



# Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter  
Spring 2020

## Art, activism and the Supreme Court of the United States

by Jessica Sims

From a night of music, art and activism to a night outside the Supreme Court of the United States, the first quarter of 2020 brought together dedicated community members continuing the fight against the ruinous Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines.

On Friday, January 24, over 240 attendees enjoyed the opening reception for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter-hosted art exhibit *Environment at Risk*, on display at Project Space @ Plant Zero in South Richmond. This was the second year of the annual exhibition, arranged by Jessica Sims. The event was a beautiful gathering of community members, activists and artists exploring visual presentations of the environmental impacts Virginia faces, including gas infrastructure, coastal flooding, corporate influence in government decisions, littering, habitat loss, ocean acidification and deforestation.

Mara Eve Robbins, of the 1000 Flags, 1000 Waters Project presented to the crowd her installation art, which features art from the fight against Mountain Valley Pipeline and an interactive opportunity for the public to create artwork to add to the exhibit through creation of a “water flag” to represent a cherished waterway. Artists Georgianne Stinnett, whose family is being impacted by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, and Genesis Chapman, whose family is being impacted by Mountain Valley Pipeline, spoke of the importance of protection of our waterways and communities; the crucial role the judicial system plays in this effort; and the continued, effective resistance to unnecessary and harmful pipeline projects.

Richmond-based musicians Høly River kicked off their East Coast tour and the release of new music by performing at the reception to an enthralled crowd of people who were dancing and singing along. The artist gallery talk also featured the portrait series *Eco-Martyr Project*, from Virginia Commonwealth University



*Attendees enjoyed the performance by Høly River at the opening reception of Environment at Risk (photo courtesy of Jessica Sims).*

professor Dr. Richard Bargdill and masters student Andrea Lee.

The collaborative portrait series honors a number of world citizens who lost their lives in the fight to protect people and the environment, and at the reception, many of the Richmond-based artists selected to create the portraits spoke about the heroism and tremendous impact of the murdered advocates. A large-scale installation from All the Saints Theater Company addressed

murdered environmental leaders and featured the large, colorful and commanding “Water Is Life” puppet, which has been part of environmental advocacy events around the state, including the 2017 Water is Life Rally and the 2019 Herring, Stand with Appalachia: No Mountain Valley Pipeline event in Loudoun County, Virginia. The exhibit featured over 50 artists and over 70 pieces of art and will continue to be an annual event, bringing together community



*Pipeline fighters waited in line overnight to receive tickets to the SCOTUS oral arguments in the case of U.S. Forest Service v. Cowpasture River Preservation (photo courtesy of Jessica Sims).*

members, activists and artists.

This quarter of 2020 also saw the court date for the U.S. Forest Service v. Cowpasture River Preservation Association case at the Supreme Court of the United States. This case concerns the ability of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to cross the Appalachian Trail and whether the U.S. Forest Service had the legal authority to give permission for that crossing. The lower court found that it was unlawful for the Forest Service to permit the pipeline to cross the Appalachian Trail on national forest land, and this decision was appealed by both the pipeline and the government. Oral arguments were heard on Monday, February 24, and pipeline fighters from Virginia and West Virginia traveled to Washington to hear the case, waiting in line overnight to obtain tickets to hear the oral arguments.

Over the course of the cold evening, over 200 people lined up to receive one of the 50 tickets available for entrance. Maury Johnson, a tremendous advocate and pipeline fighter from Monroe County, West Virginia, held the first spot, having arrived before dark. Paid line holders took up many of the limited spots, but the inspiring pipeline fighters and community members impacted by Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines, including members of the POWHR Coalition and Friends of Buckingham, were able to secure spots, waiting through the frigid night into Monday morning. Sierra Club Virginia and D.C. chapters were able to provide support through the evening. Public interest in the case was very high, and although the Atlantic Coast Pipeline would significantly impact the public, the limited accessibility to the proceedings and the small amount of seating and available tickets reinforced that public engagement is not prioritized.

After the oral arguments concluded, the Sierra Club, the South-

*See Art and activism on page 7.*

## Notes from the chair: Virginia Chapter chair and director road show

by Daryl Downing



### From the chair

Kate and I decided it was worth the effort to visit all of the Sierra Club

groups in Virginia. It's a big state! Since late last year, we've managed to visit 11 of 12 groups to discuss the Chapter strategic plan and hear about the successes and problems experienced by the groups. Both Kate and I found it very worthwhile and thank group members for their hospitality and preparedness. We're smarter for having made the effort, and progress has been seen on several fronts. We'll visit the twelfth group this month.

One problem that all groups identified is the difficulty accessing and using the Club's IT systems. There are several, and some

are more user-friendly than others. Virginia Chapter has a Leader Resources website that provides lots of information about these systems for new chapter and group leaders, such as the executive committee and committee chairs. Sierra Club National experts have helped people who've had problems. Ben Weiner, who transferred from the Chapter to National last year, is offering IT training accessible to volunteer leaders across the state. Be on the lookout for information regarding dates of digital training for groups hosted by Ben.

Group leaders presented one or

two of their 2021 goals at the March 14 ExCom mtg. This information sharing with other groups, Chapter ExCom and the director will help us chart paths to strengthen our presence in the state and achieve great environmental outcomes.

Great results have come out of the General Assembly. Combine this with the grassroots knowledge and activism of Sierrans working with other community groups, and we can look forward to cleaner air, cleaner water and healthier communities. Onward.

*Daryl Downing is the chair of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Closing the Chapter's digital divide

by Tim Cywinski

A "digital divide" refers to the gap between those who have access to online and internet resources and those who do not. Staff and volunteer leaders are working hard to enhance our membership's access to Sierra Club's unique digital tools, and I am happy to report that more groups are adopting plans to maximize their digital activity. We are certainly making progress, and there are certain actions that members can take to help close our chapter's digital divide.

One simple but effective action to close the gap is to update your email preferences. The total membership of Virginia Chapter is around 20,000 members, but less than half have updated their email preferences so they can receive membership-relevant information from the Chapter. The problem of this gap became clear when numerous members did not receive an email containing vital information regarding the ExCom

election digital ballot.

The good news is that the fix is easy with internet access. All one has to do is visit <https://vasierra.club/account> and log in or sign up for access to the site. Once you are logged in, click the My Account drop down menu on the top left and select Communication Preferences. From there, select "Manage email newsletters and email contact preferences." You will now find yourself on a page that enables you to tailor your email preferences. I strongly encourage you to ensure you are subscribed to the My Chapter category as it will enable you to receive information specific to our members. Updating email preferences should only take about two minutes, but it goes a long way in strengthening our chapter's communication efforts and closing our own digital divide.

*Tim Cywinski is the communications coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Virginia Chapter at-large and group elections

by Linda Muller

Each year the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club holds elections for at-large executive committee (ExCom) positions. Additionally, each group holds elections for its local executive committees. Elections take place in the final quarter of each year. The following is a timeline for the 2020 at-large and local group elections

March 2020, Virginia Chapter ExCom meeting: Chair solicits volunteers for nominating committee and election committee

Spring through August 2020, solicitation of nominees for four at-large seats: Goal is to have more candidates than vacancies. Increasing diversity across the organization's leadership team is important.

