

Nurturing a Micro Rain Garden System at Home

Alyse Cruickshank Rzodkiewicz

As a former teacher and mother of two young girls, I've been exploring ways to bring hands-on environmental learning into our lives. Around our yard, we've started creating a series of small native plant and pollinator gardens—a "micro-rain-pollinator-garden system" designed not only to support bees, butterflies, and birds, but also to help my toddlers learn about planting, gardening, and the natural world from our backyard.

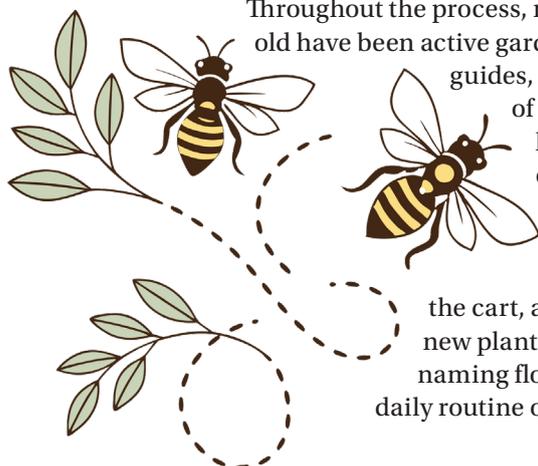
Each micro garden serves a purpose: some are designed for pollinators that love full sun, while others help absorb rainwater and filter runoff along slopes. Through this project, we're learning about how Virginia native plants—like Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Smooth Blue Asters (*Symphotrichum laeve*), Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), and Joe-Pye Weed (*Eutrochium fistulosum*)—play an essential role in restoring ecosystems, preventing erosion, and creating a year-round habitat for pollinators and birds.

Garden as a Living Canvas

Our deeper dive into garden design began after I took the gardening class "Designing for the Experience: Composition in Practice" class with Preston Montague. Montague, who had a background in classical art, spoke about the garden as a living canvas—how its shapes, textures, and movement interact with the existing landscape. That idea really resonated with me. Instead of designing a single garden, we're shaping the entire yard into connected living spaces that use the natural slopes, drainage patterns, and light conditions around our home.

Pollinators and Hungry Gardeners

In one sunny brick circle, we've planted pollinator favorites that thrive in dry soil and full light. Along a small hillside, we're creating a second garden around an old cement grill—transforming it into a rustic centerpiece where butterflies and bees will gather. At the bottom of the slope, we added two rose bushes and one blackberry bush (which will certainly be enjoyed by both pollinators and hungry gardeners). Outside our living room window, we planted a young Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)—a native tree whose spring blossoms will attract early pollinators and provide flowers we can enjoy from inside.



Throughout the process, my three-year-old and one-year-old have been active gardeners: flipping through flower guides, sorting and identifying pictures of native flowers, choosing plant locations, and learning the basics of gardening and planting. When we visited Snow's Garden Center in Charlottesville, they helped choose our first plants, load up the cart, and gently pat soil around each new plant. Every step—digging, watering, naming flowers—has become part of our daily routine of learning and exploring together.

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE →

It Ain't Over Till It's Over



A sign from 'Friends of Chesterfield' showing opposition to the proposed Chesterfield gas plant.

Fight Against Chesterfield Gas Plant Continues

Glen Besa

December was a bad month for Chesterfield Gas Plant fighters. First, the SCC (State Corporation Commission) accepted Dominion Energy's contention that this new gas plant is needed to meet the electricity demands of explosive data center growth despite convincing evidence that demands could be met with solar, wind and battery storage. Just before Christmas, VA DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) issued the air pollution permit for the project.

The Chesterfield Gas Plant is the first of eight or more plants Dominion proposes to build despite a state law, the VCEA (Virginia Clean Economy Act), that calls for Dominion to retire its entire fossil fleet by 2045. The ruling by the SCC effectively guts this provision of the VCEA as we go into the 2026 General Assembly session. Dominion's army of lobbyists and the tech industry bros are gearing up to put the SCC's decision into statutory law.

The Good News...

The SELC (Southern Environmental Law Center) filed a petition for reconsideration with the SCC which paused its permit for the gas plant. While the SCC seems focused on just one narrow aspect of the case that would *not* reverse the permit, it nonetheless prevents Dominion from starting construction for now.

Meanwhile, attorneys in the case are contemplating possible appeals of both the SCC and DEQ

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 →



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](#).

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Judy Gayer
Chapter Chair

Chapter Chair Judy Gayer

We just enjoyed an amazing electoral victory in Virginia. Now is the time to address the dual affordability and sustainability crisis embodied in Dominion, Virginia's monopoly utility.

As a reminder, the following are just a few of the many "gifts" Dominion has delivered to consumers—and to Virginia's air and environment—in recent years:

1. Billions of dollars of overcharges, of which it has reimbursed only a minuscule portion;
2. Despite item #1 above, higher monthly utility bills for 2026-27, even though Virginians already pay some of the highest electricity bills in the country;
3. An Integrated Resource Plan that reflects a reversal of Dominion's prior (legislatively required) environmental commitments. In addition to relying predominantly on fossil fuels to meet future energy needs, Dominion is proposing to build additional fossil fuel infrastructure, committing consumers to long-term reliance on fossil fuels subject to price volatility instead of lower-cost, environmentally friendly renewable resources.;
4. Interconnection charges for use of Dominion's monopoly platform that are designed to drive solar providers out of business, reducing competition and increasing pollution; and
5. Environmentally heedless behavior, including wanton clear-cutting of trees on the W&OD trail in Northern Virginia

You can probably add to this list—there are so many gifts to choose from!

