



# Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter  
Spring 2019

## Pipeline diary: Continuing opposition to the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines

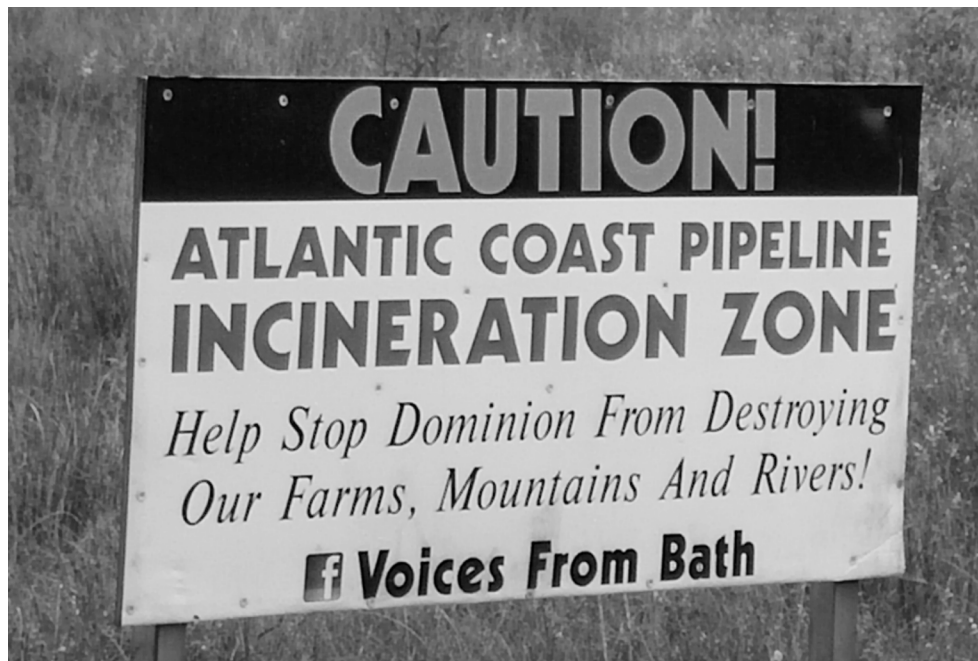
by Kirk Bowers

It's been a long winter for the pipelines campaign with some good news and some not-so-good news.

On the legal front, good news was received in December when the Fourth Circuit published the order against the U.S. Forest Service confirming that the Atlantic Coast Pipeline permits are vacated and that the Forest Service will need to try again. The court stated that, "We trust the United States Forest Service to 'speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues.' A thorough review of the record leads to the necessary conclusion that the Forest Service abdicated its responsibility to preserve national forest resources."

The Fourth Circuit also stayed the Biological Opinion and Incidental Take Statement permit for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Shortly after these decisions, Dominion suspended all Atlantic Coast Pipeline construction along the entire 600-mile route. Construction will only continue for safety purposes and to prevent environmental damage.

In December, Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring filed a complaint against Mountain Valley Pipeline alleging that the company did not comply with state environmental laws and regulations during pipeline construction and did not control sediment and stormwater runoff, which negatively impacted waterways and roads. Virginia Department of Environmental Quality inspectors found



A sign in Bath County, Virginia, voicing opposition to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (photo courtesy of Kirk Bowers).

more than 300 alleged violations related to the pipeline between June and mid-November of this year. Charges in the lawsuit include failure to maintain access roads, keep sediment off of rights-of-way and maintain and repair erosion and sediment control structures.

On December 13, the State Water Control Board voted to hold a special meeting on whether to revoke the water quality certification for the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Then, on March 1, the board voted unanimously not to do anything. Following a closed-door meeting, the board announced that it had concluded it

did not have authority to revoke the certification after all. The attorney general's office advised the board that they did not have the authority to rescind the water quality permit. In a complete reversal of their previous vote, they had the temerity to vote to withdraw the previous motion. Flying in the face of reason, it was a stunning and shocking decision.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is still targeting the fourth quarter of 2019 for its in-service date. However, this is highly unlikely as it lacks some of its key permits. Chief among its lacking permits are the Nationwide 12 permit and the Forest

Service Special Use permit.