September 2020, Virginia Chapter nominating committee's reporting of candidates for at-large positions: Names and candidate bios for at-large positions will be published in the fall Virginia Sierran, which will include ballots and balloting in-

structions. Chapter ExCom and all group ExCom voting will be done using National's electronic voting program. Since this is the first year where e-voting will be used for all elections, a paper ballot will appear in the September Virginia Sierran, too. Members should vote using one method or the other.

October 16, 2020, Deadline for group candidates: Groups provide Chapter communications coordinator with a list of candidates and the link to the group websites where bios/statements and photos are located.

November 22, 2020, Deadline for all ballots/e-ballots to be post-marked/submitted for at-large and group board elections.

*Linda Muller is the chair of the nominating committee of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Virginia Sierran

Virginia Sierran is the official newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter and is published quarterly. 100 West Franklin St., Mezzanine, Richmond, Virginia 23220 <https://sierraclub.org/virginia>

**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](mailto: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](mailto:member.care@sierraclub.org) for membership and mailing issues and [address.changes@sierraclub.org](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org) to change your mailing address.



## Coming together: The power of grassroots advocacy and collective action

by Kate Addleson

As I write this article, the World Health Organization has confirmed that the coronavirus outbreak is a global pandemic and adequate response will significantly disrupt our typical day-to-day lives. Given that things are in such a state of flux, it bears noting that all Sierra Club events and activities mentioned in this newsletter are subject to change. As an organization that prioritizes community building and collective action, we encourage you to be proactive in the role you can play in helping to avert further spread of the virus. Stopping this pandemic will require us all to support one another, particularly those most vulnerable to the illness and those who may not be well-equipped to adapt to changing circumstances in this difficult time.

The shift toward social distancing feels particularly abrupt and surreal in light of the past ten weeks of nonstop, intense activity around the state legislature, including passage of many environmental policies that wouldn't have had a prayer in sessions past. Ultimately, over 42 environmental and energy policies we supported passed and will now go on to the governor's desk. (More on this later in the issue from Bob Shippee, our legislative chair.)

This year's Virginia General Assembly session and the unprec-

edented opportunity for progress (thanks to the new cadre of liberal/progressive representatives) brought with it unique struggles that our team of staff and volunteers weathered with determination, grit and grace. Together, we were able to pass long-overdue legislation that implements climate action and removes barriers to distributed renewable energy, charting a path to 100% clean energy by 2050. This bill, the Virginia Clean Economy Act, transforms our state into the top clean-energy leader of the South and places Virginia among the top states for climate solutions in the nation. This victory was a direct result of the growing grassroots movement for climate action and our unrelenting determination to be united as we confronted the corporate polluters that have long held Virginia back on environmental protections.

The results speak for themselves. This is what effective grassroots organizing and advocacy looks like. As a community, we didn't get everything we wanted, but we have a lot to show for this struggle and the commitment of everyone involved to keep fighting until the very end. And, in this work, the end is never really an end but another beginning. Our exciting achievements in the General Assembly this year set us up for further victories in our campaigns

and in the 2021 legislative session, which are essential to meet the challenges of the climate crisis and ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

The unsurprising failings of the Trump administration to handle the coronavirus outbreak, which are causing many states, communities and businesses to take matters into their own hands to stifle the spread, are yet another reminder of the urgent need to tap into the full potential of grassroots power and elect new federal leadership this fall.

This year presents an unprecedented opportunity to work in unity with our allies across a broad spectrum of issues to defeat Trump and restore the rights and protections that exemplify our values. In the coming months, I hope you will join

me in celebrating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by engaging in the youth-led Climate Strike and days of action (April 22-24), attending legislative debriefs and meetings with your representatives and participating in our Summer of Action—launching our People's Lobby Force and political action teams.

While the format of some of our actions may change, today's digital tools provide us with the means to continue to grow our movement, even if in-person interaction is limited. Please don't sit this out! Join with other volunteers in your community and across the state to make history this fall and beyond. Together, we cannot be defeated.

*Kate Addleson is the director of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Chapter issue chairs needed!

by Daryl Downing

"What's a Chapter issue chair?" you ask. If you go to the Issues page of the Virginia Chapter website (<https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/about#issues>), you will see that "Issue Chairs are responsible for identifying and championing priorities related to their issue area, and ensuring that all Chapter work related to their issue area is in compliance with Club policy." If you were only slightly intrigued originally, now you're probably really excited to read on.

As you undoubtedly know, the Sierra Club delves into a lot of different areas. It's unreasonable to expect that someone on the staff or Chapter executive committee has the expertise in every environmental area. This is where issue chairs come in. The volunteers who serve in these roles have a personal or professional interest in the topic, e.g., nuclear power. It is expected that they'd keep up to date on news in this subject area with a focus on Virginia.

The title "chair" is a bit misleading. Generally, these chairs don't actually chair a committee; although, one could be created should the need arise (e.g., Lake Anna 3 rears its ugly head making nuclear energy a hot topic). In the Club, conservation chair is a big position and most issue chairs will provide input to our conservation co-chairs for the quarterly conservation reports and keep them apprised, along with other

Chapter leaders, on breaking issues. Our forests chair recently raised an issue and prepared an Action Alert and coordinated the Chapter joining other organizations in signing a letter highlighting our concerns.

While some issue chair titles at the above website have links to a job description, many do not. Those who fill these positions can help develop a description of duties when it doesn't exist. What's required is that you be a Virginia Chapter member who's willing to maintain an in-depth understanding of what's happening in the issue area and communicate with Chapter leaders when necessary.

Current issue chair vacancies:

- Legal
- Environmental justice
- Outings
- Public health
- Climate
- Ocean issues (We have two volunteers working in this area but they're willing to pass the baton if someone's interested.)
- Newsletter compliance officer (not listed on website): This person would work with the Virginia Sierran editor to ensure our chapter newsletter complies with 501(c)(3)/(c)(4) requirements.

Thank you for all you do! Please contact me at [dtdowning@comcast.net](mailto:dtdowning@comcast.net) if you'd like to do more.

*Daryl Downing is the chair of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Staff update: Thank you, Corrina



Corrina Beall, the Chapter's legislative and political director, is moving on from her time at the Sierra Club and relocating to Montana with her husband and sweet, 9-month-old baby. Corrina served the Chapter for more than seven years, playing a vital role in implementing and enhancing the Chapter's legislative advocacy and political program. Corrina not only worked to influence state policy as the Chapter's sole staff lobbyist in the General Assembly session and

to the governor's administration, she also oversaw the growth of our legislative committee, now composed of more than 20 members. The list of Corrina's accomplishments runs longer than the word limit our newsletter articles allow, but her impact and work was noticed beyond the Sierra Club scope. In 2019, Corrina was recognized as one of Richmond's "Top 40 under 40" by Style Magazine for her advocacy inside and out of the halls of the General Assembly Building.

It is always hard to say goodbye to staff members who represent the ideals of the Sierra Club, especially when they were part of the organization for so long. As we look to find the new legislative and political director, we know that Corrina's shoes will be hard to fill. We will always be thankful for all of Corrina's contributions during her tenure at the Chapter, and we wish her all the best as she continues her journey in Montana.



**Please note: As part of the Sierra Club's efforts to prioritize the health and safety of communities and vulnerable individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic, all upcoming events are subject to change or cancellation. For more information, please contact the appropriate group chair listed in the Group Directory on page 5.**

## Piedmont Group events

All described events are free and open to the public.

### Upcoming events

**April 16**, 6:30 p.m. Preparing for the Climate Crisis, Northside Library, 705 Rio Road West, Charlottesville

Emily Little of the Climate Reality Project will discuss the crisis of climate change. What can we do to avoid the worst effects? How can we adapt to the inevitable changes?