The new Administration in Richmond offers a fresh opportunity to move forward and make meaningful progress on our energy goals.

Attempts to rein in Dominion's bad behavior have largely failed. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- 🌲 Dominion Energy ("Dominion") is the parent of Virginia's monopoly utility, Dominion Energy Virginia (the "Utility"). Dominion is a shareholder-owned company whose mission is to make profits for its owners. By way of contrast, the Utility is legally obligated to provide services to its customers at reasonable rates. As a shareholder-owned company, Dominion naturally favors profit at the expense of consumers, subject only to whatever express limitations are placed on it by statute and regulation.
- 🌲 Despite the critical role regulation plays to ensure fulfillment of the Utility's mission, there are no restrictions on Dominion's or its PAC's right to donate money to or lobby legislators. Moreover, Virginia is one of only a few states that places no limits on individual and corporate contributions. According to Clean Virginia, in the last election cycle, Dominion spent over \$8.3 million, making it one of the largest contributors to the election. Dominion spent \$3 million in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the election of an Attorney General who refused to accept contributions that might influence his role in regulating utility costs and policing environmental compliance.
- 🌲 Dominion's cost recovery structure provides a set rate of return (currently 9.8%) on items included in its "base rate," including its cost of new and expanded infrastructure, regardless of whether the construction in



Funding EV Charging at a Multi-Unit Condo Building: Dispatch No. 2 from the Trenches by Don Burke

This article builds upon our initial discussion (*Virginia Sierran*, Summer 2025) regarding the crucial role a condominium’s board of directors plays in establishing a strategic framework for electric vehicle (EV) charging. As the endeavor proceeds through its various phases, the board will inevitably confront a series of complex questions and trade-offs that it must navigate. In this article, we’ll look at funding.

A primary concern for all stakeholders will be the financing of the project. Every EV charging initiative involves two broad categories of costs. The first encompasses “make-ready” costs, which cover all expenses associated with the initial installation and build-out. These may include, but are not limited to, electrical surveys, the installation of new electrical panels, and the purchase and installation of the chargers. The second category comprises monthly operating costs, which include expenses such as software platform fees, transaction fees, electricity consumption, and ongoing maintenance. Boards have four primary funding options, and a combination of these is often the most practical approach:

Option 1: Funding from Condominium Fees and Reserves

This option involves funding the entire project through existing condominium fees and reserves, treating EV charging as any other Common Element amenity. For example, associations often have amenities like fitness centers, swimming pools, and community rooms that are accessible to all residents.

On the operating side of the equation, the Association may choose to fund the monthly software fees and maintenance as a Common Element expense, only seeking to recover funds for the electricity and transaction costs because, like other amenities, EV charging enhances property value for individual units, whether the resident owns an EV or not. EV charging makes the association more appealing to prospective owners or renters, particularly to those who own or desire to own an EV. The demographic of current or potential EV owners continues to expand significantly.

Option 2: Requiring Existing EV Owners to Fund the Project

In this scenario, the community decides against communal funding, requiring existing EV owners to bear the full financial burden. While this approach may initially seem appealing to some members of the community, it presents numerous complications and inherent unfairness. More significantly, it proves unwieldy to manage both presently and in the future. Difficult

Chesterfield Gas Plants (continued from page 1)

decisions to the courts, and litigation challenging the zoning for the gas plant is on appeal to the Virginia Court of Appeals.

We continue to fight on at the state agencies, in the courts, and in the General Assembly. Be sure to sign up for one of the many lobby days this session. Most importantly, let your state legislators know you support the VA Clean Economy and the RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) and oppose any weakening of this critical climate legislation. #ActionClimate

Glen Besa



JEN LAMHORNE

Community members gather for the Chesterfield People’s Hearing

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:

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The editor welcomes editorial contributions, photographs and artwork. 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.



Meet Corrina Beall: Leading Our Legislative Push into 2026

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is thrilled to welcome back Corrina Beall as our Legislative & Political Director. Corrina brings deep experience at the General Assembly, where she previously led the Chapter's government relations and political strategy through nine legislative sessions. In 2020, she played a key role in negotiating and passing the landmark Virginia Clean Economy Act—the state's first Renewable Portfolio Standard and one of the most significant climate victories in Virginia history.

After that historic achievement, Corrina stepped away from her career to raise her son. Now, five years later, she returns at a pivotal moment. Following historic wins at the ballot box, Democrats will take control of both the General Assembly and the Governor's mansion in January, opening the door to new opportunities for meaningful climate and environmental progress. With consequential decisions ahead on the state budget, data center expansion, gas plant proposals, and Virginia's long-term path to 100% clean energy, Corrina is ready to help chart the Commonwealth's next chapter.

Looking ahead to the 2026 General Assembly Session, Corrina is eager to collaborate with lawmakers, partners, and grassroots advocates to advance legislation that accelerates Virginia's clean-energy transition, protects communities from pollution, and ensures the Commonwealth stays on track to meet its climate commitments.

