



**SIERRA
CLUB**

VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Winter 2020-21

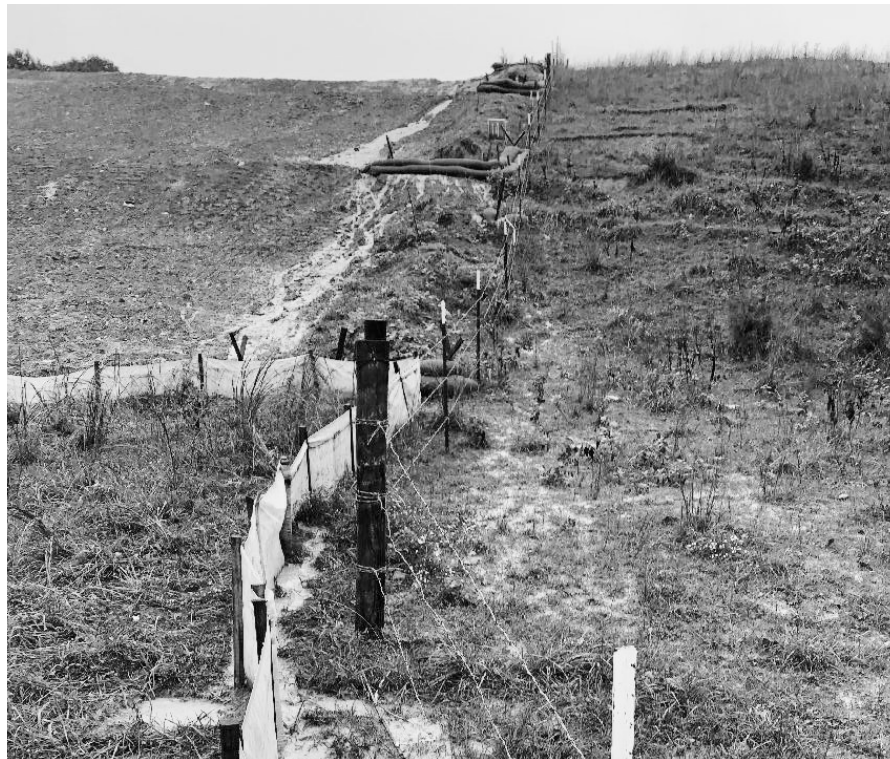
Mountain high, valley low: the roller coaster ride of the Mountain Valley Pipeline

by Lynn Godfrey

Appalachian people in Virginia and West Virginia have been making “good trouble” for six years in their struggle to defeat what is hopefully the last bastion of fossil fuel infrastructure buildout of its magnitude in their states. The Mountain Valley Pipeline is a 303-mile fracked gas pipeline currently under construction in West Virginia and Virginia, with a proposed connector line into North Carolina. Although the initial permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to commence construction of the MVP was not granted until 2017, the people of Virginia and West Virginia got wind of the plan in 2014, and they have been fighting ever since to keep this dangerous fracked gas pipeline from marring the beautiful mountains, streams and trails they have known all their lives. They have been working to avoid the gas explosions that are well known throughout the country and highly likely in a mountainous region; and since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, they have been fighting to keep their community healthy.

There are numerous reasons why the MVP is so dangerous. According to Protect our Water and Heritage Rights—known as POWHR, the principal coalition organized against the MVP, “multiple geological hazards (karst, very steep slopes, poor soils and relatively frequent moderate ground shaking from seismic activity) will likely impair the construction and integrity of a gas pipeline of this size and the topography, soils and water systems through which it is buried.”

There are the challenges of building a large gas pipeline in karst regions, where much of the pipeline route is, and the resulting risk of water contamination; there are the ever-present dangers of an explosion, further increased by the geological condi-



A construction site for the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Giles County, Virginia (photo courtesy of Mountain Valley Watch).

tions of the pipeline route; there is the threat to endangered species; and, since the pandemic, there is the danger of out-of-state workers invading local communities without proper COVID-19 mitigating plans being presented to the Virginia Department of Health.

The grassroots response to these threats has been enormous. There is the coalition comprised of organizers from Virginia and West Virginia represented by POWHR; there are also organizations such as Preserve Bent Mountain, Preserve Craig, Preserve Floyd, Preserve Giles County, etc., plus the Greenbrier River Watershed Association and others; there are the environmental organizations, such as Sierra Club, Chesapeake Climate Action Network and Appalachia Voices; there are partnerships with subject-matter experts, including engineers, geologists, hydrologists and others; and there are the Yellow Finch Lane Tree Sitters. The Tree Sitters are the movement’s stalwarts who have presented their bodies as

a living testimony to their opposition to this pipeline, continuously sitting 50 feet up in the trees on Yellow Finch Lane in Montgomery County, Virginia, for over 800 days since 2018. Salute!

According to engineers and geologists working with POWHR, the challenges facing the construction of this monstrous pipeline are many, but they all originate primarily from one source. According to geologist Dr. Ernst Kastning, in his report to FERC regarding geological hazards concerning the MVP, the karst regions along the route of the pipeline, in Monroe County, West Virginia, and Giles, Montgomery and Roanoke counties in Virginia “are exacerbated by additional geological-hazards, such as steep slopes, shallow bedrock, poor soils and seismic activity, all common to this region.” Kastning notes that the consensus among many scientists who have studied the project is that the threats posed by karst terrain and other colocation hazards “render this region a no-build zone for large diameter gas pipelines.”

The 42-inch pipes would transmit high-pressured gas over a karst region with a history of seismic activity. The construction in areas with karst, along with other geological hazards, would result in water contamination because of improper groundwater recharge, sedimentation and erosion, especially in Giles County where there is ground movement. As POWHR notes on their website, scientists have concluded that pipeline construction would “enhance storm water runoff and accelerate erosion, contributing to slope instability and groundwater contamination.” Giles County is specifically conducive to this because of poor soil quality, slopes, ground shaking and landslides. These challenges and hazards have been reported to the governing powers and highlighted for local, state and federal authorities for immediate remedy. Environmental groups have filed legal oppositions and stays against many of the permits allowing the MVP to move forward.

All the permits issued authorizing permission to pursue construction of the MVP were challenged by POWHR or one of its partner organizations and by environmental groups. The Nationwide Permit 12 issued by the Army Corps of Engineers is currently under a stay from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. This permit gives the MVP authority to cross streams, thus threatening endangered species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a new biological opinion and incidental take statement in September of this year after the first one was remanded in a legal challenge. The new one, much like the initial one, finds no threat to endangered species, including the Roanoke logperch, candy darter fish and the northern long-eared bat.

See MVP on page 4.