Other presenters include Gudrun Campbell, leader of the Youth Climate Strike, and staff from Charlottesville and Albemarle County, who will provide updates on their climate protection plans.

Sponsored by the Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club and the National Organization of Women.

**April 26**, 12:00-4:00 p.m. Love Mother Earth Sustainability Festival, IX Park, Charlottesville

Come explore a vast, free family-fun festival on Sunday, April 26. A plethora of activities pertaining to sustainability issues awaits children of all ages. There will be dozens of green living demonstrations and other entertainment! Several music groups will be performing.

Over 25 of our community partners will be speaking about what they do for the community of Charlottesville. Fostering a sense of sustainability, each community partner

is carefully selected and some will be providing demonstrations.

The Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club will have a table and be distributing free redbud seedlings.

### Past events

The Piedmont Group hosted a program on Light Pollution on **January 26**. University of Virginia astronomer Ricky Patterson shared information about the effect of light pollution on turtles, birds, bats and fireflies as well as humans. There's an equity component, too, with lower-income folks less likely to be able to see the night sky. We learned about the quality of light, including using shielded lights outdoors and LED bulbs less than 2,700 Kelvin indoors. This program was the kickoff to working with local governments to update lighting ordinances; plans are underway to move that forward.

Kid\*Vention, the annual science fair for kids, took place on **February 8** and had over 1,000 visitors. Our group helped kids plant flowers to take home (we all like getting dirt under our fingernails) while we talked about what plants and pollinators need.

Our **February 16** program was the State of Clean Banking and Investing in Virginia, and we learned a lot about how to ensure our personal funds aren't supporting fossil fuels, private prisons and more.



*Piedmont Group treasurer Mike Pillow helped kids plant seeds at Kid\*Vention on February 8 (photo courtesy of Donna Shaunesey).*

## Rappahannock Group's Green Drinks social by Richard Eggeling

For the benefit of Chapter members who have not yet heard of this social, the Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club hosts a Green Drinks evening on the third Wednesday of each month at Tapa Rio in downtown Fredericksburg. Attendance is free and open to the public. If anyone would like more information about these events, please call or text me at 443-472-8264

On behalf of the Rappahannock Group, I would like to thank Adam Lynch (River Steward, Friends of the Rappahannock) for a most interesting presentation at our second social on **February 19**.

Adam shared the history and accomplishments of Friends of the

Rappahannock as well as the short- and long-term plans to expand its reach (while remaining focused on local issues) in a manner that set the stage for a lively question and answer session and, indeed, a very informative evening. Keep up the good work Adam!

We'd also like to thank Councilman Matt and Jon, for updating us on local issues related to the Rappahannock and progress in recycling; Anne, for sharing her efforts to protect the river from pavement litter and other serious matters "green"; Bill, for summarizing fracking issues in the Taylorsville basin (Potomac aquifer); Sarah, for promoting woman leaders; and Marcia, Mitzi,

Austin Sachs, Director of Protect US, shared his group's vision for public banking in Virginia. Stay tuned for this to come up in the General Assembly next year.

Our program on the State of Clean Banking and Investing in Virginia reached a wide cross-section

of folks. There are ongoing efforts to establish socially responsible investment and banking in Virginia and to make sure state-held funds are invested in projects that support justice, not extractive industries. The discussion also included ways to improve personal banking, too.

Amanda, Ruth and Pauline, for your questions, suggestions and contribution to the evening. (Last names were deliberately omitted in the interests of privacy.)

To witness this level of engagement and information sharing was a tonic!

And finally, We also would like to thank Ruth, the manager of Tapa Rio, for hosting this monthly event.

RGSC now invites all to attend our next social on **March 18**, at 6-7:30 p.m. at Tapa Rio, for presentations by women leaders in our community. March is dedicated to recognizing women who are leading the charge confronting local envi-

ronmental issues, including climate change.

Our thanks to Bridget McGregor for coordinating with the following prominent woman who will make presentations: Amanda Stebbins with Fossil Free Fredericksburg, Anne Little with Tree Fredericksburg and our own Paula Chow with RGSC.

These women will be sharing wins they've had since 2019 and what they would like to accomplish in 2020. We look forward to an interesting evening!

*Richard Eggeling is a co-chair and an outings co-chair of the Rappahannock Group.*



## Earth Day on the Rappahannock

by Paula Chow

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, April 18**, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Old Mill Park, Fredericksburg, for the 17th annual Earth Day on the Rappahannock festival (rain date April 25). As 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, this year's festival will have many new exhibits and stage presentations. The festival is free and open to the public and has an average attendance of 5,000 people.

One of the most exciting things that will occur on this momentous 50th anniversary of Earth Day is the Passing of the Torch to the youth. We plan to pass the torch to several area youth groups who will take the helm as volunteers under Fredericksburg's Department of Parks and Recreation in planning the annual Earth Day festival. A ceremony to

mark this transition will occur in the afternoon on stage.

2020 is the 11th year of Rappahannock Group Sierra Club's Living Green Award, which is presented to the recipients on stage. This award recognizes businesses, organizations, agencies or individuals of RGSC's membership catchment area who have implemented sustainable and ecologically sound practices in their daily activities.

RGSC organizes the student judging of the vendors' booths. Students will award booths in the following categories: Best Earth Day Idea, Most Creative Display and Most Interactive Display. Student judges are served pizza and given a certificate for their work.

RGSC will be collecting worn-out, ready-for-discarding athletic

shoes for the Nike program to recycle them for new shoes, clothing and playground surface material. Please remove the shoelaces before dropping them off.

This year may bring about a Trashion Show from area high schools. This event is an excellent opportunity to educate and advocate on issues locally, nationally and globally.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the RGSC booth. Contact Paula Chow at paulachow132@gmail.com to see how you can get involved.

*Paula Chow is the program chair of the Rappahannock Group.*

## Falls of the James Group spring programs

Unless otherwise noted, 2020 Falls of the James Group spring programs begin at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at the Science Museum of Virginia and are free and open to the public. Check out the FOJG website at <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/falls-james> for more information.

**Tuesday, April 14**, The Zero-Energy-Ready Home, with Jay Epstein

As a developer of communities of energy-efficient homes, Jay Epstein will walk you through a history of energy efficient design from the early 90s to the present and end with descriptions of some of the projects that were and continue to be built around the state of Virginia.

**Saturday April 25**, 9:30 a.m., Bike Tour of Petersburg National Battlefield and Crater

With John Zeugner as our biking tour guide, we will leave from the Blandford Church and Cemetery Visitor's Center Parking Lot, 111 Rochelle Lane, Petersburg VA 23803.

Our moderately hilly 5+ mile ride will take us to Petersburg National Park Visitor's Interpretation Center where we will watch a 20 minute film about the Siege of Petersburg and Battle of the Crater and view the exhibits. Then we retrace our 5 mile route, pausing at the park's interpretation stops and other places of interest. Last stop will be at the site of the Battle of the Crater. The esti-

mated time is 2.5 to 3 hours. Lunch afterwards at Trapezium Brewery or Saucy's Sit Down BBQ in Petersburg.

A voluntary \$2 donation to FOJG Sierra Club is requested to support our volunteer-led activities. Please contact Shavon Peacock, FOJG Sierra Club certified outings leader, at 804-855-8458 or at shavonandrew@verizon.net for more information.

