



Virginia Chapter Annual Report 2017



SIERRA CLUB
VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Message from the Chair & Director

Many voices speaking as one for Virginia's environment

Elections have consequences. The year 2017 will be remembered for many things, all connected back to that truth. It was a year in which hard-won basic protections for our environment and first steps toward addressing climate change came under ferocious assault by corporate polluters aided and abetted by Donald Trump's presidency. However, it was also a year of passionate resistance against corrupt actors and their agendas.

Virginia found itself at the center of national fights over these environmental protections. Yet, public support continued to bolster state-based efforts to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and reject fossil fuels.

Challenges to progress on climate and environmental protection in Virginia are inextricably linked to big polluters like Dominion Energy and their political allies who stand to gain from the extended use of dirty fuels, however unnecessary and harmful. But across the state, Virginians' eyes have been opened, creating demand for divestment from companies involved in extracting fossil fuels and for elected officials to refuse dirty money.

As the state's largest corporate contributor of campaign financing, Dominion Energy, one of the nation's largest fracked-gas companies and parent of Virginia's largest electric utility, has wielded its influence to stymie clean, distributed energy solutions. Yet, two-thirds of Virginia voters support a transition to 100% clean renewable energy.

Our goal has been and is to marshal the climate and clean energy movement and build a coalition that can't be ignored in Richmond or in Washington – no matter how much money Dominion and other polluters spend.

Starting with the People's Climate March in April and concluding the year with a march to the polls in November, the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club locked arms with old friends and worked with new allies to resist the pollution of our environment, heritage and politics, and protect the health of our communities.

Elections do have consequences, and one of the consequences from the shocking results of Trump's election it is that a powerful resistance has been awoken. This time will be remembered as the year our movement realized that we can never afford to take progress for granted. We are re-discovering just how much more impactful our voices can be when speaking together as one.

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter leaders, volunteers and staff contributed immensely to both local and national demonstrations that people advocating for their communities are powerful enough to overcome corporate and political corruption when we work together in common cause.

Thank you for all you do for the environment,



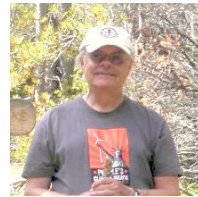
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Kate Addleson
Director

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Community Outreach Coordinator

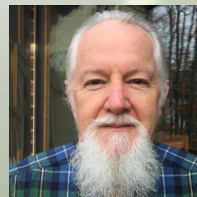
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Clean Energy & Climate Action

In the capitol, in the courts and in our communities, we are speaking out to protect Virginia's land, water and air.

Advocating

Throughout the 2017 General Assembly session, the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club championed Virginians' rights to choose clean energy options like community solar against the lobbyists of Dominion Energy and other big polluters.

We worked to ensure that Gov. McAuliffe did the right thing by vetoing corporate welfare for coal barons. The Virginia Chapter challenged polluter-friendly gerrymandered districts. And, thanks to your support, we also successfully fought for the clean closure of toxic coal ash sites.

Litigating

Over the course of the year in courtrooms across the commonwealth, your Sierra Club Virginia Chapter held Dominion Energy to a higher environmental standard under the law.

In a landmark decision on Sierra Club v. Virginia Electric and Power Company U.S. Federal Judge John A. Gibney Jr. ruled that Dominion offered a "completely ineffective solution" to the storage of toxic coal ash waste, violating the Clean Water Act.

Organizing

At the Dominion Energy shareholder meeting, we stood together as a movement to send the message loud and clear that Virginians demand clean energy choices.

In 2017, the Virginia Chapter also empowered over 1,000 Virginians to tell Dominion executives Tom F. Farrell II and Bob M. Blue to "turn not burn" in support of clean energy like offshore wind and opposition to fossil fuels.

The chapter also collected comments from more than 2,000 Virginians in support of creating the framework for Virginia's first-ever carbon reduction plan.