Please join us in welcoming Corrina back to the Sierra Club team—we're delighted to have her leadership as we gear up for 2026.

United Government Could Mean Big Wins for the Environment During 2026 Legislative Session

Corrina Beall

Big topics will be tackled during the 2026 Session, including the affordability crisis forced on us by explosive data center growth. With a new administration and a wave of newly elected leaders taking office, Virginia has an unprecedented opportunity to advance bold climate policy. The decisions made this legislative session will shape our communities for decades to come.

Governor Spanberger's Agenda

Before the holidays, the Governor stood with Senate and House leadership at a press conference to announce a unified agenda for consolidated government. A full third of the policies announced as part of the 'Affordable Virginia Agenda' package are energy-focused initiatives, and include many of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter's priorities.

Governor Spanberger's energy agenda includes battery storage, balcony (or plug-in) solar, optimizing the grid to avoid building unnecessary and expensive projects, energy efficiency, weatherization, and utility rate reform. Several of these initiatives are tied to bills that were passed by the legislature but vetoed in 2025 by Governor Youngkin; others will be new bill concepts. All will receive the support of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

Data Centers

Data centers are likely to take center stage this legislative session. Forcing the issue is

increasing grassroots opposition to not only the energy, water, and air quality impacts, but the skyrocketing electricity bills caused by unchecked growth. A single AI data center campus can consume a large city's amount of electricity, forcing utilities to build new power plants, transmission lines, and substations at an unprecedented pace. Those costs are being passed on to everyday Virginians through ever-increasing electric bills. Dominion estimates that our residential electric bills will double over the next decade. Governor Spanberger has promised to make data centers "pay their fair share." How that happens may be decided over the next two months.



Agrivoltaics

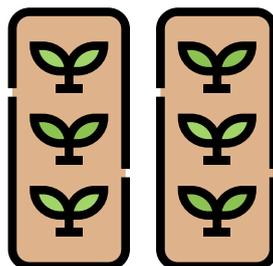
Virginia farmers are in trouble. Climate change, unstable weather patterns, rising costs and market volatility—including tariffs—all stress family farms. Many farm households run primarily on off-farm income. It's no surprise that the number of Virginia family farms has been steadily decreasing. Agrivoltaics (agriculture plus photovoltaics) can help.

Agrivoltaics is the practice of agricultural production and solar energy generation co-existing on the same land. This can diversify farm income and save farmland all while fighting climate change.

Several bills will be introduced during the 2026 legislative session that make it easier for farmers to go solar.

Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)

Virginia's mandatory Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), created under the Virginia Clean Economy Act in 2020, requires the Commonwealth's largest electric utilities to steadily increase clean, renewable electricity and reach 100% renewable energy—Dominion Energy Virginia by 2045 and Appalachian Power by 2050. Strengthening the RPS is one of the most practical tools the General Assembly has to protect families from fossil-fuel price spikes, lock



in lower-cost new generation, and keep Virginia competitive as electricity demand grows.

Make Polluters Pay with RGGI

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) is a common-sense approach to reducing climate pollution in Virginia. It sets limits on pollution from large power plants, requires polluters to pay for the pollution they create, and reinvests that money—by law—back into Virginia communities to lower energy costs, improve housing, and strengthen climate resilience.



Virginia joined RGGI in 2021, but was illegally pulled out by Governor Youngkin. Before Governor Youngkin pulled the plug, Virginia participated in 12 RGGI auctions, resulting in \$730M for Virginia. That cash was split evenly between the Community Flood Preparedness Fund and the Low-Income Energy Efficiency Program; some funds were diverted to provide relief to flooded communities.

Now under new leadership, we're asking decision-makers to re-join RGGI and bring back major funding for energy efficiency and climate resiliency. RGGI ensures polluters pay—and that the money is reinvested right here in Virginia.

F.A.S.T. Act

Data center growth has sent Virginia's electricity costs soaring, and threatens to cause rolling brown-outs if we don't act. New projects are snarled in permitting traffic jams and red tape. But we have options: our existing infrastructure has 'headroom,' gaps when the grid isn't running at full capacity.

These gaps are a perfect match for flexible electricity generators like solar, wind and battery storage. New legislation introduced this Session would allow the cheapest, fastest and cleanest forms of energy to be added to the grid at these "surplus interconnection service" points. The F.A.S.T. Act (Facilitating Access to Surplus Transmission) will cut through the red tape to get clean energy on our grid FAST.



Act Now!

Join us in Richmond on Tuesday, February 17th for Climate Lobby Day! The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter and Chesapeake Climate Action Network will channel our collective voices into action as we lobby for priority climate legislation. Whether you are new or have lobbied for years, please join us!

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 | 8:00am - 1:30pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 815 E Grace St, Richmond, VA 23219

Register Today! Visit <http://vasierra.club/scvalobbyday26>

Corrina Beall



OCEAN ACTION FUND

Chapter Chair (continued from page 2)

question serves the Commonwealth's best overall interests.

In exchange for the advantages provided to Dominion by its statutory monopoly, it seems logical that Dominion should be prohibited from donating any funds whatsoever to the political campaigns of the elected officials ultimately responsible for its regulation. Past attempts to limit campaign contributions by Dominion have failed due to legislators' reluctance to cede access to the vast amounts of money Dominion throws their way. This doesn't mean we should abandon this as an objective, however.