**April 26-May 9**, Volunteers needed for presorting before the Big Yard Sale!

It is time again to volunteer for the fantastic Big Yard Sale at the University of Richmond! As you know, this recycling effort involves a huge volunteer team that collects, sorts and sells items discarded by students as they leave campus. Preparation starts weeks before the public sale date (this year, **Saturday, May 16**), so already the presorting sign-up sheets are available.

Keep in mind that this project is a perfect example of reduce/recycle/reuse. Volunteers are benefited by knowing that they take part in diverting good stuff from the landfill, donating leftover items to Goodwill Industries and generating funds for FOJG and the Sustainability Department at the University of Richmond. Plus, meeting other volunteers makes it all fun! So check your calendar and sign up to participate!

**Saturday, May 23**, Capital Trail Bike Ride. 9 a.m.

Bring your bike for a leisurely ride on the Capital Trail. We plan to set off from Four Mile Creek Park off Hwy 5 in Richmond and ride for 2-3 hours before lunch at Ronnie's BBQ on Hwy 5. All levels of adult riders are welcome. Maximum of ten participants. A voluntary \$2 donation to FOJG Sierra Club is requested to support our volunteer-led activities.

**Thursday, May 28**, FOJG Annual Picnic. 6-8 p.m.

**Saturday, May 30**, Paddling in Pocahontas State Park, 10 a.m.

We will meet at the canoe/kayak rental building to rent kayaks, canoes and equipment and aim to set off by 10:30. After paddling for a couple of hours upstream on the narrow Swift Creek, we will come back downstream into the wider Swift Creek Lake.

Park entrance fee is \$10 per car. Canoes and kayaks rent for \$10 an hour or \$30 for 4 hours. All equipment is provided by Pocahontas State Park. We ask for a \$2 donation to FOJG Sierra Club for hosting this event.

Registration for the trip, waiver form and more information can be found on our website. Participants will pay at the park, first come first serve. The limit is 15 people 14 years and older. No experience is needed.

## 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.

**Blue Ridge:** Tom Eick  
434-277-5491  
ThomasEick4@gmail.com

**Chesapeake Bay:** John Luker  
757-337-4092  
4solar+SC@gmail.com

**Falls of the James:** Joe Brancoli  
804-502-9502  
omethid@hotmail.com

**Great Falls:** Norbert Pink  
703-264-7445  
norbertsierra@aol.com

**Mount Vernon:** Rick Keller  
703-625-9055  
rkeller49@verizon.net

**New River Valley:** Rick Shingles  
540-921-7324  
shingles@vt.edu

**Piedmont:** Donna Shaunesey  
434-996-0392  
shaunesey@hotmail.com

**Rappahannock:** Richard Eggeling  
443-472-8264  
rich.sue.sc@gmail.com

Bill Johnson  
540-657-1733  
billatthelake@comcast.net

**Roanoke:** Daniel Crawford  
540-343-5080  
dbcrawford@cox.net

**Shenandoah:** Pete Bsumek  
540-421-4105  
pkbsumek@gmail.com

**Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO):** Ellen Hill  
703-994-9493  
ellenwhill@gmail.com

**York River:** Tyla Matteson  
804-275-6476  
tmatteson1@mindspring.com



## Great Falls Group activities

by Norbert Pink



*The Great Falls Group organized three community meetings on the Transco Southeast Pipeline (photo courtesy of Norbert Pink).*

### Climate and energy

**Data centers.** A new BBC documentary on the polluting aspects of data centers, *Dirty Secrets*, was released on BBC iPlayer and YouTube on March 5. Alex Rough of the Great Falls Group was interviewed for the film and made a very good summary statement that appears at 4:30 on the video. GFG will host a related forum, “Renewable Energy Revolution and the Loudoun Data Centers,” on Saturday, May 16, 3-5 p.m.; venue TBD. This event will be free and open to the public.

**Pipelines.** Efforts by the GFG and allies to stop several controversial fracked-gas pipelines in Virginia continue to progress, with other environmental organizations getting involved. Three community meetings focusing on the Transco Southeast Pipeline have been organized by Susan Bonney, with a total attendance of about 75 people. The

community was appreciative that we were bringing this issue to their attention. Jolene Mafnas of Food and Water Watch has been our principal speaker. Focus will now be directed to the Virginia Natural Gas Header Improvement Project.

**Fairfax County 12-Point Energy and Climate Plan.** This has been updated by Ann Bennett for 2020. GFG will use this document as a guide when we talk to Fairfax County supervisors about the GFG energy and climate goals for Fairfax County.

**Fairfax County action plan.** Work on Fairfax County’s Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, known as CECAP, is advancing; new documentation is now scheduled for distribution by March 17 to the task force and focus groups for review. Brian Castelli is the lead for this activity with many GFG members on the focus groups. Comments are due back from the

focus groups to the task force by March 27. We look for this fact-laden information to educate the community and spur more action on climate impacts.

### Activism

#### Meetings with supervisors.

GFG has met with three of the ten Fairfax County supervisors so far. They have expressed support for helping us to advance our environmental goals, but we will still need to keep the pressure on them to protect our environment. After the Loudoun budget gets approved, we will probably meet with the nine Loudoun supervisors.

**Volunteer nights.** GFG has held three very successful volunteer nights focusing on recent issues like pipelines, data centers, transportation, etc. Following the issue presentations, the attendees formed small groups for roundtable discussions organized by topic and led by the speakers. The groups traded ideas about their topics and developed concrete actions or follow-up activities. For example, at one meeting, Linda Brown learned about the greenhouse-gas impact of data centers in Loudoun County and then wrote and submitted a letter to the editor. This LTE was published in the Loudoun Now, raising awareness of the issue. Another group took a trip to Richmond to lobby to stop a new fracked-gas pipeline in Manassas. Lisa Robinson of GFG has been transitioning into organizing these events, which we appreciate. GFG will initiate an LTE working group that Linda Brown has volunteered to coordinate and Seth Heald has vol-

unteered to advise.

**School partnerships.** Christopher Cuozzo has initiated getting GFG to partner with environmental groups at the Loudoun County Public Schools in support of some of their activities. First up will be an environmental engineer, Justin Smith of GFG, presenting on his experiences in his career. The next event will be on data centers’ energy impact, followed by a Climate Reality presentation. We’re trying to encourage more GFG members to get involved in these activities.

### Other programs

**Earth Day.** Earth Day’s 50th anniversary is coming up next month, and GFG plans on being involved in many community events.

**Name/boundary changes?** Both GFG and the Mount Vernon Group, the two Sierra Club groups in Northern Virginia, are exploring changing their names to clarify what parts of the region they represent, making it easier for the community to find the groups. Also, since the region’s membership has grown and is expected to continue to grow, the group boundaries are being looked at, especially given issues with the boundaries splitting political jurisdictions, areas underrepresented due to distance, population densities, etc.

See the January, February and March Great Falls Group newsletters at <https://virginia2.sierraclub.org> for more details.

*Norbert Pink is the chair of the Great Falls Group.*

## SCPRO One Day Hike

by Ellen Hill

Since the beginning of 2020, Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO) has been busy preparing for and helping participants train for the One Day Hike, held this year on **Saturday, April 18**. This free and open event, a 100k hike with a 50k option, has been sponsored by our outings group every year since 1974. Traditionally, it begins on the C&O Canal Towpath in Georgetown, Washington, D.C., and ends in Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, West Virginia, but because of the December 21 CSX train derailment that wiped out a portion of the Potomac River footbridge to Harpers Ferry, this year’s

hike will end at the Brunswick Family Campground.