In April, our organizers and volunteers led recruitment efforts for the People's Climate March in Washington, D.C., a top Sierra Club national priority, turning out more than 2,000 participants. The Virginia Chapter sponsored and filled 29 buses full of activists from across the state, providing sustainable and affordable transportation to the march.



Protecting Air, Water & Lands

The Virginia Chapter worked to fight dirty infrastructure and protect the beautiful places we enjoy.

Air

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter successfully worked with allies to influence the McAuliffe administration's plan to cut carbon pollution, despite the judicial stay on the Clean Power Plan. As a result, the governor then issued Executive Directive 11, requiring the Department of Environmental Quality to develop a state-based, trading-ready plan to cut carbon pollution from power plants. The regulatory framework development process commenced in late 2017. Our team also helped establish the Governor's Advisory Council on Environmental Justice to ensure disproportionately impacted communities have a seat at the table.

Furthermore, in August, the chapter issued a report on "Virginia's Most Toxic Zip Codes" generating a dozen press hits in a variety of media markets across the state, increasing public awareness of dangerous air pollutants and the polluters that are responsible for those emissions.

Water

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter collected hundreds of public comments, generated letters-to-the-editor, held rallies and organized community meetings in opposition to the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines. We coordinated with coalition partners to stand with impacted communities and resist on every front the construction of these dirty and dangerous fracked-gas pipeline projects.

In order to combat the powerful interests promoting these pipelines, we have pooled our resources with local, state and national groups to work along multiple tracks to educate and engage the public and organize grassroots opposition while providing technical expertise throughout permitting processes and pursuing legal actions.

Furthermore, the Chapter mobilized against the scourge of offshore drilling by encouraging the submittal of more than 2,000 comments and helping more than 200 people speak out at Hands Across the Sand events.

Smart Growth

We served as a leading organization in a coalition-based effort advocating for a transit-first approach to improvements planned for the Interstate 66 corridor in northern Virginia.

Legislative Priorities & Elections

The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club recognizes that climate change is the most urgent issue that we face, but it is far from our only urgent challenge.

General Assembly

During the 2017 legislative session, the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Legislative Committee tracked a total of 233 bills, up from 185 in 2016, taking a position and lobbying on 68 bills, down from 105. The lower number of active positions on bills reflected the committee's strategic goal to narrow the legislative focus of the Virginia Chapter on key issues to increase efficacy.

Four major priorities emerged in 2017, which were all successful. We worked to end the coal tax credit, enact a moratorium on the coal ash permitting process, defeat loopholes for oil and gas in protections against fracking and provide a pro-consumer counterpoint to the industry-dominated Rubin Group on solar, specifically on community solar.

Nineteen core legislative volunteers, up from ten in 2016, chaired eleven issue areas to inform a committee of 37 total active volunteer members.

The Sierra Club stood strong as the only environmental organization in Virginia who lobbied on phasing in energy efficient LED municipal lighting, enacting a penalty for plastic bag waste, phasing out regressive agricultural net metering in coop territories, limiting power purchase agreements for renewable energy to institutions of higher learning, enacting true community solar and mandating that school boards make a plan for testing drinking water for lead contamination.

Elections

The 2017 Political Field Program, run by the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Political Action Committee, sought to develop a list of active environmental political supporters, recruit those activists as volunteers to contact voters, and provide volunteer capacity for endorsed campaigns.

Over the course of the election campaign, the Virginia Chapter made more than 13,000 volunteer recruitment calls mobilizing more than 150 individuals to take action on behalf of our target campaigns. The program successfully filled over 760 direct voter contact shifts including nearly 350 "Get Out The Vote" shifts for the Virginia Coordinated Campaign in the final days before the election.

The Virginia Chapter's political field program was successful in its objective of activating a robust coalition of political activists for environmental policy and providing significant additional capacity for our targeted campaigns. In total, the Chapter's political program helped to elect 12 candidates, including Lt. Gov. Fairfax, who took a pledge not to accept any contributions from Dominion.