Notes from the chair: Final update

by Daryl Downing



From the chair

I've decided not to run for a third year as chapter chair, so this is my last article in this section of the Virginia Sierran. I will remain on the Chapter ExCom for at least one more year as my term ends in December 2021. I still serve as a board member of the Virginia Conservation Net-

work, which has 140 some odd partners; including the Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club and all of its groups.

It's been an amazing two years in Virginia! While I don't claim credit for any of the successes, I'm really proud that the fingerprints of many Sierrans are on the state's accomplishments. We achieved conservation-minded majorities in the Virginia Senate and House. Our U.S. Senators and most of our U.S. Representatives are firmly in the conservation column. Yes, I'm talking about Democrats, but we'd happily endorse candidates from other parties and independents if they had a strong environmental agenda. Sierra Club remains nonpartisan.

Those majorities helped us achieve incredible legislative victories that I won't list in the

interest of space. Virginia went from being a relative laggard nationally to being a national leader in the enviro space. I expect more great results from the 2021 General Assembly session.

Virginia joined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and solidified a commitment to 100% clean energy in our energy sector. Virginia Sierrans dramatically modified our way of doing business in response to a pandemic that's affected every aspect of our lives. We realized we need to do a better job to address systemic racism, urging our staff and volunteers to be antiracist as they address environmental injustice in our communities. When we help those who've been historically overburdened by pollution, lack of green space and other inequities, we help everyone.

Ding dong, the wicked ACP witch is dead! Wow! Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Let's continue to bend it towards justice. There are still far too many companies who are pursuing fossil fuel projects and other business opportunities that will cause excessive harm to Virginia communities and beyond. Be your best activist.

Let me end by saying thank you to the staff and volunteers who mentored me, allowed me to guide them and didn't yell too harshly when I goofed up. You folks do an amazing job—keep it up. Thank you!

Daryl Downing is the chair of the Virginia Chapter.

2020 Virginia Chapter Volunteer Awards

by Joe Brancoli

While 2020 has been an incredibly hard year, volunteers throughout the Virginia Chapter have stepped up to continue our good work in a variety of ways. This article is one way that we recognize them for their efforts. Twenty-five people received the Chapter Volunteer Award, as recommended by their peers for their work this year. The 2020 awardees are the following Chapter members:

Dean Amel
Jehanne Arslan
Sarah Ayling

Steve Banashek
Ann Bennett
Glen Besa
Joe Brancoli
Steve Carter-Lovejoy
Brian Castelli
Sheila Dunheimer
Wendy Gao
Gary Greenwood
Debra Jacobson
Mary Kadera
Ivy Main
Bill Penniman
Anne Repp
Chris Rumsey
Rick Shingles
Bob Shippee

Douglas Stewart
Susan Stillman
Smita Chandra Thomas
Randie Trestrail
Catherine Welsh

And finally, this year we create a new award, titled the Glen Besa Lifetime Achievement Award, and bestow the inaugural one on Bob Shippee. Speech! Speech!

We thank the leaders who took time to nominate these folks; in some cases they nominated and were nominated.

This list is yet another remind-

er of how our Chapter membership includes countless people who impart invaluable contributions to the conservation and climate justice movement. Each member recognized here represents the spirit of "powerful together" in their own unique ways.

Please visit our volunteer awards webpage at <https://vasierra.club/volawards> if you'd like to see more details of the work imparted by the award recipients.

Joe Brancoli is the chair of the Falls of the James Group.

Virginia Sierran

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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."

Virginia Sierran Editor: Sevim Kalyoncu, editorvirginiasieran@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@sierraclub.org for membership and mailing issues and address.changes@sierraclub.org to change your mailing address.

Leaning into transformation

by Kate Addleson

Transformation is profound, fundamental change, altering the very nature of something. Transformational change is both radical and sustainable. Something that is transformed can never go back to exactly what it was before. - Robert Gass

Maria Ramos-Chertok, an organizational development consultant and trainer with over 20 years of experience, wrote: "When I heard Robert Gass, co-founder of Rockwood Leadership Institute, explain the difference between change and transformation, it was a powerful moment of clarity for me. 'When you undergo a true transformation,' he shared, 'you never go back to the way you were. So many organizational and personal change efforts fail because people only pay attention to one or two areas of the wheel of change (hearts and minds/structures/behaviors), but don't fully address all three.'"

Little did we know in 2019, when we adopted our strategic plan, that this year would be one of such enormous transformational change for our organization. Yet, we developed and undertook the implementation of our plan to set us up for success regardless of what the fu-

ture might hold. And, fortuitously, it has been and will continue to be a guide—helping us navigate unprecedented obstacles and hard truths (see <https://vasierra.club/scvaplant>).

As 2020 finally winds to an end, I hope you'll join me in reflecting on what we have learned from this challenging year in the context of our shared efforts as Virginia Sierrans and lean into the transformation we are undergoing.

For me, our vision—to be an exceptionally effective and relevant grassroots force for creating climate solutions and combating the climate crisis—has taken on new meaning. We have a lot to learn as well as a lot to give. Who leads, who we listen to and who isn't being heard or seen matter profoundly. Our words and language, how we define things, matters. Our forums and messages have to be more accessible, providing space for dialogue and collaboration in more languages and mediums. Our actions and inaction, what is said and what goes unsaid, matter. How we work together and who we are referring to when we say "we" are reflections of our culture and values and will be determining factors in our success.

Our ability to secure access to clean air and water and clean, affordable energy and transportation for all Virginians for generations to come requires transformation. Now, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated inequities, forcing us to break out of the mold and giving our work a renewed sense of purpose. I look forward to working with you in the new year to seize the moment and become more powerful, together, by decolonizing our allyship, supporting the goals of marginalized groups, developing deeper understanding of our own biases, breaking down silos, being more proactive and less reactive, lifting up voices that are not being heard, and using respectful, thoughtful language to ensure all feel welcome. Let's see what we can become! (For more on these topics, see: <https://community.sierraclub.org/page/equity-language-guide>, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/decolonize/2018/04/03/white-allies-lets-be-honest-about-decolonization/>)

So much of the knowledge and tools needed to achieve the change we wish to see in the world have been available to us all along, but we weren't looking for them, weren't listening to and/or hearing them or simply weren't using them.

Some of the tendencies/proclivities that I hope we will work more diligently to avoid moving forward are:

- Allowing urgency to detract from the quality of our relationships and building trust and patience required for genuine collaboration

- Perfectionism
- Written over spoken word

We want to increase efforts to:

- Prioritize issues/initiatives that support the goals of marginalized groups

- Break down silos

- Be more proactive and less reactive

- Lift up voices that are not being heard

- Use equity-based language to ensure marginalized people feel welcome

We will need to support each other, reinforce our resolve.