Another major impediment is the crossing of the Appalachian Trail, which blocks passage of the Mountain Valley Pipeline across Peters Mountain. An act of Congress is required to gain permission to cross the Appalachian Trail, and it will not be easy to obtain.

The Protect Our Water Heritage Rights coalition, one of Sierra Club's key partners in southwest Virginia, was given the 2019 Helen Lewis Community Service Award by the Appalachian Studies Association. The Helen Lewis Award is given to an individual or an organization that has made exemplary contributions to Appalachia through involvement with and service to its people and communities.

Since the beginning of this coalition, local groups have relentlessly organized volunteers in opposition to the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Protect Our Water Heritage Rights, in collaboration with the Sierra Club and other regional organizations, has succeeded in causing significant delays and substantial increased costs to the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Congratulations to the POWHR coalition for well-deserved recognition of their service to Appalachian communities.

*Kirk Bowers is the pipelines program advisor of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Virginia Chapter executive committee election results

by Bill Johnson

At the end of 2018, an election was held for four Virginia Chapter at-large ExCom members. Each year, four at-large members are voted onto the Chapter ExCom for two-year terms, and they join group delegates to make up the Virginia Chapter ExCom.

They then elect chapter officers in the first meeting of 2019. The ExCom sets policy not already deter-

mined by the Sierra Club National Board and conducts the affairs of the Chapter. At-large members are limited to serving three successive terms on the ExCom but can return after a year's absence.

One member, Susan Stillman, was ineligible to run for the Chapter ExCom this year because of this rule. She did a great job while on the ExCom and will be sorely missed.

Please welcome the two returning ExCom members, Marjorie Leach-Parker and Bill Penniman, and two new members, Ann Bennett and Jeff Staples.

The first chapter meeting was held on March 9, in Charlottesville, and officer elections were held for chair and vice chair. Marjorie Leach-Parker elected not to run again, believing she could be more

effective at local activism with more time. She turned over the gavel to Daryl Downing as chair. Joe Brancoli was voted in as vice chair.

Please welcome and support our new leaders.

*Bill Johnson is the nomination and election chair and the secretary of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Notes from the chair by Daryl Downing



From the chair

Hello, Sierrans and friends. I am humbled that the state chapter executive committee voted on March 9 to make me the chair of the Virginia Chapter. Vice chair had some responsibilities; chair has a lot more.

I take comfort in knowing I'm surrounded by a phenomenal group of volunteers in the Chapter ExCom and across the state. Oh, and the staff is amazing, too. I live in Richmond and have the opportunity to engage with the staff on a frequent basis. Case in point, one staff member and four Sierra Club volunteers (and five other citizens) protested in between the governor's mansion and his office recently about the abominable pipelines that are irreparably damaging

our commonwealth. Apparently, it bothers him that this group assembles in this location weekly; so, we'll continue to meet. It's about that speak truth to power thing. #NOMVP, #NOACP, etc.

I retired from the Air Force in 2008, and now I spend my time volunteering, primarily for environmental organizations. I'm active in the Falls of the James Group (just stepped down as advocacy chair), I'm on the board of the Virginia Conservation Network and I'm a master naturalist. Our natural world has always been very important to me, and I now have the time to dedicate myself to this extremely important cause. It's unforgivable that corpo-

rations (with the collusion of elected officials) are able to frack, mine uranium, drill offshore, store coal ash in unlined pits, etc. I saw a sign in front of a Chesterfield church that is apropos: "Just because it's legal doesn't mean it's moral."

Thank you for your vote of confidence. I pledge to work with you and for you to protect this precious place we call Virginia for this and future generations.

Yours in Conservation,  
Daryl

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

## Virginia proposal for carbon market for large power plants moves forward by Bill Penniman

Pending before the Air Pollution Control Board is the latest Department of Environmental Quality revised proposal to regulate carbon dioxide emissions by linking Virginia's emissions to the multistate carbon market implemented by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. The regulatory process began two years ago with Gov. McAuliffe's Executive Directive 11. Extensive comments were filed in early March by many parties, including Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

The re-proposed rule would require most of Virginia's large electric generating plants to purchase carbon dioxide allowances from the RGGI pool. It would apply to plants having a capacity of 25 MWe or more whose combustion is at least 5 percent from fossil fuels, unless

90 percent of the electricity is consumed onsite. The level of allowances for covered Virginia generators would decline by 3 percent per year from a total of 28 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2020 to 19.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2030.