Mike Darzi and the hike committee have worked tirelessly to make this alternate arrangement to the finish. Hundreds of volunteers help make the the hike successful. Every Saturday, SCPRO leaders conduct fast conditioning hikes of ever-increasing distances. On the day of the hike, first-aid volunteers tend to hikers’ blisters and an array of minor injuries and discomforts. Volunteers on bicycles monitor participants’ progress and condition, lending encouragement and trouble-shooting issues before they become full-

blown problems. Family and friends line the towpath cheering on hikers as on any marathon. The atmosphere is festive and inspiring!

Now that I’ve described how the One Day Hike should roll out, I would be foolish not to acknowledge that the coronavirus could result in more derailment this year than just the Harpers Ferry footbridge. At the time of this writing, I, like everyone on earth, have no idea how the virus will affect future plans. Already, so many plans have been disrupted. So . . . fingers crossed.

In closing, I want to thank the Virginia Chapter for the steadfast

support they give our outings group. In the four years I have been chair of SCPRO, I have been truly awed by the expertise and commitment of the staff and volunteers who work so tirelessly to “conserve and protect” the commonwealth. As my office is term-limited to four years, this will be my last missive in the Virginia Sierran and this weekend’s executive committee meeting will be my last. I mean it when I say that the privilege has been all mine.

*Ellen Hill is the chair of Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings.*



## Youth Climate Crisis Conference

by Paula Chow



*Mekenzy, Melanie, Tierra and Esme of the Colonial Forge High School Eco Club tabled at the second annual Youth Climate Crisis Conference (photo courtesy of John Gerlach).*

The student members of Fossil Free Fredericksburg successfully organized the second annual Youth Climate Crisis Conference held on February 29 at Colonial Forge High School in Stafford.

Free and open to the public, the conference included a keynote address on the current climate crisis in Virginia by climate scientist Ben Watson. Breakout sessions included the topics of youth advocacy, reducing your carbon footprint, coral reef conservation, climate medicine, regenerative agriculture, sustainable energy and an overview of environmental justice. The public policy session included Sierra Club Virginia Chapter member Lee Williams as a panel speaker. Eric Bonds ended with a talk on hope and action.

Refreshments were sponsored

by the Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club. Kudos to the student organizers who held close to zero-waste principles in serving the refreshments. Many local businesses contributed to the sustainable raffle. Area environmental and related groups tabled with Pass On Plastic campaign giving away reusable net produce bags with a pledge “from now on to refuse any new plastic bag including Ziploc-type bags but excluding large trash bags.”

The conference was well attended by area high school and middle school students, their parents, interested adults, community leaders and government officials.

*Paula Chow is the program chair of the Rappahannock Group.*

### Summer Outings Leader Training Register Now!

On June 26-28, Sierra Club Virginia Chapter will host a weekend training for new outings leaders at Pocahontas State Park. This training will prepare leaders to conduct hiking, mountain biking and kayaking day trips. This is an exciting opportunity to grow our outings program across the state, and we encourage anyone interested to sign up.

Visit <http://vasierra.club/oltava20> to register.

We believe that “by naming and reducing barriers to entry and ensuring all people have the opportunities to explore and enjoy nature, we will improve lives while inspiring and empowering a new generation of leaders to protect the environment.”

Hope to see you at the summer training!

## Environmental justice update

by Gustavo Angeles

Together, we helped secure a small victory in our support for Charles City residents fighting the Chickahominy power plant, the proposed fracked-gas plant whose massive size will serve as the nation’s fifth largest plant of its kind. Thanks to you and nearly 600 others who took action, the comment period for a special exception water permit was both moved to a more convenient date outside the holiday season and extended by an additional 20 days. This achievement may seem small, but it goes a long way in ensuring impacted residents have ample time to learn about the impacts of this dirty project on their community and allows more time for residents and advocates to respond appropriately.

Through an action alert, our members and supporters also requested that the Department of Environmental Quality offer another informational meeting. The meeting happened in Varina. The notable difference in that meeting was that a member of the board of supervisors requested that the department answer questions on the microphone instead of doing so individually at the tables around the room, a request previously denied to community members. This shows that DEQ can easily take steps to better inform community members. That the department does not do it proactively sends a message that this office, created to provide us with information, exhibits little interest in complying with that mission, regardless of how much this information helps people understand what is happening in their backyards.

On February 28, 2020, DEQ held a public hearing for the special exception permit for water withdrawal for the Chickahominy gas power

plant in Charles City County. The meeting was well-attended. Several community members presented their testimonies, alerting water board members as well as DEQ about their concerns regarding water, which in this county is all coming from individual wheels. In addition to the lawyer representing the gas power plant, only one person, a county supervisor, spoke in favor of the special exception.

We are also providing support and monitoring an environmental justice issue currently impacting the Monacan Indian Nation. On March 11, the James River Water Authority voted in favor of pursuing its original path for construction of its water pump station, which will in turn destroy Rassawek, a sacred site for the Monacan Indian Nation. In doing so, the water authority rejected several alternatives that the Army Corp of Engineers had ordered them to consider and explore. We are deeply concerned with this decision, which will put the Monacan Nation’s sacred site in jeopardy. Once again, this result ignores native culture and burials located in the area. There is still an opportunity to request that the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers deny their permits. We will continue to support the desires of the Monacan Indian Nation.

It will take constant and unified efforts to ensure Virginia prioritizes environmental justice. Please stay in touch if you would like to help us move forward with any of these fights, and thank you for all that you do.

*Gustavo Angeles is the environmental justice program coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.*

### Art and activism continued from page 1

ern Environmental Law Center and Wild Virginia held a press conference on the steps of the Supreme Court. Kelly Martin, the director of the Sierra Club Beyond Dirty Fuels campaign, spoke at the conference. “For the past six years,” she said, “communities have been speaking out against the damage this unnecessary fracked gas pipeline would cause to our health, water and climate. It is a dirty, dangerous project that would endanger communities, harm wildlife, pollute our air, damage water quality and change the character of our land. Today, our

fight against the ACP took us to the Supreme Court, but the fight didn’t start here and it won’t end here.”

The court is expected to reach a decision by the end of June. Regardless of the court’s decision, the unnecessary, dangerous Atlantic Coast Pipeline remains without many required permits. Please contact [jessica.sims@sierraclub.org](mailto:jessica.sims@sierraclub.org) if you would like to get involved in the Stop the Pipelines campaign.

*Jessica Sims is the Richmond community outreach coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.*



## The road to clean transportation in Virginia by Cheri Conca

In the battle against climate change, much attention is understandably focused on replacing dirty energy from coal and fracked gas with renewable power from wind and solar. But emissions from cars, trucks and buses are the No. 1 source of climate change pollution in Virginia, accounting for almost half of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. People with respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and low-income folks who live next to congested roads particularly suffer. In a land that worships the car, it is going to take a lot of grassroots power from people like you to push local, regional and state decision-makers to adopt policies and actions that prioritize clean transportation.

Communities need to rethink not only how to move people from point A to point B without getting into a car but also what points A and B will look like in the future. Bus rapid transit, connected systems of bicycle and pedestrian paths, improved Metro and bus service at affordable prices, electric vehicle infrastructure and fleet vehicles are all options that go a long way toward decreasing the fossil fuel pollution that warms the planet and negatively affects people's health.