In December, we welcome new leaders to our chapter and group executive committees, and I'm eager to work with them to build on the foundation of our strategic goals as well as lessons learned this year from adapting to the pandemic and confronting systemic racism to make the most of the transformational changes we are undergoing. We also welcome input and participation from you, our members, as we work to reimagine membership, build deeper and stronger relationships with marginalized communities and more.

Kate Addleson is the director of the Virginia Chapter.

2021-2022 Virginia Chapter Executive Committee at-large election results

by Linda Muller

We are pleased to announce the newly elected at-large Executive Committee members serving two-year terms for 2021-2022:

- Ann Bennett
- Ralph Grove
- Susan Stillman
- Robin Van Tine

Congratulations to all!

According to Virginia Chapter Communication Coordinator Tim Cywinski, the Virginia Chapter's digital election experienced a 75% higher turnout compared to last year. Additionally we had a 60% increase in mail-in ballots compared to last year. Thank you to the Virginia Chapter membership for stepping up and voting.

It has been an honor and a pleasure working with my fellow Nominating and Election Committee members, John Cruickshank and Richard Shingles. They offered wise counsel and support throughout the nomination and election process. Also, a big thank you to Tim Cywinski, who helped design and implement the digital balloting of the Chapter and its groups.

We hope the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter will continue to reach out to our membership and tap into our talent pool for future leadership positions. Remember, we have another election next year!

Linda Muller is the chair of the Nominating and Election Committee of the Virginia Chapter.

Remembering Walter Wells

Last summer's issue of the Virginia Sierran ran a lengthy tribute to Sierra Club Life Member Walter Wells on the occasion of his 100th birthday, July 30, 2020.

We are sad to report that Walter passed away on October 24, but not before he had seen and enjoyed the many cards and letters sent to him. He will be remembered by the Virginia Chapter for his countless and invaluable contributions.

Sierra Club Outings update

by Ralph Grove and Gary Kosciusko

While winter weather is upon us, it's still a great time to be outdoors for hiking, biking and paddling. Though short on sunshine hours, winter compensates by giving us great views through the leafless woods, comfortable temperatures for exercising and an absence of annoying insects.

Sierra Club's organized outings programs are still on hold due to the pandemic, so there will be no official in-person outings in the near future. The Club's National Outdoor Activities and Safety team is currently examining a handful of "pilot" (experimental) outings, however, to see if we can find a way to safely conduct some limited outings despite the pandemic. If their decision is positive, we could be offering limited outings in the near future. Still, the current upward surge in COVID-19 infections across the nation could render that moot, and we'll likely not see a return to normal, or at least near-normal, until sometime in 2021. Remember that we're all in this together, and together we'll get through the pandemic.

In preparation for the eventual return to our regular outings program, our outings leader



A hiker descends from Maryland Heights near Harpers Ferry, West Virginia in February (photo courtesy of Gary Kosciusko).

training curriculum is currently undergoing revision. The new training program will be offered with a combination of online, in-person and mentored training that we hope can make it widely available to prospective leaders. If you've ever thought about leading a Sierra Club outing, watch for more news or talk with one of us about how to get involved.

Meanwhile, we encourage

everyone to get outdoors for exercise and enjoyment whenever possible, but be sure to stay safe when you do. In October there were medical emergencies in Shenandoah National Park on two consecutive days, brought on in each case by a lack of preparation by hikers who underestimated the challenges of the hike they chose (Old Rag Mountain in both cases). Winter hiking

away from civilization poses special challenges, including rapid shifts in weather conditions, shorter daylight, and the threat of hypothermia. For such hikes, it's best to dress in layers and to go with at least one other person. Notify a trusted relative or friend of your intended route and when you expect to return.

Every hiker should have a "10 essentials" checklist, in order to be ready for anything that might happen on the trail. Here's our list (yours might vary depending on the season or place):

- (1) map and compass;
- (2) plenty of drinking water;
- (3) extra high-energy food (e.g., snack bars or dried fruit);
- (4) proper footwear, clothing and rain gear;
- (5) sun protection (hat, SPF lotion, sunglasses, lip balm);
- (6) flashlight or headlamp and extra batteries;
- (7) whistle to summon help;
- (8) first aid kit;
- (9) multi-tool knife and duct tape for repairs;
- and (10) portable shelter or space blanket in case you're stuck outside.

Happy Trails!

Ralph Grove is the outings chair of the Virginia Chapter and Gary Kosciusko is the chair of Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings.

MVP

continued from page 1

In 2018 the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals remanded the U.S. Forest Service to conduct a new environmental impact statement after it ruled the Forest Service had capriciously and arbitrarily accepted FERC's initial statement without providing adequate and required review of the pipelines route through the Jefferson National Forest or the impact it would have on sedimentation and erosion without adequate containment. The Forest Service's open comment period during this process collected over 8,000 comments opposing the newly drafted statement with the outcome pending, albeit already recorded in the Federal Register, thus giving it general applicability and legality.

The MVP is two years behind schedule and has piled up over 300 water protection violations resulting in \$2 million in fines imposed by the state. It's already

more than \$3 billion over budget. It is an unnecessary and extremely dangerous fossil fuel infrastructure. So, the question is, why would such a project, with so much risk and such a high contribution to climate change, be allowed to proceed? The answer is one word, money.

According to energy financial expert Oil Change International, the MVP is a supply-driven project. No need exists for this fracked-gas project because the demand for residential gas for heating and cooking has remained static and the industrial need for electricity is on the decline. According to many analysts in the energy finance sector, the drive to overdrill is because of the higher rates pipeline companies usually earn with higher production. According to Oil Change International, FERC, the federal agency responsible for regulating pipeline rates, "allows

higher rates of return for pipeline companies than it does for electric transmission companies." The result is a rush for overbuilding as an industry norm with the ratepayer taking on the cost of the project whether capacity is materialized or not.