But suppose we decided to start small. What could be done to at least align the Commonwealth's energy goals with Dominion's incentives as a profit-making corporation?

Potential Solutions

One possibility would be to modify Dominion's cost recovery structure to better align its financial interests with the Commonwealth's sustainability and energy efficiency goals. For example, Dominion could retain its current 9.8% return on investments in solar, wind and energy efficiency (such as batteries and distributed energy resources), providing it with the incentive to accelerate its investment in these much-needed resources.



At the same time, its recovery on fossil fuel-related infrastructure could be limited to a reasonable, but significantly lower, profit margin (say, 3-4%) in recognition of the lower net value of these investments to Virginia's energy future, when externalities such as pollution are taken into account. These market-based incentives would encourage Dominion to focus its efforts on the kinds of infrastructure and efficiencies we need to address Virginia's energy needs while reducing costs and price volatility for consumers and moving us toward achieving our sustainability goals.

We have an opportunity with this new Administration in Richmond to re-start making real progress on our energy goals. It is likely too late to move this proposal forward in 2026 under the very constrained Virginia legislative calendar, but we can and should start planting the seeds for the following year.

Judy Gayer

FALLS OF THE JAMES GROUP



SHAVON PEACOCK

Martin Sang, Sheri Shannon, and Dr. Todd Lookingbill at the FOJG program, *Go With the Flow*.

Monthly Programs

October

Richmond City Commissions: Their Work and How You Can Help, with speakers **Trieste Lockwood**, Vice Chair of the Public Utilities and Services Commission, and **Steve Marzolf**, Chair of the Clean City Commission.

November

Go With the Flow: Mapping Urban Flooding Through Community Science, with UR (University of Richmond) Professor **Dr. Todd Lookingbill**, **Sheri Shannon** (FOJG ExCom member and Co-Founder of Southside ReLeaf), and UR student **Martin Sang**. View their PowerPoint presentation here: [FOJG Go With the Flow](#)

December FOJG Potluck Dinner

Three Green Giant Awards were presented at our FOJG Potluck Dinner in December, celebrating community members and organizations whose work has made a meaningful and lasting impact on environmental conservation.

This year's inspiring honorees were **Rachel James**, Staff Attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center; **Melissa Thomas**, Strategic Community Organizer and Climate Justice Leader with Mothers Out Front; and the **Science Museum of Virginia (SMV)**.

Each awardee was honored for exceptional dedication to environmental stewardship and education, leadership in the natural sciences, and conservation efforts that continue to strengthen and inspire our community. Individual recipients received a certificate and a \$250 award, while SMV was awarded \$500. Read more about these remarkable honorees in the FOJG December 2025 Newsletter.

Falls of the James Group Outings

FOJG leaders **Ralph Grove**, **Doug Couvillion** and **Shavon Peacock** organized seven outings since last August. **Ralph White** gave a talk about the Slave Trade at Ancarrow's Landing in Richmond in September, and we led hikes at Powhatan State Park, Cumberland Marsh Nature Preserve, the James River in Richmond, Shenandoah National Park from Jarman Gap to Turk Mountain, and at the Varina LandLab Conservation Area.



SHAVON PEACOCK

Sierra Club members and supporters with recyclables collected at Ancarrow's Landing.

In September, Sierra Club FOJG members—joined by a few new friends—collected a significant amount of trash and recyclables at Ancarrow's Landing, part of the James River Park. **Josh Stutz**, Executive Director of Friends of the James River, generously provided the volunteers with pickers and bags. The day concluded with an engaging talk by **Ralph White**, former director of the James River Parks, who shared fascinating insights about Ancarrow's Landing and its history in the Slave Trade.



DOUG COUVILLON

Outing Leader Doug Couvillion with Luda, Colleen, Sean, and Gretchen on the 7-mile loop hike along the Buttermilk/North Bank trail in Richmond.

FALLS OF THE JAMES GROUP

Tabling Events

Over the past quarter, FOJG members attended five tabling events, connecting with the community and inspiring more than 150 people to join our FOJG newsletter! These tabling events were held at a Sun Day event, Veggie Fest, Virginia Clean Energy Summit, Spooky Science After Dark at the Science Museum of Virginia and the Plant Native Festival at Dorey Park.

Sierra Club members had a fantastic time tabling at the October Spooky Science After Dark event at the Science Museum of Virginia! Kids and parents eagerly stopped by to explore hands-on, science-themed activities hosted by several local organizations. Our table was buzzing with excitement as we handed out stickers, played flower and bird matching games, and quizzed visitors about local Richmond wildlife—like identifying creepy-crawly tent caterpillars. Kids and families also had a blast posing for photos with our Bigfoot cutout, complete with the playful reminder: ‘Don’t be a Bigfoot! Reduce your Carbon Footprint!’

The Trash/Pollution Witch added to the fun, wielding her trusty litter picker to engage kids in interactive lessons about littering (No!), recycling plastics, glass, and paper (Yes!), and reducing their carbon footprint in everyday life—like remembering to turn off the lights when leaving a room (sometimes...). Visitors were laughing, learning, and actively participating, making environmental education both fun and memorable. By the end of the night, more than two dozen enthusiastic participants had signed up for our newsletter, eager to stay connected and continue taking action for the environment. It was an evening full of smiles, science, and spooky, eco-friendly fun!”