About Your Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club has a legacy of environmental protection built over more than 30 years.

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter has a core group of dedicated volunteer activists who work both in conjunction with and independently of Sierra Club staff. The chapter has active campaigns on climate change and clean energy and a well-organized structure utilizing volunteers and staff that makes it easy for new activists to get involved. Since 2005, our top conservation priority has been climate change.

The chapter partners with an increasingly broad and diverse range of allies and continues to lead efforts to recruit and engage climate activists, turning out thousands of Virginians to climate and energy-related demonstrations, rallies, public hearings, meetings with elected leaders and building a climate movement that is instrumental in bringing more clean energy online and reducing the commonwealth's greenhouse gas pollution.

Our mission is to:

- Address the climate crisis through a successful transition to a resource-efficient clean energy economy that better serves people and nature, including dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas pollution;
- Secure protections for public lands and waters, promote healthy ecosystems and communities, and fight for clean air and water;
- Expand opportunities for more people to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet by supporting programs and policies that reach across economic, cultural, and community lines to get people outdoors; and
- Build an equitable and inclusive environmental movement that reflects and represents today's American public, and prioritizes important connections between environmental health and social justice.

Invest in the Virginia Chapter

Virginians don't want dirty power. Virginians want clean air, clean water, and freedom to explore and enjoy the beauty of our natural places.

Across the political spectrum, Virginians from all different walks of life support the goal of generating more, if not all, of our electricity from clean renewable resources like solar and wind. And an increasing number of Virginians are also speaking out about how dirty money in politics is corrupting our democracy.

Unfortunately, corporate polluters like Dominion Energy would rather keep us dependent on dirty, fossil-fueled power plants to boost their short-term profits. The choices we make now will either strengthen our economy and provide for healthy, sustainable communities, or continue to degrade the quality of life in our state with harmful pollution that makes people sick, spoils our natural resources and kills wildlife.

By investing in clean energy solutions, the future will be brighter for all who call Virginia home.