Although the people opposing the MVP are weary, they fight on, and hope is on the horizon. Fracked gas is not part of a clean energy future, and we cannot prevent the worst effects of climate change if we allow the fossil fuel industry to lock the United States into decades more of gas production. Opposition continues to mount against this pipeline with the same agencies that are granting permission actually questioning the wisdom of their choices. A U.S. Forest Service regional planning director, Peter Gaulke, reported to media outlets that his agency was not in the driver's seat when the deci-

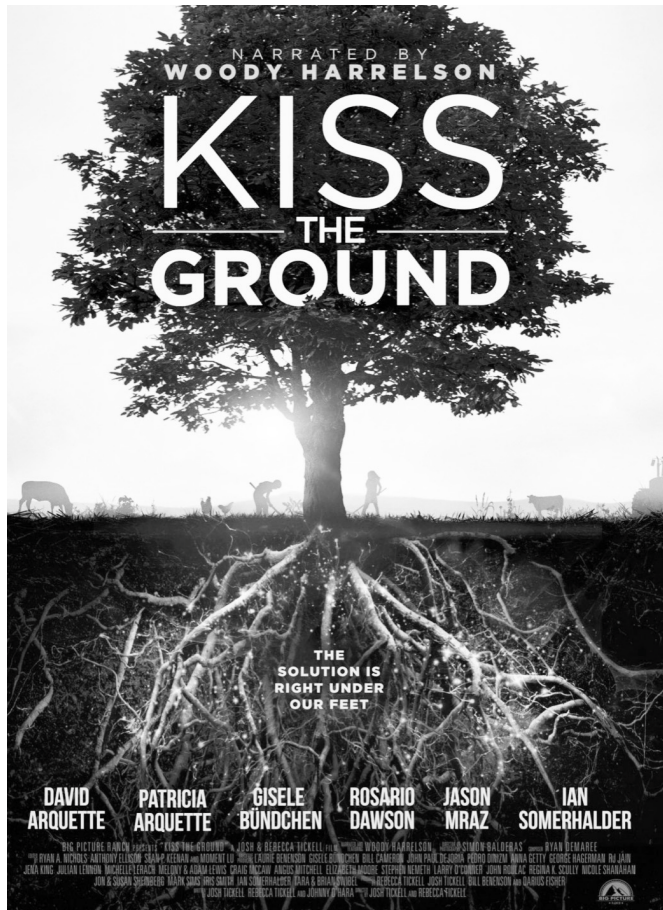
sion to accept the environmental impact statement was made. At the time, FERC was; but this position is changing according to a November 1, 2020 article in the Roanoke Times.

Another seat of power, the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, chaired by Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md, is requesting from FERC its procedures guiding landowners' disputes and the initial rebuke in the dissent of FERC commissioner Cheryl A. LaFleur in granting the MVP the certificate of convenience and public necessity to construct the pipeline. All these factors, plus the will of the people, are moving us closer to environmental justice for the people, the environment and the planet.

Lynn Godfrey is the community outreach coordinator of the Stop the Pipelines campaign of the Virginia Chapter.

Piedmont Group update

by Donna Shaunesey



On November 18, the Piedmont Group hosted a Zoom presentation of the film “Kiss the Ground,” followed by a discussion with a local soil scientist

about actions we could take in Virginia. It was free and open to the public, and we were excited to have 35 folks participate in the call, including from outside our area and the commonwealth. This film is available on Netflix if you missed the opportunity to learn how agriculture can be an important part of tackling climate change.

On October 6, Piedmont Conservation Chair Kirk Bowers held a free and open Zoom update on the Mountain Valley Pipeline. He took us through some of the history and the pushback from experts, lawyers and activists. There are still

missing permits—most significantly involving stream crossings, and the fight continues to prevent this environmental disaster from being constructed in some of Virginia’s most vulnerable and beautiful terrain.

The Piedmont and Rappahannock Groups are coordinating with Beyond Nuclear, NRDC and Friends of the Earth to address the upcoming license renewal of the North Anna nuclear power plants. Comments were due by November 23 despite the fact that the renewal date isn’t until 2038. Our concerns include the lack of an environmental impact statement that includes analysis of the structure of these aging plants as well as the damage from the previous earthquake and the preparations for another seismic event in the future.

See John Cruickshank’s article on the plants on page 12 for more information.

Donna Shaunesey is the chair of the Piedmont Group.

Great Falls Group update

by Norbert Pink

This quarter Susan Bonney and Susan Weltz are starting up volunteer night virtual meetings with an exciting line of issues that GFG is working on. Natalie Pien is continuing to take the lead in pursuing the data center issue with numerous productive meetings. Brian Castelli and team are being challenged with the Fairfax County’s Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan process being restructured from the concept of focus groups and task force to working groups, so we are waiting to see how that works out. Ann Bennett has had her hands full as land use activities are still progressing very quickly and it is difficult to keep up with all the changes. The realignment of boundaries between GFG and Mount Vernon Group has been approved by the Chapter, and membership changes will be made soon. We have also elected four members to the group’s executive committee.

The newly formatted GFG website is available online at

<https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/great-falls> for your viewing. It is still a work in progress, but if you have any suggestions, we certainly would appreciate them. Please read the GFG monthly newsletters at <https://bit.ly/3q66Q8q> and our December Conservation Report at <https://bit.ly/3q72FJv> and you can subscribe to GFG’s weekly list of events at <https://bit.ly/37edcKg>

Here are some of our upcoming virtual activities (visit the GFG website for more information, all are free and open to the public):

Volunteer Action Night for the Environment, Monday, December 7, 5-6 pm

Join us to learn and share ideas to protect the environment. Let’s plan for our 2021 approach to electric buses, fighting gas pipelines, zoning and reducing energy hogging massive data centers, and more. We will discuss issues and work on strategies and actions. Come be part of the solutions!

Contact Susan Weltz at s.weltz@yahoo.com to register.

Learn About Proposals to Reintroduce Red Wolves to Virginia, Wednesday, January 27, 6:30-7:30pm

Richmond-based journalist Stephen Nash has been looking into proposals to reintroduce red wolves, *Canis lupus rufus*, to Virginia. In the 1970s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caught the last 17 known representatives of this critically endangered species, and it has worked to enlarge the captive population and reintroduce these animals to the wild. Today, only a handful of red wolves remain in the wild in coastal North Carolina, and 200 or so are in captive breeding facilities, including nine at Roanoke’s Mill Mountain Zoo.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3mOzMQs> to register.

Norbert Pink is the chair of the Great Falls Group.

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 regarding groups’ geographical area can be found on our website under Find a Group Near You.

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Election outcomes and what to expect in the 2021 General Assembly session

by Connor Kish

When we entered calendar year 2020, we knew a lot was at stake politically with a presidential election and the new Democratic majority in the General Assembly. Since then the COVID-19 pandemic has upended life as we knew it. The Movement for Black Lives has rightfully redirected work, focus, energy and time toward progress in so many areas where our country, our states, our communities and we as people have for too long fallen short on addressing the systemic inequities that plague our structured systems across the board and overburden people and communities of color.

We began the year in the thick of the presidential primaries. Through the high-stakes primary campaign, former Vice President Joe Biden emerged as the Democratic nominee for president of the United States. Through a general election campaign slowed by the pandemic, the former vice president turned to a relentless focus on digital and video campaigning to get out his message, which was that he could “Build Back Better,” restoring the soul of a nation hurt by corrupt dealings, racist rhetoric and behavior, and lackadaisical care for the American people by a president who only cares for himself. Mr. Biden selected Cal-

ifornia Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate. Mr. Biden and his wife Jill and Senator Harris and her husband Doug, fanned out across the country’s battleground states to small, intricate campaign stops that practiced social distancing. The incumbent president, Donald Trump, largely flouted CDC and health official guidelines, choosing to hold large campaign rallies with limited mask wearing and practically no social distancing. Until the end, polls in battleground states showed Mr. Biden and President Trump in a close race in several states.