TOP: Back row, (l to r): Energy-Sucking Vampire Aileen Rivera, Trash Witch Shavon Peacock, and Planet Hero Bruce Tarr. Front row: Cowgirl Linda Redmond, Enviro Heroine Eileen Tarr, and Joe Brancoli.

RIGHT: Spooky Science After Dark attendees



SCIENCE MUSEUM OF VIRGINIA

RAPPAHANNOCK GROUP

The RG (Rappahannock Group) continues to offer its monthly outings and programs, drawing enthusiastic attendance—particularly for sessions focused on microplastics and biosolids.

- University of Mary Washington (UMW) Adjunct Professor **John Tippett** presented compelling research during a presentation on microplastics in the human body.
- The presentation ‘Toxic Biosolids Applications on VA Farmlands’ drew strong attendance in the Northern Neck—where much of the local produce in the RG’s membership area is grown—and featured Potomac Riverkeeper’s **Dean Naujoks** and **Mike Lightfoot** of the Virginia Waterman’s Association.

The enthusiastic response led to a second well-attended presentation in Fredericksburg, with Dean joined by **Brent Hunsinger** of Friends of the Rappahannock.

- The RG participated in National SUN day in September with a solar information program and Open House at the Fredericksburg Food Co-op.
- The RG tabled at the Tree Fredericksburg area Fall Native Plant Festival in September.
- The RG continues to challenge the growing data center industry with the ongoing proposals for new data centers covering seven counties and one city in our membership area.

Congratulations

Our fantastic intern **Sarah Balon** graduated from UMW in December.

Paula Chow



Environmental Open House

Join us for our second annual Environmental Open House for Fredericksburg Area environmental nonprofits:

**Wednesday, February 25th
Central Library, Fredericksburg**

This event was very successful last year and several area groups encouraged us to hold it again.

To learn more, contact:
Rappahannockgroupsierraclub@gmail.com.

A Short History of Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings Gary Kosciusko

Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO), an activities section of the Virginia Chapter, has a proud but complicated history and can trace its roots back to the 1960s.

For many decades after the Sierra Club's founding in 1892, the Club remained a distinctly Western organization. It wasn't until 1950 that the Atlantic Chapter was formed by Club members who had moved East to New York City. That Chapter included all the states east of the Mississippi and had just 150 members. Under the leadership of its first Executive Director, David Brower, the Sierra Club pursued a true nationwide expansion during that decade.

The "Washington Area Group" (also known as the "Maryland-D.C. Group") was founded by Dr. Irving Delappe of Bethesda, MD in 1961. By late 1965, it was quite active, with a bi-monthly newsletter and two volunteer officers (Dr. Delappe as Group Chairman and George Alderson as Conservation Chair.) A number of volunteer outings leaders led weekly outings that were advertised in the newsletter. As of January 1967, the Group's membership stood at 500 and the newsletter had been named the *Potomac Sierran*. That same year, the Group's 5-person executive committee was assisted by a treasurer, a newsletter editor, and a "Trips Chairman."

In May 1968, the new Southeast Chapter—consisting of all the coastal states from Delaware south to Florida—split off from the Atlantic Chapter. The *Potomac Sierran* newsletter was renamed the *Mountain Laurel*. The Chapter executive committee had 10 members, one of whom was listed as "Chairman, Trips," who led the Trips Committee that coordinated the scheduling of outings advertised in the *Mountain Laurel* and local newspapers.

In late 1971, the states south of Virginia broke away to form their own chapters and the remaining area was renamed the Potomac Chapter. Though administratively comprised of DE, MD, VA, WV, and DC, most chapter members lived in the Washington, DC metro area and outings were listed as "Washington Area Outings."

Two years later, members in the Richmond area formed the Old Dominion Group, started advertising their own local outings, and subsequently became a separate chapter, later renamed the Virginia Chapter. The Potomac Chapter—now consisting of DE, MD, and DC—and its local outings program continued to retain its Washington, DC-oriented identity under the banner of "Metropolitan Washington Regional Outings Program" or MWROP, and continued publishing its own newsletter from 1975-2012.

By the 1990s, it was unclear to which chapter MWROP belonged, so discussions and meetings ensued that culminated in MWROP's affiliation with the Virginia Chapter. In 2008, MWROP members voted to rename the activity "Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings," not only to affirm its geographical connection, but also to underscore its Sierra Club identity to members of the general public who participate in its outings.

Today, SCPRO is the only multi-jurisdictional entity within the Sierra Club, with outings leaders residing in VA, DC, and MD. Our outings postings in Campfire show up on the Virginia and DC Chapter websites and are also posted on SCPRO's Meetup site. As an activities section of the Virginia Chapter, SCPRO is governed by bylaws, standing rules, and a 7-person executive committee.

From its 1960s roots to its unique multi-jurisdictional role today, SCPRO has navigated decades of organizational change without losing its core identity. By bridging Virginia, Maryland, and DC, the group remains a vital gateway for the public to explore and protect the Potomac region. Today, SCPRO stands as a testament to the enduring power of community-led conservation across state lines.