The Department of Environmental Quality has made several important changes in the re-proposed draft rule. The starting point of 28MM tons of aggregate emissions represents a significant improvement compared the department's original proposal of 33-34MM tons. Importantly, the revised proposal would also require carbon dioxide emissions to continue to decline by the same annual quantity during the years 2030-2040 unless the rules are amended, and it adds language recognizing the

need to monitor emission impacts in the interest of environmental justice. On the other hand, in the latest version, the department leaned toward exempting carbon dioxide emitted from biomass combustion, although it requested comments on this issue. Exempting emissions from biomass, particularly woody biomass, would be harmful and unsupported by the science.

Virginia Chapter filed detailed comments on March 6 supporting the improvements noted above and arguing that all carbon dioxide emitted by large power plants should be covered by the rule, regardless of the type of fuel that is burned. Per unit of electricity produced, biomass produces more carbon dioxide, as well as harmful co-pollutants, and forests would take decades to re-

capture the emitted carbon. Our comments also urged stronger language concerning measures to address environmental justice harms that might occur if emissions from dirty fuels were to increase locally. And, we recommended several technical changes to assure that the rule functions as intended.

Action by the Air Pollution Control Board is expected on April 19. We encourage you to join us in Richmond to show support for this important vote for carbon reduction. Please contact Mary-Stuart Torbeck at [mary-stuart.torbeck@sierraclub.org](mailto:mary-stuart.torbeck@sierraclub.org) for more information.

*Bill Penniman is the sustainability chair and an at-large ExCom member 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.



## How do we protect the Atlantic from oil and gas drilling?

by Ann Creasy



Participants joined hands at the 2018 Hands Across the Sand event in Virginia Beach (photo courtesy of Ann Creasy).

### 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 2-year certification, approved by the ACA, BSA, GS-USA, BCUNA and more. No prerequisites.

**May 4-5 ... Richmond, VA**

**May 11-12 ... Charlottesville, VA (with optional CPR/AED/Choking eve. of May 10)**

**May 11-12 ... Washington, DC (\$15 Off for SC Members)**

**May 15-16 ... Charlottesville, VA**

**May 18-19 ... Roanoke, VA**

**May 21-22 ... Charlottesville, VA**

**May 25-27 ... Holiday weekend specialty series in Thru-hiker town in mountains above Blacksburg, VA**

**June 15-16 ... Charlottesville, VA (with optional CPR/AED/Choking eve. of June 14)**

**June 22-23 ... Fredericksburg, VA**

Classes instructed by Matthew Rosefsky, Geo Medic, SOLO Instructor-Trainer and Sierra Club Outings leader. Cost is \$195. See <https://solowfa.com> for more information and online registration.

### And Check Out Matt's Advanced Backpacking Adventure in Adirondacks High Peaks, NY

July 20-28, achieve vast views from atop New York State's four tallest mountains, plus many more. No fee! For more information, fill out the form at <https://tinyurl.com/n5vuedu> and email Matt at [matt@solowfa.com](mailto:matt@solowfa.com)

It felt like we were crossing the starting line of a marathon with the release of the draft proposal of the 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program in January 2018. Dashing onward we went to amplify the "no" to drilling as swiftly and effectively as we could. Confident and prepared for the journey ahead, we brace ourselves; we are prepared to succeed.

Part of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management process is soliciting public comments, so it held about 25 public meetings across the country to provide information about the plan and provide people an opportunity to submit written comments. The Virginia Chapter collected over 2,000 comments in opposition to the new drilling plan. The overall response to the comment period was huge nationally—633,887 comments received by the bureau total. As we all know, things are far from over yet. What's next?

We are still waiting for the second draft of the plan to be released. As of March 12, the date of this writing, we still don't have that plan! But, it could come out any day now, at which time it will initiate a comment period that will require massive pub-

lic response of opposition to keep drilling out of the Atlantic.

We are now gearing up for the 10th Annual Hands Across the Sand Virginia happening on May 18 in four locations, including the oceanfront of Virginia Beach, Ocean View in Norfolk, Buckroe Beach in Hampton and Willis Wharf on the Eastern Shore. At this event, we join hands across our coasts to demonstrate our unity in protecting the ocean from drilling in favor of cleaner energy alternatives. It is a landmark event for building community and strengthening the movement against offshore drilling. Please visit <https://vasierra.club/hands2019> and RSVP to get in the loop!