On election night, the counting across the country was generally slow by normal standards. Election officials, often volunteers, faced the pandemic and a massive counting operation made more difficult by the mass influx of mail-in and drop-off ballots. Differing election laws in various states dictated when the mail and drop-off ballots could be counted, complicating the timeline for knowing results in several states. It was a long night and an even longer few following days. Eventually, the Biden/Harris ticket prevailed, winning the battleground states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Arizona and Georgia on their way to 306 electoral votes.

The Biden/Harris transition is underway.

Here in Virginia, Sen. Mark Warner was re-elected to a third term. Our endorsed incumbents Reps. Bobby Scott, Donald McEachin, Don Beyer, Gerry Connolly and Jennifer Wexton won their races. Sierra Club National PAC activated the Victory Corps program in the districts of Rep. Abigail Spanberger and Rep. Elaine Luria to support close races, and both incumbents were re-elected thanks to the work of many, including our own Mary-Stuart Torbeck, who worked on both campaigns diligently. Unfortunately, our endorsed candidates in the 1st District and 5th District lost in close races.

At the local level, the Falls of the James Group made endorsements in the Richmond City Council races and for mayor of Richmond. The Chesapeake Bay Group made an endorsement in the race for mayor of Virginia Beach. Unfortunately, our candidates for mayor in both elections were not victorious.

As we turn our attention away from elections (but not for long!), the 2021 session of the General Assembly is upon us. Like the elections, the pandemic and the Movement for Black Lives have rightfully and thankfully impact-

ed the work of the legislature this year. During a long summer special session, the General Assembly passed many criminal justice and policing reforms that were needed and long overdue. After balancing the state budget and plugging a \$2.8 billion shortfall over the summer and into the fall of 2020, the regular session for 2021 will begin on January 13. For anyone familiar with the General Assembly’s operations, this session will be unlike anything we have seen before.

The General Assembly will operate mostly virtually via Zoom. The Senate is expected to have some in-person components in a large room inside the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, but the House of Delegates will not travel to Richmond and will instead conduct the session 100% online. Those familiar with testifying in support or in opposition to legislation in a room inside the Capitol will now do so via Zoom, appearing before various subcommittee and committee meetings in breakout rooms with legislators and committee staff. Those familiar with stopping by the office of your legislator to lobby or say hello will instead need to communi-

See General Assembly on page 11.

State Corporation Commission to deny Virginia Natural Gas certification for Header Improvement Project

by Lynn Godfrey

On December 1, the Virginia State Corporation Commission did something it rarely does and denied a public gas utility, Virginia Natural Gas, a certificate of convenience and public necessity to build its Header Improvement Project. This project has been dubbed the “Header Injustice Project” by environmental activists and grassroots community members of SAVE (Stop Abusing Virginia’s Energy), a statewide coalition created to oppose and address fossil fuel buildout in the state and the environmental racism and justice issues accompanying it, of which Sierra Club is a member.

The Header Improvement Project would have move fracked gas through communities across

Virginia for the sole purpose of providing it to a private merchant, C4GT, LLC, a gas plant in Charles City County. Should C4GT be approved along with the Chickahominy Plant, another proposed private merchant gas plant, it would be only the fifth instance in the United States where two stations totaling more than 2,500 MW of fossil-fired generating capacity are located within a mile of one another.

Following the December 2019 application by Virginia Natural Gas to the SCC, the SAVE coalition mounted a valiant opposition to this attempt to pimp the people of Virginia—especially poor people in environmental justice communities—to pay for a gas plant owned by a private

merchant. The gas was to be sold to a regional market that the community wouldn’t use or need. The project would have moved high-pressure gas from one end of the state to the other with three compressor stations in Prince William County, Caroline County and Chesapeake City.

On June 26 of this year, the commission issued a preliminary order that required VNG meet three conditions by a December 31, 2020 deadline before it would be issued a permit to construct the pipeline. This order essentially validated C4GT’s fiduciary ability to complete the construction schedule since VNG, in its original application, explicitly named transmission of gas for the C4GT plant as the primary purpose

of the application. Earlier in the spring, C4GT communicated to VNG its challenges in providing financial support for the project. A November 13, 2020 letter to the SCC from VNG’s lawyers, McGuire and Woods, stated that VNG would not be able to meet the conditions of the preliminary order, requesting instead revising the application on the same docket.

In its final ruling, the SCC states that as “VNG is unable to meet the directives of the June 26, 2020 Preliminary Order on Application...this matter is dismissed.”

Lynn Godfrey is the community outreach coordinator of the Stop the Pipelines campaign of the Virginia Chapter.

2021 legislative priorities

by Bob Shippee

The Legislative Committee met in November to discuss priorities for the upcoming General Assembly session. On the heels of a historically successful 2020 session, where top priorities—the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Solar Freedom and the landmark Virginia Clean Economy Act—passed, expectations are tempered for 2021. One reason is that in odd years, the General Assembly typically meets for a “short” 45-day session. However, for the first time since 1971, this will be just a 30-day session due to Republicans refusing to support a routine procedural vote to expand it to 45.

As 2021 is an election year (all 100 seats in the House of Delegates, plus governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general, are on the ballot), for political reasons it can be difficult to pass major legislation. Additionally, leadership has placed tight limits on the number of bills that each lawmaker can introduce: 12 in the Senate and just seven in the House. Finally, with the enormous budget pressures created by the COVID-19 crisis, proposals requiring financial allocations are unlikely to find support. To make things even more challenging for our lobbying efforts, the House will meet virtually and the Senate (as in the recent special session) will work out of the Science Museum of Virginia.

Against that daunting backdrop, we still plan to advocate for several significant priorities. At the time of this writing, no legislation relating to our top priorities has been introduced, yet we expect this to change as the session draws closer. At the top of our list is addressing the largest source of carbon emissions in Virginia, transportation. The commonwealth should adopt the Clean Car Standards (Low Emission/Zero Emission Vehicles) as allowed by the Clean Air Act. In addition to the climate benefits, this will yield health benefits (especially to communities suffering from disproportionate air pollution from vehicles) and economic benefits (helping Virginia compete with Maryland and other states in the electric vehicle

market).

Another high priority is improving Virginia’s outdated, inefficient building codes. At minimum, Virginia should adopt the international standards declared every three years. Today, our requirements lag behind these marks by several years, dooming occupants to high utility bills and, of course, needlessly increasing carbon emissions.