**Gary Kosciusko, Vice Chair of SCPRO
Chair of SCPRO's History Committee (formed in 2017)**

NEWSLETTER

Washington Area Group of the Atlantic Chapter
Sierra Club
February-March 1966

Chairman, Irv Telappe (365-3075) Programs, Armin Dehr (933-4039)
Conservation, George Alderson (562-9693) •Newsletter Editor, Phoebe Koss (943-2642)

The second series of hikes described below covers the period from February 13 through March 10. Scheduled trips leave from a convenient parking lot near drivers till Share transportation/ costs are handled by the driver who shares the cost with attendance. Reservations are not necessary, and non-members are always welcome. For more information about a trip, call the leader.

Sunday, February 13 C & O CANAL
Leader: Irvs Bray (564-4218)

Moderate-paced hike of 7 miles from Old Angler's Inn down the towpath to Sycamore Island. Bring lunch and water. Meet at 9:00 a.m. on MacClit arr. on MacArthur Blvd. 1 mile west of D.C. Line.

Sunday, February 20 APPALACHIAN TRAIL
Leader: Bill Hart (656-9367)

Hike of 7 miles on Appalachian Trail from Gathland State Park, Md. to White Rocks and return. Spectacular view of valley area. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Wildwood Shopping Center parking area near Esso station, approximately 1 mile from Beltway on Old Georgetown Rd., in direction of Rockville. 3.E.

Sunday, February 27 DIFFICULT RUN
Leader: Irv Delappe (365-3076)

Hike of 7 1/2 miles from Great Falls on Virginia side of Potomac River to Difficult Run and return. Bring lunch and water. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Great Falls, Va. parking area.

Sunday, March 6 CEDARVILLE STATE FOREST
Leader: George Alderson (562-9693)

Hike of 7 1/2 miles in Cedarville State Forest, Md. Gently rolling topography, with highly varied vegetation, including several pine and hardwood forest types. Bring lunch. Meet at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 13 C & O CANAL
Leader: Michael Wright (337--0245)

Hike of 8 miles along the tree-arched towpath from Edwards Ferry down to Seneca. Bring lunch. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Montgomery County Shopping Center off River Road, Md. (Md. 190) 3 1/2 miles west of beltway.

Sunday, March 20 BLUE RIDGE TRAIL
Leader: George Alderson (562-9693)

Hike of about 6 miles on Blue Blaze Trail, Harpers Ferry. Steep climb at beginning of hike will include historic Civil War sites above confluence of Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers. Bring lunch and water.

Sunday, March 20 BLUE RIDGE TRAIL
Leader: George Alderson (562-9693)

A series of hikes along the C & O Canal is planned. The series, represented in this length by two hikes, will cover the full, 184-mile length of the Canal between Georgetown, D.C., and Cumberland, Md.

The February/March 1966 Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter newsletter, which boasted a series of hikes in the region.

NEWSLETTER

Washington Area Group of the Atlantic Chapter
Sierra Club
February-March 1966

February 28, GENERAL MEETING, 8:00 p.m.
Place: Washington Post Hospitality Room 1515 L. St. N.W. Guests welcome

This is a rescheduling of the January 31st meeting which was snowed out. The speaker will be Harry Nees, the new chairman of the Atlantic Chapter, who will come down from New Jersey. The program also includes a showing of the film "Wilderness Alps of the Stehekin." This is one of the most beautiful of the Sierra Club series, and provides timely background for the upcoming hearings on the proposed North Cascades National Park.

Editorial

LOCAL EFFORTS ARE CRITICAL IN CONSERVATION

Members of the Washington Area Group have an enviable opportunity to advance the conservation work of the Sierra Club. Situated in a region where Congress is relatively low, but where intense interest in conservation is high, we have a chance to gain the support of many friends.

Acting as private citizens, we should take advantage of the right to petition Congress. Living in the national capital we can meet with Senators and Congressmen in relatively low, but where intense interest in conservation is high, we have a chance to gain the support of many friends. These efforts are often best carried out by individual citizens speaking wach innself and not primarily as a member of an organization. The Club's function is to coordinate volunteer work, study the issue, and to express the consensus of its members...

Major issues on which our attention should now focus are the proposals for dams in the Grand Canyon, for a transmountain road in Great Smokey Mountain National Park, for a Redwood National Park, and on the complex of decisions pertaining to the North Cascades and Olympic National Park. Local and regional issues also speaking it Elysanct. Basin plans, wilderness proposals for glens at Glen Echo. More voluntary help Group takes part in these deliberations if the Washington Area Group takes part in these deliberations.

In conservation there is work enough for all, and each member may do as little or as much as likes, ranging from leadership of hikes or helping on a telephone committee, to investigation of proposed wilderness areas. Let us know you want to help!

George Alderson

Sierra Club
Atlantic Chapter
2309 T St., N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Reflections on an Environmental Career Path Transition **Ken Sandler**

Those of us who spend a lot of time outdoors are used to observing all the signs of the seasons changing, both prominent and subtle ones. For over 300,000 people who left the federal workforce last year—including many thousands of Virginians—the present moment feels like a massive seasonal shift.