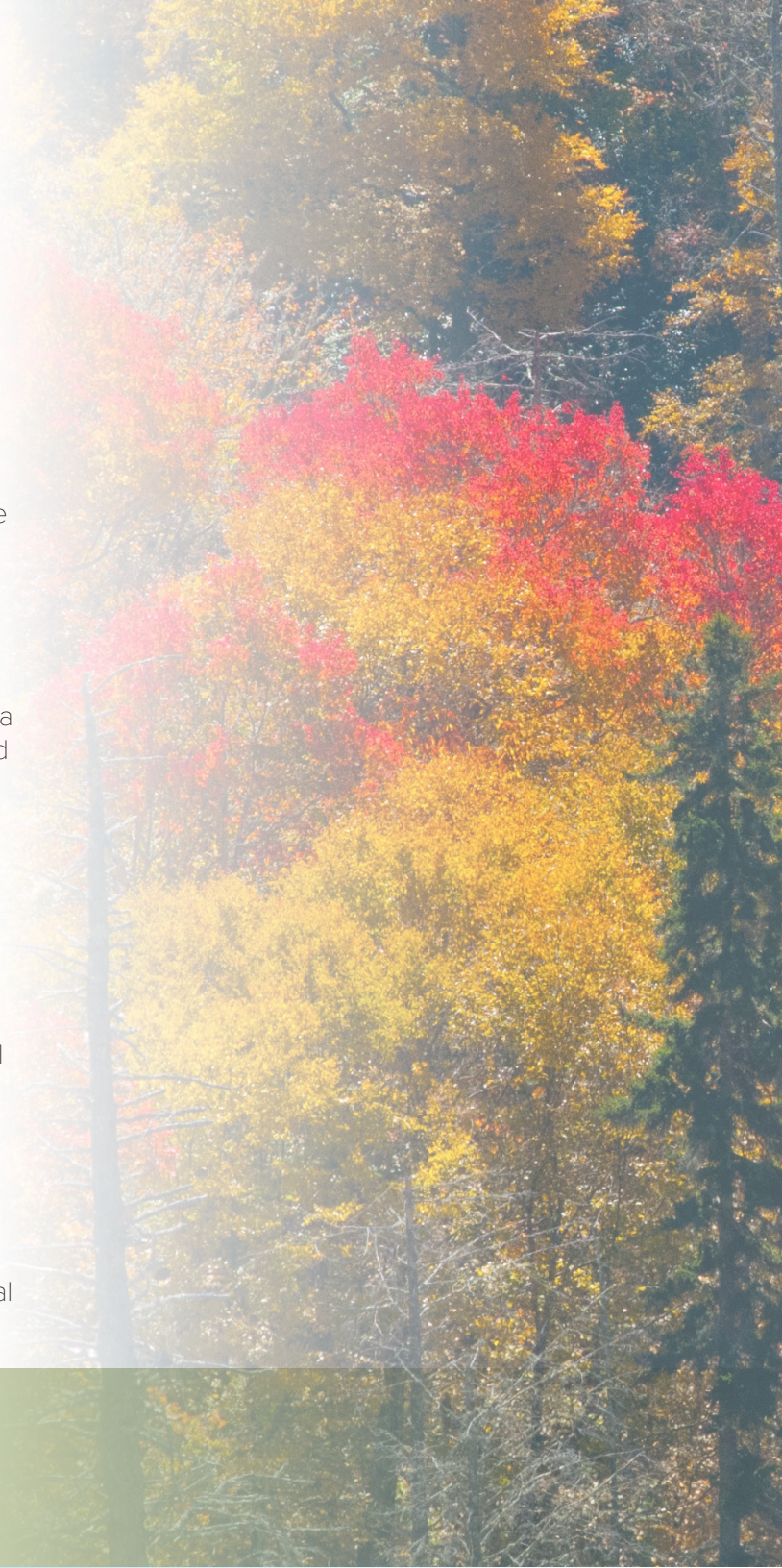
The movement for a clean energy future is growing with each passing day. The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is proud of the work we are doing to help lead this movement, amplifying local voices and serving as a powerful megaphone to our decision-makers.

Our opponents are content to deny climate science and the availability of solutions, putting their short-term profits ahead of our children's health. The big polluters in our state employ an army of lobbyists trying to undermine critical safeguards for Virginia's environment at the state capital, locally, and in Washington.

In response, your Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club has worked hard to support the efforts of our environmental champions and hold polluter-allies accountable for their positions on environmental issues like clean energy, transportation, fracked gas and offshore drilling.

The Sierra Club is uniquely suited to tackle big environmental challenges and make big changes – but we can't do it without support from our donors.

This is vital work for the future of our communities, and we need your financial support to make it happen. Contributing to the Virginia Chapter is a long-term investment to protect the environmental health of our state for future generations. **Give now at <http://vasierra.club/donate>.**



Supporting the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

In Virginia, our supporters scale great heights. In 2017, these donors enabled us to surmount threats to our vision for a healthy, sustainable Virginia with a clean energy economy.

Scaling Old Rag \$100-249

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Old Rag (3268') - Hogback (3474') - Pinnacle (3730') - Stony Man (4010') - Hawksbill (4050') - Whitetop (5518') - Mount Rogers (5728')



Founded by legendary conservationist John Muir in 1892, the Sierra Club is now the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization—with more than 3.5 million members and supporters. Our successes range from protecting millions of acres of wilderness to helping pass the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act. More recently, we've made history by leading the charge to move away from

the dirty fossil fuels that cause climate disruption and toward a thriving clean energy economy.

The Virginia Chapter is part of the national Sierra Club. The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is over 20,000 members strong and growing. We are your friends and neighbors working to build healthy, livable communities, and to conserve and protect our climate and environment.