We can stop offshore drilling again with the skills and efforts of many. To get involved in our upcoming efforts, please email [ann.creasy@sierraclub.org](mailto:ann.creasy@sierraclub.org) or call 757-513-2844.

*Ann Creasy is the Hampton Roads community outreach coordinator for the Virginia Chapter.*

### Final thoughts as chair by Marjorie Leach-Parker

The year 2019 has started out with so many different and interesting items relative to politics. We are still in the midst of trying to understand and deal with the incidents around the governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general. There are still so many conversations going on, and they probably will continue to go on for quite some time. These incidents, although they are terrible, have had some positive impact. I know what you're thinking, "WHAT positive impact?"

Step back and think—for the first time, there are events, meetings and conversations to examine the intersection of race and equity relative to racial perception. Caring people, I believe, are putting more thought into how their words and actions may be perceived by others. I am not going to go on about this; I just ask that all try and take the actions that have a positive effect.

For those of you that are not aware, I decided to not run for the position of chapter chair again. I

stepped down at our first quarterly meeting of the year on March 9 and was elected again to the ExCom as an at-large member. I plan to do all I can to assist our chapter and our new chapter chair, Daryl Downing, as we continue to move forward.

Finally, I would like to give a big thanks to all who helped me carry out my duties as chair; what an honor and a privilege to serve. I also want to acknowledge what a great job the staff has done under the leadership of our director, Kate Addleson. I ask that each of you continue to help us move forward as an environmental organization. Please let us all focus on educating and getting more people involved since there is so much work that still needs to be done.

Thanks again for allowing me to serve.

*Marjorie Leach-Parker is an at-large ExCom member of the Virginia Chapter.*



## Piedmont Group promotes pollinators at KidVention

by Donna Shaunesey

There were kids galore at KidVention in Charlottesville on February 9, and the Piedmont Group was there encouraging kids to get their hands dirty planting pollinator seeds. This annual event lets kids explore all kinds of science with hands-on projects and draws hundreds of kids and their parents for five hours of fun.

Sierra Club members helped the kids choose flower seeds, got them to plant the seeds in peat pots and encouraged them to come up with

the two things their plants would need (water and sun in case you were stumped). We hope all the plants find happy homes outside once the weather warms up.

There were also great displays of local animals, and the big hit was a dead monarch and a piece of turtle shell they could handle.

*Donna Shaunesey is the chair of the Piedmont Group.*



*Left photo: At KidVention Mike Pillow and Wren Olivier made sure two little girls got their favorite flowers (photo courtesy of Donna Shaunesey); Above photo: Donna Shaunesey and John Cruikshank talked two children through the planting process (photo courtesy of Dave Redding).*

## Roanoke Group Earth Friendly Friday

The Roanoke Group, in collaboration with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke, presents Earth Friendly Friday on the second Friday of the month. All programs are free and open to the public. Visit the Roanoke Group website at <https://sites.google.com/site/roanokesierra/> for more information.

- **April 12** David Foster, RAIL Solution, the proposal to put I-81 thru-trucks on trains, to everybody's benefit.

- **May 10** Hannah Kinder, Factory Farming Awareness Coalition, the negative environmental impacts of the huge industries that feed us animals.

- **June 14** Summer open month. No events scheduled.

## New River Group hosts talk on pipeline developments

by Joseph Scarpaci

The New River Group benefited from an informative talk on the pipeline developments across the Old Dominion. Kirk Bowers, engineer and Sierra Club pipelines program advisor, traveled to our end of the state from Charlottesville.

Twenty-three folks showed up for the talk, which was complemented by discussions about how to monitor pipeline construction activity, digitize the location and photographs and then pass the data along to the Department of Environmental Quality.