In my case, I left the government after a 35-year career focused on green building, sustainability and clean energy that spanned the Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, White House Council on Environmental Quality and Department of Energy. Though eligible for retirement, I was not mentally ready for it, as I feel deep in my heart how much unfinished work remains. The environment, including the climate, is still under daily attack and, while solutions can be found everywhere, they are too infrequently implemented.



But when one season ends, the next one begins. My mission did not conclude just because I'm no longer working for agencies and offices with mission statements on their homepages. Just maybe, for me and others in the same boat, now is the time when things get super-interesting.

“When winter comes, can spring be far behind?” –Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ode to the West Wind*

I spend perhaps a bit too much time on the career-oriented social media site LinkedIn, finding it fascinating to observe the course of what I call the “federal diaspora”—the dispersion of former feds into new assignments, bringing their environmental skills and knowledge to the private or non-profit sectors or state or local government—or to volunteer activities, where the options are nearly endless.

Personally, I recently joined the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club's Virginia Chapter as well as the leadership team of the Virginia Grassroots Coalition's Climate and Clean Energy Workgroup. Through these positions, I am dedicated to doing all I can in the next few months to help move strong clean energy legislation through the General Assembly.

I have also delved into a range of writing projects, having entered a new world in which I feel liberated from the legal and administrative constraints of what a government employee can safely say. I am completing a peer-reviewed journal article reviewing the history of our work on federal green building, as well as writing the sustainability column for a facility management trade journal and my own newsletters on LinkedIn and Substack.

I hope that others in my shoes do not see their work as done anymore than I do—unless, of course, that is their genuine preference. As climate activist Bill McKibben understood when he launched the group Third Act, aimed at retirees, this is a population with a great deal yet to offer. The season changes, but the path continues ever forward, with many twists and turns, rewards and adventures yet to come.

Ken Sandler



Visualizing a career path transition can be a positive experience.

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.

PIEDMONT GROUP

Glen Besa Lifetime Achievement Award

At the Virginia Chapter's annual Gathering on November 15, we were delighted to see our Conservation Chair—and former Chapter staff member—**Kirk Bowers** receive the Glen Besa Lifetime Achievement Award. A licensed civil engineer, Kirk has spent the past 15 years protecting Virginia's environment and the Piedmont region, providing invaluable, fact-based guidance to local governments on issues ranging from pipelines and floodplain protections to data centers and power plants. We are deeply grateful for his work.



Barb Adams, Kirk Bowers, and Glen Besa



Sierra Club presenters Donna Shaunesey (center) and Scott Ziemer (right) awarded an Earth Flag to RLEP (Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection). RLEP President Rick Kohler (left) accepted the Flag on behalf of the group.

Earth Flag

The Piedmont Group proudly awarded an Earth Flag to the amazing Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection as part of our ongoing efforts to recognize and celebrate unsung environmental champions. For fifty years, this dedicated organization has been a powerful force for good, winning critical battles to protect the natural beauty of their county while also building a strong culture of stewardship. Their wide-ranging volunteer programs monitor water quality, educate landowners, promote dark-sky-compliant lighting, and organize litter cleanups—creating lasting, positive impacts for both the environment and the community they serve.



Agrivoltaics

In October, we hosted a presentation on agrivoltaics featuring several Virginia-based experts. **Ivy Main**—a lawyer and writer focused on energy, climate, and environmental issues—spoke about the benefits of pairing agricultural practices with solar facilities. **Jim Purekal**, Director of Advanced Energy United's legislative portfolio in Virginia, discussed how solar projects can generate energy while also supporting crops, grazing, and native habitats.

Jess Gray, owner of Gray's LAMBscaping, presented on sheep grazing as an agrivoltaic practice and its role in the sheep economy. While the first two speakers provided valuable information and context, the LAMBscaping presentation truly won over hearts and minds—and we even had two sheep farmers in the room.

EV Charging (continued from page 3)

questions arise regarding the ownership of the infrastructure, integration of new EV owners, the departure of existing EV owners, the enforceability of individual financial contributions, the leveraging of incentives when individuals are self-funding, and the incorporation of efficiencies such as jointly owned panel boxes.

Charging solutions that include deeded parking spots will likely include the EV Owner funding some portion of the installation. Still, even here, it is critical to define the demarcation line between owner responsibility and association responsibility. For example, it might be most beneficial to all current and future parties for the association to fund the installation of an electrical panel(s) in or near the deeded parking spots that any owner of a deeded parking spot would use to install charging at their parking spot.

Once the people, consultants, or committee chartered with fleshing out the details of the proposed charging solution put specific architectural ideas forward to the Board, they, in partnership with the board, can create a more nuanced approach to who pays for what.

Option 3: Leveraging Association Reserves with Repayment Policies

This elegant approach utilizes the association’s reserves to cover capital costs, followed by the development of a policy for current and future EV owners to repay some or all of these capital costs over time. The association could integrate a reserves repayment component into the per-kilowatt-hour price, impose an annual fee, levy a one-time registration fee, or implement different strategies for communal charging versus deeded parking spot chargers, or a combination thereof. This approach reflects an association that recognizes the long-term value of EV charging as an amenity for the property while systematically recovering costs and potentially helping fund future expansion. This same approach can be applied to ongoing operational costs. For instance, the association could absorb monthly software platform fees to maintain an attractive per-kilowatt-hour price compared to local alternatives. This benefits the association because with high pricing, EV owners may choose to charge elsewhere despite the inconvenience.