Additional strategies for greenhouse gas reduction involve land-use planning, such as smart growth and transit-oriented development. Smart growth is a way to build communities that are economically

prosperous, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable. Transit-oriented development allows communities to develop or redevelop in a way that tosses aside the typical one-person-per-car scenario in favor of development that plans residential, business and recreation areas all within walking distance of public transport, such as a Metro station.

New state legislation nudges localities to incorporate transit-oriented development into their planning processes. House Bill 585, sponsored by Del. Elizabeth Guzmán, requires certain Virginia cities and counties to consider incorporating strategies into their comprehensive plans that focus development around transit, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through coordination of transportation, housing and land-use planning.

"Localities and cities are asked to do their part to fight climate change by considering options related to affordable housing, public transportation and land-use planning when preparing their comprehensive plans," said Del. Guzmán. "By working together, we can drastically reduce Virginia's carbon footprint." Upon signing the bill, Gov. Ralph Northam pointed out that transit-oriented development helps create walkable, accessible communities with smaller carbon footprints.

Many groups and individuals in Northern Virginia join the Sierra Club

in advocating for transportation-related climate solutions, from smart growth to electrification of school buses. All of these transportation pieces fit into a bigger picture, one that must be fleshed out in community plans to provide direction and measurable results for years to come.

It is critical that all of Fairfax County's voices are heard for clean transportation, for example:

- commuters who would use transit if it were convenient,
- bus riders who are negatively impacted by fees and fumes,
- people who travel by foot or bicycle who find it difficult or impossible to get from point A to point B,
- business owners who know that well-connected, healthy communities draw more customers,
- neighborhoods that suffer from health and respiratory problems caused by congestion-clogged roads.

If you live in Fairfax County, you have some important upcoming opportunities to join us in advocating for actions that will reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. Fairfax County has drafted its first-ever strategic plan, and community input meetings are scheduled for March and April.

A Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, known as CECAP, is also in the works; it will include a greenhouse gas inventory and target dates for greenhouse gas

reduction. Actions and strategies to help mitigate climate change and reduce the impact of climate-related events on county residents and businesses will also be part of the plan.

The plan will be primarily developed by a task force composed of leaders from the business community; local and regional nonprofits, including Sierra Club members; and residents from each of the nine Fairfax County supervisor districts. Each district has a focus group composed of community members with experience or interest in climate, energy and environmental issues. Community input is critical to the success of CECAP, and all county residents will have the opportunity to provide input at community meetings later this year.

Your voice is important. Share these opportunities with friends, neighbors and especially people who might not otherwise hear about them. Climate change affects everyone. Your stories are the spark for transition to cleaner, more equitable transportation in Fairfax County. Together we build power to affect the policies and actions needed to fight climate change.

*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](mailto: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 Tim Cywinski at [tim.cywinski@sierraclub.org](mailto:tim.cywinski@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 Tim Cywinski at [tim.cywinski@sierraclub.org](mailto:tim.cywinski@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](mailto: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 Jessica Sims at [jessica.sims@sierraclub.org](mailto:jessica.sims@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](mailto:cheri.conca@sierraclub.org)** or visit <https://vasierra.club/nova>

## Virginians protest proposed overhaul of the National Environmental Policy Act

by Ann Creasy

Climate advocates from across Virginia called on leaders to halt the rollback of NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act.

Dr. Mildred McClain of Savannah's Harambe organization framed the battle over the rollbacks. "We will not be silent," she said. "NEPA is our tool, it's the people's tool...we are going to fight, fight, fight for our environment." The Trump administration released a proposal to take a wrecking ball to one of our foundational environmental laws, the National Environmental Policy Act. The latest proposal represents another handout to polluters. The proposed changes call for expediting major federal actions like new drilling and mining and unnecessary development of new fossil fuel infrastructure, and they direct our agencies to ignore the impacts on climate change and our health.

At present, the National Environmental Policy Act requires completion of a rigorous environmental review that incorporates the concerns of local communities and determines whether a proposed infrastructure project may have a significant environmental impact. It promotes environmental justice by requiring federal agencies to study and disclose a proposed project's potential environmental, economic, social and health impacts on low-income, minority and rural communities. It also provides opportunities for meaningful input from those affected communities.

The Trump administration is seeking changes to current NEPA policy that would roll back necessary protective measures of the approval process, making it easier for polluters to acquire approval absent of diligent oversight. Lakshmi Fjord, an anthropologist, commented to the federal government, "We beg you, please reinforce what's already there. Do not take away any of these protections."

On February 25, the Sierra Club and partners protested the proposed rollback at an organized rally and heard individuals representing impacted communities in Washington, D.C.

"We felt great urgency about coming to the NEPA hearing in person. NEPA's mission to perform in-depth environmental impact and justice reviews of the ecosystems



*On February 25, members of Sierra Club and partner organizations protested the proposed rollback of NEPA at a rally in Rawlins Park in Washington (photo courtesy of Cheri Conca).*

and communities where polluting infrastructure is planned has already been greatly diminished. Now, at stake are very public comment pe-

riods where independent scientific experts and impacted peoples bring factual evidence of these impacts and injustices to decision-makers—

to directly counter biased industry-sponsored data that erases these harms. These protections need to be strengthened, not eliminated," said Lakshmi Fjord, Heidi Dhivya Berthoud and Swami Dayananda with Friends of Buckingham.

Shortcutting environmental reviews doesn't just cost taxpayers money, it jeopardizes worker safety as well as the health of our local communities. As sea levels continue to rise and extreme weather events become more frequent, the National Environmental Policy Act ensures our roads, bridges and other infrastructure are engineered to be more resilient to the increasingly severe effects of climate change.

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

### Protecting Human Health in a Changing Climate 2020 Conference Registration Open!

Register now for UVA's conference designed to help you address population health needs in the face of a changing climate.

**Date: April 18, 2020**

**Time: 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM**

**Location: UVA Darden School of Business, Charlottesville, VA**

Provided by University of Virginia School of Nursing Continuing Education in partnership with University of Virginia School of Medicine Office of Continuing Medical Education.

Credits offered: 6.5 Contact Hours, 6.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)<sup>™</sup>, 6.5 Hours of Participation

This one-day conference is designed to help health care providers gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between a changing climate and human health. Climate change is leading to an increase in intensity and frequency of extreme weather and weather-related disasters, changes in air and water quality, and changes in the distribution of vector-borne illnesses. The effect of these changes on selected health conditions will be reviewed. By gaining a deeper understanding of these changes, health care professionals will be better prepared to address population health needs in the face of a changing climate. Opportunities for health care professionals to become more involved with addressing climate-related policy will be discussed.

For more information or to register, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/2020CCHH-Register>

University of Virginia School of Nursing Continuing Education is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Questions? Write to us: [sonce@virginia.edu](mailto:sonce@virginia.edu)



## 2020: The most important election in our lifetime

by Glen Besa

As you know, the Trump Administration has taken a wrecking ball to our environmental laws and institutions. Trump's attacks on democratic institutions even threatens the basic system of government that permits us to advocate for environmental and climate protections. The need to defeat Trump in 2020 makes this year the most important election in our lifetime.