Rounding out our top priorities are a number of environmental justice items: enhancing/clarifying language in last session’s Environmental Justice Act, expanding comment periods and required community outreach for permits and addressing the solid waste management landfill problem.

In addition, we will push for

several other important bills in January. First is a measure directing the State Corporation Commission to effectively implement Dominion’s Percentage of Income Payment Program, a priority of the Beyond Coal campaign. Also, following the December release of the electric vehicle rebate study authorized last spring, we will push for an equitable plan to make EVs more affordable for all Virginians. The Chapter also continues to work toward a solution to electrify the commonwealth’s school bus fleet. Additionally, we need to ensure that last year’s bills banning/restricting polystyrene and plastic bags are re-enacted (a requirement of the language passed in March). Other measures the Chapter is engaged in

include reform of electric co-op governance; enhanced water quality measures for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Water Control Board to utilize for pipeline projects, allowing customers to shop for clean energy; and reintroduction of a bill to force Dominion to fairly charge its customers.

There will be many other bills that the Chapter will review and take positions on. Please reach out to me at rsoxbob@gmail.com or Political and Legislative Director Connor Kish at connor.kish@sierraclub.org if you have any questions or would like to assist our legislative efforts.

Bob Shippee is the legislative chair of the Virginia Chapter.

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Mar 20-21 ... Charlottesville, VA

Mar 27-28 ... Norfolk area, VA

Mar 27-28 ... Washington, DC area

Apr 10-11 ... Lexington, VA

Apr 24-25 ... Richmond, VA

Instruction by Matthew Rosefsky, Geo Medic, street medic, SOLO Instructor-Trainer, SC Outings Leader, and Volunteer Strategist for SC National “Outdoors for All Campaign.” See <https://solowfa.com> for more information and online registration.

You're not stuck in traffic, you are traffic

by Cheri Conca

Amidst the train wreck otherwise known as 2020, the issue of climate change feels like it has been pushed to the back burner. Now, with a coronavirus vaccine on the horizon and new leaders preparing to take office, people are looking forward to getting back to “normal,” and climate activists are pushing forward with renewed enthusiasm, fighting for clean energy, land conservation and other strategies to help ensure the future of the planet.

On the bright side, the storms we've weathered have spawned some silver linings, such as the re-emergence into the mainstream of the Black Lives Matter Movement—which elevated awareness of racial inequalities and sparked change—and an unprecedented drop in traffic—as people gave up their commutes to work from home and hopped on bike trails and pedestrian paths for recreation and an alternative mode of transportation.

Should we go back to normal? Not if we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Giv-

en that transportation emissions are a major contributor to climate change, we need to push for a significant overhaul in how everyone gets to work, shopping, services such as doctor appointments and recreation.

One of my favorite transportation memes goes like this: you're not stuck in traffic, you are traffic. That is so true, but it doesn't have to be. Looking ahead, we can no longer afford to plan from a congestion “mitigation” viewpoint by building and widening roads, a solution that only invites more traffic. Transportation planners and leaders need to look at how people live on a daily basis: who drives and who doesn't? Where do people go, and what barriers do they face getting there? What alternative modes of transportation can be enhanced or built to get people out of their cars?

Much like a vaccine will provide an antidote for the pandemic that stopped us in our tracks, a reimagined transportation system can be a remedy for many of the ills with which we grappled in 2020: pandemic, social injus-

tice, economic downturn as well as climate change. We need a transportation system that

- acknowledges that the majority of car trips are less than 3 miles long and could be accomplished on foot or bicycle—if infrastructure and safe road crossings are available;
- provides permanent alternatives to car travel that get people outside and moving;
- builds affordable housing near jobs and services so residents can walk or bike to their destinations;
- invests in safe road crossings, especially in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, where people die while walking at much higher rates than in other communities; and
- allows everyone access to services that are vital to economic growth.

The transformation to a healthier, more equitable transportation system must happen at the local level. As climate activists, we need to focus on taking cars off the road. Transportation plans take years to implement, so

now is the time to push transportation leaders to prioritize funding for transit, bike/pedestrian paths and safe, accessible road crossings. Please take some time to give your input to local and regional transportation funding authorities and tell them to prioritize transportation projects that give more weight to accessibility, safety and environmental quality. Tell your local leaders where trails are needed to connect neighborhoods to services or where unsafe road crossings need to be improved.

Let's do our part for the planet by transforming our traffic-dominated communities into healthy, accessible, economically vibrant places where everyone can move about without having to sit behind a steering wheel.

Cheri Conca is the conservation program coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.

Virginia Chapter email lists

Join these email lists to get more informed about and involved with Virginia Chapter activities:

Virginia Climate Movement

This is a statewide list of people active in the Virginia climate movement. You can receive and send emails on climate-related news, events, webinars and actions going on across the state. *Monthly call on the fourth Tuesday at 12 p.m. and 7 p.m.* **Contact Mary-Stuart Torbeck at mary-stuart.torbeck@sierraclub.org**

Virginia Environmental Justice

Join our email 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. *Monthly call on the second Wednesday at 11 a.m. and the second Thursday at 5:30 p.m.* **Contact Gustavo Angeles at gustavo.angeles@sierraclub.org**

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Equity, Inclusion and Justice

This space is for asking questions, voicing concerns and sharing ideas as we move forward in our work to create a more equitable environment and chapter. **Contact Gustavo Angeles at gustavo.angeles@sierraclub.org**

Hampton Roads

Join this list to get updates about actions, events and ways to get involved in Hampton Roads. **Contact Ann Creasy at Ann.Creasy@sierraclub.org** or visit <https://vasierra.club/hr>

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 visit <https://vasierra.club/rva>

Northern Virginia

Join this list to get updates about actions, events and ways to get involved in Northern Virginia. **Contact Cheri Conca at cheri.conca@sierraclub.org** or visit <https://vasierra.club/nova>

How communities are transforming with solar

by Ann Creasy



There's a lot to talk about when it comes to solar. When it comes down to it, the way solar impacts communities is by impacting people. Solar saves people money. It gives them involvement and control over how they produce electricity. When we consider solar's direct impact on people, we can sense transformation in how we make decisions about our energy.

Let's look to solar on schools as an example. Nine installations of solar on schools in Virginia Beach and Newport News will save a total of \$8 million. These installations are possible due to financing mechanisms that allow schools and other customers to install solar at no upfront cost.

In Virginia Beach, new installations will save the division about \$4.2 million over the next 25 years. They will also be a key part in achieving some of the goals laid out in the division's sustainability plan, such as reducing emissions by 70% by 2030. The array at Ocean Lakes Elementary could provide 100% of the school's energy needs, making it Virginia Beach schools' first net-zero building. Newport News Public Schools is installing or has recently installed solar at five schools and also expects \$4 million in savings.