Option 4: Leveraging Local or Electric Utility Incentives

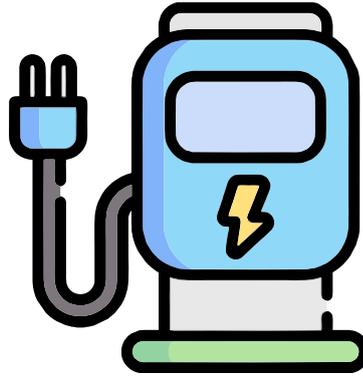
This option incorporates local or electric utility incentives, which can dramatically reduce the capital costs of charger installation. However, these incentives are not a panacea and will likely need to be combined with the options above. Issues to consider with incentives include lock-in periods, requirements for specific charger types or platforms and their associated costs, maintenance obligations, reporting requirements, and build timelines.

How you can find these incentives:

- 🌿 Google EV charging incentives from your city, state, and electricity utility provider
- 🌿 Contact your city’s sustainability department
- 🌿 Contact local EV charging installers and integrators, like BlueWhale
- 🌿 Search non-profit advocacy sites, like Forth’s incentive page
- 🌿 Contact condominiums in your area that have EV charging

How We Did It

Our initial charging infrastructure is communal, operating on a first-come, first-served basis for anyone with the right to use our parking lot. We chose



Virginia Sierran WFA Classes

Most courses offer CPR/AED/choking add-on the Friday evening immediately beforehand; see below.

Winter/Spring WFA Classes

February 21-22	Williamsburg area, VA +CPR
February 21-22	Blacksburg, VA +CPR
February 28-March 1	Charlottesville, VA +CPR
March 21-22	Washington, DC area On-site CAMPING available
March 21-22	Richmond, VA
April 4-5	Charlottesville, VA +CPR
April 11-12	Williamsburg, VA +CPR
April 18-19	Blacksburg, VA +CPR
May 9-10	Charlottesville, VA +CPR
May 30-31	Richmond, VA +CPR
May 30-31	Washington, DC area On-site camping available
June 13-14	Winchester area, VA
June 13-14	Charlottesville, VA area +CPR
September 5-7	Mountaintop Retreat On-site trails; lake with sandy beach, swimming, and free boat use; optional sunset view hike; evening campfires. Free camping nearby, and \$15/bed/night cabins on-site at Mountain Lake Biological Station near Blacksburg, VA

Visit www.sierraclub.org/virginia/events-calendar, select the course you are interested in, and follow the link to RSVP.

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."

Inside Virginia Sierran

Home Micro Rain Gardens	1
Chesterfield Gas Plant Fight	1
Condo Building EV Charging	3
2026 Legislative Session	4
Falls of the James Group	6
Rappahannock Group	7
History of Potomac Region Outings	8
Environmental Career Path	9
Piedmont Group	10
WFA Classes	11

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

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Richmond, Virginia 23220

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Micro Rain Garden (continued from page 1)



The author's children, nurturing the family garden last fall.

This is just the beginning of our family's garden project. We will keep expanding our micro-gardens, tracking how each native plant grows, adapts and supports wildlife. We hope our little yard becomes an example of how small spaces—and small hands—can make a big impact.

Alyse Cruickshank Rzodkiewicz, Charlottesville

EV Charging (continued from previous page)

not to pursue dedicated charging for our deeded parking spots at this time. To achieve community consensus, we implemented a strategy where EV owners repay the Association over time for the initial make-ready work. We funded the make-ready from our reserves, then ensured our per-kWh (per-kilowatt-hour) charging price included a significant margin above operating costs to replenish the reserves over time. The speed of repayment was a lower priority. The Board instead prioritized ensuring the amenity would be attractive to use from a per-kWh price perspective. To further establish a competitive per-kWh price, the Board focused on minimizing monthly operating costs by selecting a vendor offering high-quality, lower-cost chargers and lower monthly platform access fees, necessitating a greater reliance on policy rather than technical controls to manage the charging. Consequently, our EV drivers pay a competitive \$0.25/kWh, which covers operating costs and should repay reserves in approximately ten years. Increased usage over time will further reduce this payback period. We explored one utility incentive program but decided not pursue it due to various concerns outlined above.

Bylaw Consideration

Many governing documents include clauses about when a project requires a full vote of the membership, often as a percentage of the association's annual budget. Given that make-ready work can be expensive, the project may trigger this rule. Review your governing documents to ensure any vote to proceed is undertaken consistent with your legal documents.

Conclusion

Every association will encounter a unique set of constraints and opportunities when funding EV charging implementation. The suggestions above offer ideas for boards to establish a funding structure that will work for their project and their membership. EV charging skeptics want to ensure their condo fees are not paying for others' transportation. EV owners are willing to pay their fair share, and all owners in a condominium benefit from charging being available. Boards have a fiduciary duty to manage the association finances in the best interest of all members, which involves balancing these various interests. This article offers several options to help each board find a solution that best meets the moment.

If you identify other funding strategies or approaches, please contact me at condocharging@gmail.com so others can learn from your successes, and feel free to reach out regarding these or any other EV charging topics.

Don Burke