In 2020, at a national level, Sierra Club will be steering our resources towards four high-priority goals:

- Defeat Donald Trump and reclaim our democracy. We are laser-focused on electing a new president and ending Mitch McConnell's grip on the Senate. Sierra Club Independent Action has launched the biggest voter mobilization effort in our history, and we'll be deploying volunteers to knock on doors, send letters and talk to millions of voters between now and Election Day. If you want to volunteer and work hard to defeat Donald Trump, please sign up. We're organizing our largest mobilization of supporters in our 128-year history.

- Shift our economy to 100% clean energy. We've shut down 304 coal plants and we have 226 left to go. As the reign of coal ends, we need to make sure it is replaced by clean, renewable energy, not fracked gas. This year we'll be working to stop gas extraction as well as the new processing facilities and export terminals the gas industry is rushing to build. Meanwhile, we'll continue to secure 100% clean energy commitments from towns, cities and states around the country through our Ready for 100 campaign.

- Protect 30% of America's public lands by 2030. Not only is undeveloped land essential for plant and animal life and as a refuge from the chaos of modern life, but it also helps fight climate change by absorbing greenhouse gases. In order to avoid mass extinction and climate catastrophe, scientists say we need to safeguard at least 30% of America's land by 2030. This year our 30x30 campaign will begin to mobilize activists on an unprecedented scale to protect state, local and federal lands. We'll also continue to defend places like the borderlands and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And we will litigate every single environmental rollback the Trump administration throws our way.

- Build power for the long term. The climate crisis, inequality and erosion of democracy aren't separate problems; we can't really solve one without addressing the others. The work we do in the coming year (and decade) has to make our movement more inclusive and resilient in the long term. That means putting equity and justice at the center of everything we do. Sierra Club has not yet endorsed a candidate for president, as we generally do not endorse in party primaries, but nationally, we are gearing up for our most expensive election program ever; it is intended to defeat Trump, retain control of the U.S. House and take control of the U.S. Senate. Already, Sierra Club is recruiting volunteers willing to travel to key battleground states like Pennsylvania, Florida, Michigan and Arizona to turn out voters in the final days of the 2020 campaign this October and November.

In Virginia, we have endorsed a number of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, and we are working on our U.S. Senate endorsement. We would encourage you to get involved locally in any of these races where we have endorsed candidates. Those races are:

- Rep. Elaine Luria (VA-2)
- Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-3)
- Rep. A. Donald McEachin (VA-4)
- Rep. Abigail Spanberger (VA-7)
- Rep. Don Beyer, Jr. (VA-8)
- Rep. Jennifer Wexton (VA-10)
- Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA-11)

The grassroots power of our membership has been proven in achieving tremendous victories in Virginia in 2017, 2018 and 2019. It is vital that we continue the momentum this year, so please consider door knocking, phone banking and other ways you can support environmental candidates. If you'd like to get involved in the Virginia Chapter's political work, please contact me, Glen Besa, at [glenbesa@gmail.com](mailto:glenbesa@gmail.com) or 804-387-6001.

*Glen Besa is the political chair of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Virginia goes big for offshore wind

by Eileen Woll

Virginia's landmark Clean Economy Act calls for over 5,200 megawatts of offshore wind, enough clean energy to power almost 1.5 million homes—all by 2034.

That 5,200 MW includes 2,600 MW from Dominion Energy's project that will be online by 2026. The remaining 2,600 MW could come from an independent project in development just across the border in North Carolina. Known as the Kitty Hawk project and developed by Avangrid, it will connect to the electric grid in Virginia and is expected to begin generating power as early as 2026.

That 5,200 MW ranks the commonwealth as the third-largest state commitment in the U.S., behind New York's 9,000 MW by 2035 and New Jersey's 7,500 MW by 2035.

Dominion's preliminary cost figures are based on offshore wind turbines being built with 100% European parts and a lot of European labor. Of course, using American parts and labor would bring that cost way down and create tens of thousands of good jobs producing those parts as well.

That 5,200 MW also prompted Siemens Gamesa to announce that they were seriously considering locating a blade manufacturing facility in Hampton Roads. This is huge. Siemens Gamesa is the world's leading offshore wind turbine supplier, today churning out almost 13,000

MW of clean energy from its 3,115 offshore wind turbines.

Siemens Gamesa spokeswoman Abby Watson testified at the General Assembly in favor of legislation committing Virginia to the offshore wind buildout, saying it "provides us with the level of commercial certainty that we would need in order to proceed."

Bingo! Exactly as we've been saying for a couple of years now! Before any investor would dump a lot of money into Virginia, they needed market certainty, i.e., commitment by Dominion and the commonwealth to developing a major offshore wind project.

Virginia has got it all, and Sierra Club activists can pat themselves on the back for helping to deliver on offshore wind. We already had the best port along the Atlantic; a ready workforce; lots of community engagement and enthusiasm; great local, regional and state government support; and all the momentum coming from the two-turbine Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project that will see construction this summer and be online by the end of 2020. Now with passage of the Clean Economy Act, Virginia is committed to a clean energy economy and ready to claim the mantle of U.S. offshore wind leader.

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

### Disaster/Travel/Wilderness First Aid Certification

For adults and teenagers with solid attention spans. Learn hands on how to save life and limb during the critical minutes or hours before ambulance or hospital arrival. Earn the SOLO WFA two-year certification, approved by the ACA, BSA, GS-USA, BCUNA and more.

- April 4-5, 2020 ... Richmond, VA**
- April 18-19, 2020 ... Blacksburg, VA**
- May 9-10, 2020 ... Charlottesville, VA**
- May 13-14, 2020 ... Charlottesville, VA**
- May 16-17, 2020 ... Washington, DC area**
- May 19-20, 2020 ... Charlottesville, VA**
- May 23-25, 2020 ... Mountains near Blacksburg, VA**
- June 6-7, 2020 ... Washington, DC**  
**(SC Members \$15 off)**
- June 13-14, 2020 ... Norfolk, VA**
- June 20-21, 2020 ... Charlottesville, VA**

Classes instructed by Matthew Rosefsky, Geo Medic, SOLO Instructor-Trainer and Sierra Club Outings leader. Cost is \$215. See <https://solowfa.com> for more information and online registration.

## Landmark General Assembly session yields major climate action

by Bob Shippee

As of this writing, the 2020 General Assembly is completing a jam-packed, slightly-extended session. The Chapter took positions on an unprecedented 180 bills this year! Thanks to the new majorities in both chambers and tremendous grassroots support, we achieved passage of more than a third of the bills, including all three of our top priorities:

The Virginia Clean Economy Act, patroned by Sen. McClellan (SB851) and Del. Sullivan (HB1526), establishes Virginia's first mandatory Energy Efficiency Resource Standard and its first mandatory Renewable Portfolio Standard. It expands utility and distributed solar, establishes major wind and battery storage goals and extends RGGI-esque carbon reductions through 2050, when the electric sector must be at zero emissions.

The "Solar Freedom" bill was patroned by McClellan (SB710) and Del. Keam (HB572), with other versions carried by Del. Lopez (HB1184) and Del. Jones (HB1647). It eliminates or eases numerous restrictions on distributed, net-metered solar for individuals, businesses and municipalities. This includes, among other provisions, an increase to the net-metering cap from 1% to 6%, a huge increase in Dominion's power purchase agreement cap to 1000 MW and an end to stand-by charges for systems below 15 kW.

Full participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative was patroned by Sen. Lewis (SB1027) and Del. Herring (HB981), with revenue from the sale of carbon allowances going to low-income energy efficiency programs and coastal adaptation/mitigation.