Both divisions entered into power purchase agreements. Under this type of agreement, a company will install the solar panels on the schools at no upfront cost and will then sell the energy back. It saves school

systems money over the life of the contract.

Solar gives opportunities for schools to invest more in education, either by paying their teachers better or really whatever that community thinks the spending should go towards. Solar on schools also provides opportunities for curriculum and career training that educate about solar. Studies show experience-based learning is one of the most effective ways to get people to learn. When students are able to see a solar panel or understand that it's powering the building that they are in, it provides a great learning experience.

Another way that solar can be accessible to communities is through qualified opportunity zones, or QOZs. Individuals with capital gains can get tax benefits by investing in them. QOZs are disadvantaged zones that contain a majority of homes and businesses that qualify as low income. Investors avoid all capital gains taxes until 2026, eliminate 15% of their capital gains taxes after that and reap the benefit of any appreciation in the value of the investment as tax-free profit. The idea is to incentivize the investment into communities who could greatly benefit.

An example of an existing opportunity zone fund in Hampton Roads is the Norfolk Solar Qualified Opportunity Zone Fund (see <https://norfolksolar.org>), which Ruth Amundsen created to install solar on businesses and nonprofits in QOZs. She started this

fund because of her belief in the need for a "quick and substantial action to fight climate change" and "a way to lessen the burden of high utility bills on residents and businesses in disadvantaged neighborhoods." The fund is responsible for seven system installs, 1200 solar panels and 370 tons carbon dioxide production avoided annually.

The primary incentives for this fund were to help businesses and nonprofits in disadvantaged areas reduce their utility bills and become more financially stable and to lower Norfolk's carbon emissions and thus help mitigate climate change and associated sea-level rise. Others with capital gains could use the fund Ruth set up as a model.

These are two glimpses of the ways that people are taking advantage of solar and experiencing savings. They come with the benefits of improved air quality, lower carbon emissions and movement away from fossil fuels for our energy needs. Solar is transforming how communities think about their energy and the benefits it can offer. Please contact Ann Creasy at (757)513-2844 or ann.creasy@sierraclub.org with any questions or ideas you may have regarding solar in Virginia.

Ann Creasy is the Hampton Roads conservation program manager of the Virginia Chapter.

Pebble Mine Prospects

by Bill Sidenstick, June 2015

They want to dig a big hole in Alaska, in the south, just north of Bristol Bay.

That hole will be a mine for metals, gold and copper if the miners have their way.

We won't deny their precious metals, if the people, fish and game can only stay.

Miners can't guarantee the pristine waters, of the watershed of the Bristol Bay?

Chorus:

Some take what they want, no matter the cost.

Some take what they want, no matter what is lost.

The mine could pollute the Salmon spawning lines,
When they take the gold from the Pebble Mine.

Sockeye Salmon have run for a million years.

Toxic wastewater raises all our fears.

Of spoiling salmon spawning waterlines.

When they take the copper from the Pebble Mine.

Arsenic and cyanide process the ore, they can poison the salmon waterways.

Miners can't assure no poisoning, ruining a way of life just for the pay.

Salmon are the heart of the food web, for natives and fishermen of the bay,

Earth dams hold toxic waste lakes, if they leak or break,
then lives are betrayed.

Chorus

When they take the metals from the Pebble Mine.

Sign of the times

by Eileen Woll



“Power Your Future” sign on Military Highway in Norfolk promoting wind turbine tech training at Centura College (photo courtesy of Eileen Woll).

The offshore wind industry is continuing its rapid development in states up and down the Atlantic Seaboard. As work intensifies, state leaders are recognizing that none of them can go it alone.

No one state will attract 100% of the manufacturing or the jobs—and that’s okay.

Partnerships rule now, as states realize there’s plenty of clean energy and economic de-

velopment to go around. According to the American Wind Energy Association, the U.S. offshore wind industry holds 15 active commercial leases that, if built, could generate 30 gigawatts of electricity, create 83,000 jobs and drive \$25 billion in annual economic output in the next decade.

Most importantly, states are realizing that only by coordinating regionally can they attract the industry investment that in turn creates those thousands of jobs AND helps drive down the cost for offshore wind power.

This year Virginia became the first state in the nation with offshore wind in federal waters, and now we are leading the way with coordination in the Mid-Atlantic. In November 2020, Gov. Northam joined the governors of Maryland and North Carolina in a partnership aimed, as North Carolina Gov. Cooper noted, “to leverage our combined economic power and ideas to achieve cost-effective success.”

Common to these three states is also access to highly trained workforces. Here again, partnerships are key.

In October 2020, Gov. Northam announced formation of the Mid-Atlantic Wind Training Alliance, which initially combines the forces of the New College Institute, Centura College and the Mid-Atlantic Maritime Academy. “[W]e look forward to working with our partners across Virgin-

ia and in neighboring states to grow this industry and reap the tremendous economic benefits for our communities, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged,” wrote the governor in a press statement.

So, imagine how thrilling it was to see this Centura College sign in Norfolk! The name of the game now is promotion. The Hampton Roads Workforce Alliance and dozens of other stakeholders are working together to assemble and organize a plethora of training programs supporting the offshore wind industry. The Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy has pledged to be the “landing page” for information about both the career pathways and the training programs open for enrollment. The challenge now is promoting these opportunities, and here again we are working in partnership with many others—getting the word out especially to young people in low-income communities.

Please visit <https://sierraclub.org/virginia/offshore-wind> for more information on our Sierra Club offshore wind campaign.

Eileen Woll is the offshore energy program director of the Virginia Chapter.

Organizing during the pandemic and volunteer spotlight

by Hunter Noffsinger

How does one organize completely virtually when faced with a pandemic? If you had asked me this question months ago, I would have said you just take a break, regroup and focus on making your campaigns stronger. Now, nine months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we have hosted loads of virtual events and kept our volunteers and members engaged on climate action. How? You may ask. Sometimes you just gotta get creative.

We’ve now hosted events and socials ranging from a virtual pet social hour to offshore

wind and solar lunch and learns and letter-to-the-editor training workshops. This virtual space we have found ourselves in for the past nine months has given us the opportunity to experiment with different times of the day to hold events and different styles of hosting. Through hosting different types of events, we’ve been able to keep engagement up among different volunteer interests.

I think in some ways, moving to a virtual space has allowed for more engagement for people who previously couldn’t travel

to events or didn’t have time to make it to events after work. For example, our volunteers on the Hampton Roads Letter to the Editor Team have really stepped up and been instrumental in calling attention to environmental issues through LTEs. So far this year we have had 24 LTEs published in the Virginian Pilot on environmental issues, clean energy, racial justice and more. As local journalism continues to take hits, having community members submit LTEs not only helps spread awareness of our issues but also helps keep engagement

up with local newspapers.

