and former 20-year executive director of Friends of the Rappahannock. Tippet spoke of the presence of microplastics in every organ and system in the human body. The greatest source of microplastics is approximately 35%-40% from textiles—with fleece as the major culprit—and 20%-30% from tires. Simple solutions for mitigating the effects of microplastics include using a microfilter for laundry effluent, using a HEPA filter for indoor dust/fibers, and to dust and vacuum often.

Partnerships

We are partnering with the Environmental & Climate Justice Committee of the Fredericksburg NAACP in tandem with the Fredericksburg Fire Department Administration. Three community meetings are scheduled for October to share information on evacuation plans, pipeline and CSX updates, and hazardous tank farm sites, and activities which affect three communities along rail lines in Fredericksburg.

National SUN day

The RG participated in National SUN day in September with a solar information program and Open House at the Fredericksburg Food Co-op.

Gordon's Flank Attack Trail Hike

Our group hiked the two-mile Gordon's Flank Attack Trail in early September. The marked trail chronicles the story of the "Battle of The Wilderness" in 1864. Fourteen Sierra Club members and guests hiked the trail on a cool Saturday morning and shared a delicious meal afterwards at Wilderness Run Winery.

Future Outings

RG Outings are free and open to the public. If you'd like updates about future adventures, send an email to Geoff Johnson at geoffwithrgsc@gmail.com. We'd love for you to join us!

by Paula Chow and Geoff Johnson