In addition, dozens of other bills we supported passed, including a fracking ban (SB106/Surovell); environmental justice measures (HB1042/Herring, SB406/Hashmi, HB704/Keam, SB883/Locke); non-partisan redistricting (SJ18/Barker, HB758/VanValkenburg, SB203/Lucas); a renewable-energy-focused revision of the Commonwealth Energy Policy/Virginia Energy Plan (SB94/Favola, HB714/Reid); an offshore drilling ban (HB706/Keam, SB795/Lewis); the establishment of wildlife corridors (HB1695/Bulova, SB1004/Marsden); an electric vehicle rebate study (HB717/Reid); improvements to litter taxes/fees (HB502/Krizek, HB1154/Lopez); the Equal Rights Amendment (HJ1/Carroll-Foy, SJ1/McClellan); and many others.

Significantly, no bill that we opposed passed, and therefore we

contemplate no veto requests of the governor. This, too, is unprecedented.

Overall, while we still have many items on our to-do list for next year (improvements to some Virginia Clean Economy Act provisions and a major focus on transportation electrification, to name but two), we are very pleased with the results of this session. The incredible grassroots power unleashed in the 2017 and 2019 elections, along with intense involvement by supporters during session, has made a huge, hopefully lasting impact on our ability to move Virginia toward a cleaner, healthier future.

*Bob Shippee is the legislative chair and political vice chair of the Virginia Chapter.*

## An intern's perspective

by Page Wesselink



For 20 hours every week, I have the privilege of working at the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter as the community outreach and communications intern. For this position I am working under Tim Cywinski, the communications coordinator, from January until May.

Working with Tim, I get to see what goes into the framing and careful wording of a triumphant quote at the end of a news article and just how many Slim Jims it takes to get inspired for those moments. As my manager, Tim has taught me how easy it is to get involved in the law-making process and that no issue is too little or too wacky for the General Assembly. I have gained knowledge on writing eye-catching emails and utilizing creativity to gain more support on issues. As my manager, Tim treats me like an equal and ensures that I am always aware of the importance of my work. He genuinely asks for my opinions and always thanks

me for even the smallest of tasks. Tim has taught me, in addition to countless communications and outreach skills, what it means to be a good motivator and communicator.

With this internship I have also had the opportunity of working with the other inspirational cogs in the wheel of the Virginia Chapter. Jessica Sims, the queen of the pipeline campaigns but officially the community outreach coordinator at the Sierra Club, has taught me that we work until we win and we whistle while we work. While making huge leaps and bounds against pipelines, she continues to sing her favorite tunes and occasionally strum a violin into the late evening. She is a barefoot, singing changemaker whose tunes help the rest of the office cope.

Mary-Stuart Torbeck is the senior organizer in the office. I would describe her as the bull of the office, pushing for her campaigns wherever she goes with a whole lot of personality. She has taught me that no space is too this or that to introduce and educate people on issues that you care about. Take for example the plethora of Sierra Club t-shirt wearers at a local restaurant that came to be because of Mary-Stuart.

Beth Roach is the part-time development associate that always radiates kindness and warmth. She is dedicated to her work with the Sierra

Club and has involved herself in other groups she cares about as well, one of which she co-founded. Beth has taught me that if you care about a cause, you make time to give it your all. With everything she does, she is genuine, present and always ready to make people smile.

Kelly Adams is, on paper, the administrative manager at the Chapter, but to the rest of the office, she's so much more than that. Kelly sits at the front of the office because she is the captain of the ship. She works with everyone in the office and anyone who arrives at the office. A perfect way to describe Kelly would be a renaissance woman. I remember on one of my first days, Kelly approached me, despite the busy nature of the week, and told me if I ever had any issues or just wanted to talk that she was available whenever. It is my understanding that this is the Kelly way with everyone.

Gustavo Angeles, an avid sweater wearer, is the environmental justice program coordinator. Gustavo takes on his work with an open heart and a reheated bowl of grains. He has taught me the importance of empathy and perspective. I have also never once seen Gustavo not smiling.

Kelsey Crane is the campaign and policy director and a silent leader of the office. Some days I

won't know she is in the office until mid-afternoon when she comes out and does her peaceful walk around, saying hello to everyone. Even with massive amounts of work, Kelsey is calm and collected. It is my philosophy that not all of us can be like Kelsey, but I try my best.

Kate Addleson, the Chapter director, was described to me just last week as the best boss this person had ever had. I believe this feeling is ubiquitous in the office. After meeting Kate and seeing her in action for the first time, it became clear to me that she is a force to be reckoned with. With everything she has on her plate, she still finds time to recognize hard work and celebrate her staff.

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is made up of people who genuinely care. They care so much that they work weekends and evenings, forget to eat at times and shed tears talking about the inspiring stories that motivate them. With this chapter and its additional volunteers/leaders working hard to protect the environment and communities facing environmental justice issues, it is easy to be positive about the future.

*Page Wesselink is the communications and community outreach intern of the Virginia Chapter.*



# Rocky Forge Wind project

by Dan Crawford

Virginia is one of only nine states with no utility-scale wind power. Go to neighboring states and you'll find wind power. West Virginia, known traditionally for coal, has six wind farms.

Rocky Forge Wind, a project of Apex Clean Energy, was fully permitted in March 2017, but with no buyer for the power, there was no development. In September of last year, that changed. The commonwealth is committed to getting 30% of our power from renewables by 2030, buying 420 megawatts of wind and solar power, with 75 MW coming from Rocky Forge in Botetourt County.

The Rocky Forge site is close to perfect. With a verified wind resource and existing high-voltage transmission lines on expansive, remote private land near highways that can handle the transport of materials and equipment, it doesn't get much better.

A common concern often heard from opposers is bird and bat loss, a concern we deeply share, as does the Audubon Society, the world's pre-eminent authority on and pro-



*A computer simulation showing what the Rocky Forge wind farm would look like when completed (courtesy of Apex Clean Energy).*

tector of birds. Their website says, "Audubon strongly supports properly-sited wind power as a renewable energy source that helps reduce the threats posed to birds and people by climate change. However, we also advocate that wind power facilities should be planned, sited, and operated in ways that minimize harm to birds and other wildlife, and we advocate that wildlife agencies should ensure strong enforcement of the laws that protect birds and other wildlife."

They tell us that for every bird killed by a turbine, 10,000 are killed by other human-related causes, with poorly managed cats being the biggest killer by a wide margin. Buildings, vehicles, poisons, cell towers, etc., all kill birds. Siting is key; thus, the Important Bird Areas program, a global initiative of Bird Life International, was implemented by Audubon and local partners in the United States to identify areas especially sensitive to development. The area nearest to the site is about 12 miles

away.

Since bats pose unique challenges, Apex will put the brakes on its turbines from dawn to dusk each year, from mid-May to mid-November, except when the wind is blowing faster than 15 mph or the temperature is 38 degrees or lower.

Since March 2017, when the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality issued its permit, technology has advanced, making larger, more powerful turbines feasible and economically attractive. Thus, Apex is applying for amendments to the Botetourt County and DEQ permits, raising the height limit from 550 to 700 feet. I am confident the permits will be amended, but we will continue to seize any opportunity to support this vital project.

If you are also excited about Virginia finally getting utility-scale wind power, let Botetourt County and Apex know. Share your respect and gratitude. They are earning it.

*Dan Crawford is the chair of the Roanoke Group of the Virginia Chapter.*

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