It’s been inspiring to see so many volunteers staying engaged during the pandemic, some even taking on new roles and projects. Adapting to our situations and challenges is an important part of being an organizer, and that is even more important now. There’s no single “correct” way to organize during a pandemic, and we are all learning as we go.

Hunter Noffsinger is the Hampton Roads community outreach coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.

The election and energy policy

by Ivy Main

Sierrans breathed a sigh of relief with the election of Joe Biden. As president, Biden will undo many of Trump's environmental rollbacks with new executive orders and agency actions. Biden has also promised a long list of new initiatives; unfortunately, many of them need cooperation from Congress. If Republicans hold the Senate, sweeping climate legislation is probably off the table. Instead, the Biden administration will have to take a piecemeal approach, using the tools of the executive branch.

Let's look at what Biden can accomplish on climate without new laws, with a particular focus on how these actions affect Virginia's energy transition.

A new Clean Power Plan?

Back in 2016, the Obama EPA finalized regulations under the Clean Air Act designed to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. Lawsuits and backpedaling by the Trump EPA prevented the Clean Power Plan from ever taking effect, and Trump's replacement plan was widely derided as a pollution-enabler. A Biden EPA could take another run at power plant regulation.

The Clean Power Plan mostly put the squeeze on coal-heavy states, requiring much less from states like ours that rely mostly on nuclear and gas. A new plan that raises the bar nationwide would make the power our utilities import cleaner. That would especially affect Appalachian Power, which brings a lot of coal power into Virginia.

Coal. Trump moved to roll back protections like the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Coal Ash Rule, both of which limit pollution caused by coal plants. We can expect the EPA under Biden to reverse course and, if



anything, tighten these protections. This won't have much effect on Virginia's few remaining coal plants, but it pounds more nails into the coffin of the coal mining industry. Hopefully, conservative leaders will finally give up the fiction of a coal comeback and will put their efforts into attracting new and cleaner jobs to coalfield communities like those of Southwest Virginia.

Fracked gas. Biden made it clear he would not ban fracking other than on federal lands, but we can expect stronger regulations to limit the leakage of methane from wellheads, pipelines and storage infrastructure. That's a Virginia priority, too.

Energy efficiency. Federal efficiency requirements for products including appliances and HVAC systems have proven to be low cost and consumer friendly. A renewed focus on strong national standards will help reduce per-capita energy consumption and help Virginia meet its carbon reduction goals at less cost to consumers.

Wind and solar. It would take legislation to extend federal

tax credits for renewable energy, but there are other actions the Biden administration can take to support wind and solar. These include increased funding of research and development through the Department of Energy (a program with bipartisan support in Congress) and removing tariffs on imported solar panels.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission can also help wind and solar. FERC has caused its share of climate damage, most memorably for Virginians by approving the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines. FERC's decisions also control the playing field for the electricity sector, including rules that currently disadvantage wind and solar in the wholesale markets. These rules could just as easily be rewritten. Although FERC is an independent agency, Biden will have an opportunity to appoint climate-friendly FERC commissioners as vacancies occur and terms expire.

And indeed, FERC is already starting to come around. Chairman Neil Chatterjee recently hosted a technical conference

and issued a proposed policy statement on carbon pricing in regional markets, an act that may have led Trump to demote him last month.

Offshore wind. Within the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management issues offshore energy leases and oversees development of offshore projects, including wind farms. More than a year ago, offshore wind activity at the bureau ground almost to a halt, setting back one project after another. With Biden in the White House, it will resume work, get out of the way of current projects and begin the process of designating new offshore lease areas for development—all critical to Virginia's clean energy plans.

Transportation. Until Trump came in, the auto industry was gradually improving fuel economy standards in new cars and light trucks. Biden will put that program back in place and likely impose more stringent tailpipe emission standards. These moves will boost the transition to electric and hybrid vehicles and lead to lower carbon emissions from the transportation sector.

Declaring a national climate emergency. It's a long shot, but Biden could use his executive authority to declare a climate emergency the way Trump declared a national emergency to redirect funds from national defense to his border fence. But going this route would be divisive and out of character for Biden. Still, his administration represents a new direction, and for that, we should all be grateful.

Ivy Main is the conservation and renewable energy chair of the Virginia Chapter.

General Assembly continued from page 6

cate via email or phone.

The pandemic has changed everything, and the General Assembly's operations were among the changes. We have additional efforts underway to encourage expanded public access to the General Assembly during this virtual session. While we can-

not anticipate all of the changes and adjustments we will need to make to successfully advocate for our priorities come January, we have a large effort underway to anticipate and prepare for as much as we can.

Thanks to the work of our Legislative Committee Chair Bob

Shippee, so many volunteers and incredible Chapter staff, I am confident that despite the challenges we face logistically, we will successfully and properly advocate our priorities and ensure the voices of our members are heard in the halls of state government. If you have

any questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me at connor.kish@sierraclub.org

Conner Kish is the political and legislative director of the Virginia Chapter.

Can nuclear reactors operate safely for 80 years?

by John Cruickshank

The two nuclear reactors at the North Anna Power Station began operation in 1978 and 1980. They were originally licensed to generate electricity for 40 years. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission granted Dominion a 20-year extension of the operating license for each reactor. They are currently licensed to operate until 2038 and 2040, respectively.

This summer Dominion began the process to renew the licenses a third time. Many of us question whether these reactors can operate safely for 80 years (until 2058 and 2060). The executive committee of the Virginia Chapter recently approved a motion to petition the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a hearing on Dominion's application for a subsequent license renewal. We will request that the commission conduct a thorough environmental impact study of the North Anna Power Station before issuing another 20-year extension of the operating license.

This study should include the



The North Anna Nuclear Power Station in Louisa County, Virginia (photo courtesy of dougward from Devon, United States, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons).

following:

- applying stringent methods to assess the condition of the aging equipment,
- harvesting and laboratory testing of aged materials from

North Anna and parts from decommissioned reactors,

- assessing the safety of this aging plant during an earthquake (remember Aug. 23, 2011?),
- assessing the ability of the

earthen dam at Lake Anna to withstand a catastrophic earthquake,

- evaluating the power plant's security and evacuation plan, and
- determining if North Anna has adequate facilities for the long-term storage of nuclear waste.

Sierra Club volunteer activists from the Rappahannock, Piedmont and Falls of the James Groups will be working on this important issue for years to come. We would encourage all Virginians to contact their legislators and ask them to require the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to do a thorough review. Let's spread the word! The safety of Virginians living within 50 miles of North Anna will depend on the diligence of the NRC.

John Cruickshank is the secretary and community outreach coordinator of the Piedmont Group.

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