*Joseph Scarpaci is the chair of the New River Group.*



*On January 10, the Great Falls Group hosted a Smart Growth Talk. Stewart Schwartz (second from the left), executive director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, discussed his smart growth initiatives in the Northern Virginia area over the past 20 years. These initiatives have included promoting enjoyable, people-oriented communities with access to walking, biking and transit that help reduce the effects of climate change. Also in attendance were Great Falls Group members (left to right) Susan Bonney, Susan Weltz, Catherine Carver, Karen Camblin and Kelsey Crane (photo courtesy of Susan Bonney).*



## Rappahannock Group upcoming events

by Paula Chow and Linda Muller

### Rappahannock Group Outings: New Outings Announced

Rappahannock Group Outings leaders Richard and Suzanne Eggeling have been busy with our club outings programs. So far this year they have offered a visit to the recycling center in Chester, Virginia; a hike through Crows Nest Natural Area in Stafford and a hike/litter pick-up along the Fredericksburg Heritage Trail. Now that the weather is warmer, more outings are planned. Come join us!

- **Thursday, March 28**, 10:30 am James Madison's Montpelier Loop, Orange County

- **Saturday, April 20**, 10:30 am Caledon State Park Earth Day hike/litter pick up

Rappahannock Group outings are free and open to the public. Please email Richard and Suzanne at rich.sue.sc@gmail.com for more information or to register.

### Earth Day on the Rappahannock Saturday, April 27, 11:00-4:00, Old Mill Park

Climate change is the theme of the Rappahannock Group's booth display this year. There will be a "how to" on advocacy and activism addressing climate change, new ideas and perspectives in making changes and making a difference will be on display, you'll learn about food issues and their relationship to greenhouse gases and, of course, there will be children's activities and giveaways. We will have ideas about Refuse, Resist, Rethink, Redesign, Repurpose, Reduce, Reuse and talk about how recycling is the last resort.

Since 2010 Rappahannock Group has given a Living Green Award to a business or organization annually for its environmental stewardship. The award is given at the Earth Day festival at the awards program in the late afternoon. Anyone

can nominate a business or organization for the Living Green Award. Go to our website: <https://sierraclub.org/virginia/rappahannock> to find the nomination form.

There is no rain date this year. Music, activities, food trucks, animals, entire family fun, raffle—this is a certified VA Green Event. Don't forget to bring your own reusable water bottle! Check out <https://earthdayfred.com> for more information on the 16th annual festival and keep up to date on the latest activities on our Facebook page.

### Rappahannock Group Members and Friends Potluck Picnic and litter cleanup

**Sunday, June 9**, 1:00–4:00 pm, Alum Springs Park, Fredericksburg. Save the Date!

*Paula Chow is the program chair and Linda Muller is the chair of the Rappahannock Group.*

## Falls of the James Group upcoming events

### The Easter Parade

On Sunday, April 21, from 1:00 to 5:00 pm, the Falls of the James Group, together with the Virginia Chapter office, will gather on Monument Avenue in Richmond in order to take our message to the people by presenting petitions, promoting the club and discussing issues with passers by. Traditionally, more than 10,000 people visit the famous annual street fair named "The Easter Parade" on Easter Sunday. If you're in the area, please stop by and visit. We're happy to have you join us and get a taste of state capital atmosphere. (It's also a great time to display your Easter fashions.) Contact Tamara Smith at [tamsmith47@gmail.com](mailto:tamsmith47@gmail.com) for more information.



*Gill Sigmon, Tamara Smith, Corrina Beall, Ron Skinner, Glen Besa, Roger Pittard and Mary Crutchfield at the 2018 Easter Parade (Photo courtesy of Anne Repp).*

collection day.

Other jobs include phone banking and working during sales week. Contact Gill Sigmon, our volunteer coordinator, at [gill.sigmon1@gmail.com](mailto:gill.sigmon1@gmail.com) for more information on how to get involved.

### Green Giant Awardees

FOJG is proud to announce four recipients of its Green Giant Award for 2018. These awards go to citizens who have shown outstanding efforts in environmental advocacy

and education in the central Virginia region. The recipients were recognized at the January and February meetings at the Science Museum of Virginia.

Awardees included Reverend Paul Wilson of Buckingham County; Dr. Jeremy Hoffman, climate and earth science specialist at the Science Museum of Virginia; Roberta Kellam, who served on the citizen State Water Control Board, and Rob Andrejewski, Director of Sustainability at the University of Richmond.

## 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  
[tigerilla600@gmail.com](mailto:tigerilla600@gmail.com)

**Chesapeake Bay:** John Luker  
716-489-8891  
[4solar+SC@gmail.com](mailto:4solar+SC@gmail.com)

**Falls of the James:** Joe Brancoli  
804-502-9502  
[omethid@hotmail.com](mailto:omethid@hotmail.com)

**Great Falls:** Norbert Pink  
703-264-7445  
[norbetsierra@aol.com](mailto:norbetsierra@aol.com)

**Mount Vernon:** Rick Keller  
703-625-9055  
[rkeller49@verizon.net](mailto:rkeller49@verizon.net)

**New River:** Joe Scarpaci  
540-230-3143  
[joescarpaci@gmail.com](mailto:joescarpaci@gmail.com)

**Piedmont:** Donna Shaunesey  
434-996-0392  
[shaunesey@hotmail.com](mailto:shaunesey@hotmail.com)

**Rappahannock:** Linda Muller  
540-720-2848  
[lmuller@mindspring.com](mailto:lmuller@mindspring.com)

**Roanoke:** Daniel Crawford  
540-343-5080  
[dbcrawford@cox.net](mailto:dbcrawford@cox.net)

**Shenandoah:** Pete Bsumek  
540-421-4105  
[pkbsumek@gmail.com](mailto:pkbsumek@gmail.com)

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

**York River:** Tyla Matteson  
804-275-6476  
[tmatteson1@mindspring.com](mailto:tmatteson1@mindspring.com)



## SCPRO: An ode to winter

by Ellen Hill

Folks who know I like to hike sometimes ask if I hike year-round. The unspoken implication is that surely I don't hike in the winter. They are surprised when I confess that winter is possibly my favorite time to hike. No gnats, mosquitos or ticks. No poison ivy. Without leafy understory to block the view, you can see deep into the woods, noticing the lovely contours of the earth. The sky is never bluer. You can climb steep trails and not become a sweaty, dehydrated mess. Trees take on a new dimension. Without their foliage, you notice the graceful beauty of their "bones." The seed balls of sycamore trees look like tiny ornaments high in the branches. Magic is everywhere.

Clearly, I'm not the only one who enjoys winter outings. Leaders for Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings post more hikes this time of year than any other. Our newest provisional leaders have been busy planning and leading the two mentored outings our club requires for full certification. Training hikes for our annual One Day Hike (May 4) have been held every Saturday since the first of the year. Our leaders offer outings that appeal to a variety of tastes and abilities—urban hikes, wilderness hikes rated "strenuous" for distance and elevation gain, bike and kayak outings and educational outings to observe flying squirrels or

learn about clean energy advances in the nation's capital.

Some of our outings have even been newsworthy. In early March, Barbara Saffir and Daniel Marcin invited Washington Post columnist John Kelly to explore Oxon Cove Park and Oxon Hill Farm, a historic Maryland farm whose future is in jeopardy. While the farm's 500 acres are currently managed by the National Park Service, Maryland Gov. Hogan has other plans for this special site along the Potomac that is a haven for all manner of wildlife. John Kelly's article about his visit to Oxon Cove with Barbara and Daniel (Maryland governor aims to build at Oxon Cove. Hikers hope that won't happen.) appeared in the March 4 edition of the Washington Post.

I realize that by the time this edition of the Virginia Sierran is distributed, winter will be over. Spring will be in the air, migratory birds will be on the move and the earth will be greening up. If you ask me then, I'll probably say that it's my favorite time to hike. Truth be told, every season is my favorite time to hike!

"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt." John Muir

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

## John Muir in France?

by Ed Sandtner

Last year my wife, Paula Chow, Rappahannock Group program chair, and I were visiting a retired winemaker friend in the tiny village of Chambolle-Musigny in the heart of Burgundy. I had met Alain, now 92, in 1985 when I worked a grape harvest in his winery and have visited him many times since.

This fall day was like many others I had spent at his house, sitting around the dining room table, finishing lunch and sipping the last of the wine. As Alain rambled on, his French less clear as he has aged, or maybe it was my American ear, my eyes began to wander. I looked around the familiar room, gazed at the colored autumn vines through the window, and then from the corner of my eye, I was drawn to a small framed photo on the wall. I instantly recognized the iconic image of John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt standing at Glacier Point with Yosemite Val-

ley and the falls in the background. Why did he have this photo there? I was sure that Alain didn't know who John Muir was and perhaps not even Roosevelt. I had taken him to Yosemite many years before when I lived in California, but we didn't go up to Glacier Point as I remember.

Finally, my curiosity overtook me, and I interrupted him, asking how he came to have this photo in a prominent place on his wall. Did he know who the people were in the picture? He said no, but the guy with the beard looked very much like his grandfather, so when he saw the photo in a magazine, he cut it out and had it framed. So, in a small house in a little village amidst the vineyards of Burgundy, there hangs a symbol of the Sierra Club in the image of its founder, recognizable by only Paula and myself.

*Ed Sandtner is a member of the Rappahannock Group.*



*Dan and Amy Marcin at a One Day Hike training hike in February (photo courtesy of Ellen Hill).*



*Paula Chow and family friend Alain Roumier with Alain's photo of John Muir at his home in Burgundy, France (photo courtesy of Ed Sandtner).*



## February 2019 brings major steps forward on clean energy and climate in Fairfax County

by Debra Jacobson

In early January 2019, the Clean Energy for Fairfax Now Campaign of the Great Falls Group issued a 12-Point Action Plan for Energy and Climate for Fairfax County in 2019. This plan summarized a variety of actions that had been group priorities for the past year and was designed to establish the group's priorities in an important election year in Fairfax County.

On February 5, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved a Board Matter that provides a roadmap for moving the county forward on clean energy and climate policies and incorporates most of our recommended actions. In addition, county staff briefed the county's Environmental Committee on February 12 on other key parts of this agenda. The key to success, however, will be funding of these action items, and the Great Falls Group encourages all members to weigh in soon to help deliver real progress. Budget talking points for emails can be found in the group's March 2019 Cascade newsletter.

The February 5 Board Matter, titled Fairfax Green Initiatives, was sponsored by Supervisors Storck, Foust and McKay, and it was approved unanimously. During the debate on the Board Matter, the co-sponsors stressed the "urgency" of action to address climate change, including the 2018 report from the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The Fairfax Green Initiatives represents one of the most important actions taken by the board on energy and climate in the past decade. It provides a roadmap for board consideration of clean energy and climate action. For example, the board did the following:

- Directed the county executive to report no later than June 2019 on the process, resources and timeline to develop a Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan and on the process for contracting with an Energy Savings Performance Contractor or other similar approach to achieve energy savings.

- Referred to the Budget Committee for discussion and consideration the topics of support for the county executive's consideration of increased dedicated county energy, climate change and environment-related staffing and capital bonding

options that could accelerate energy savings initiatives.

The Board Matter also included many other initiatives, including accelerating the goals and targets for the county's June 2018 Operational Energy Strategy and implementing the draft Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program by the end of 2019.

Second, on February 12, the county's chief financial officer presented the Environmental Committee with a plan to reorganize and increase the county's staffing to increase coordination of energy, climate and environmental functions. In drafting this plan, the CFO considered a white paper that highlighted weaknesses in the organization and staffing of Fairfax County's energy and climate functions and that summarized best practices in the public and private sectors. This white paper was authored by Debra Jacobson, chair of Clean Energy for Fairfax Now, in her capacity as a member of the county's Environmental Quality Advisory Council. The reorganization and increased staffing are extremely important since it has become clear that inadequate staffing has been a significant contributor to past weaknesses in the county's energy and climate

efforts. Although the proposed reorganization and increased staffing is a big step forward, the Great Falls Group is advocating for at least two additional staff with a primary role of developing and implementing a community-wide energy and climate action plan for the county.

At the February 12 meeting, the Environmental Committee also received a briefing on the status of a request for proposal for a solar power purchase agreement that will include up to 70 county and 24 school sites. This RFP is projected to be released in mid-March with a contract in June. This action is very exciting because it would bring the first significant installation of rooftop solar on Fairfax County government buildings and schools. The amount of solar installations under discussion could exceed several megawatts and potentially represent the largest solar purchase by a local government in Virginia. In addition, the contract will be structured so that other localities across Virginia can "ride the contract" after it is released. Currently, no other solar contract offers this opportunity to local governments. You should make sure that your locality is aware of this new opportunity.

The RFP represents a major victory for the Great Falls Group, which

has advocated for more than 18 months for this approach. Our September 7, 2017 workshop on Clean Energy Finance Alternatives helped to spur this effort, and the county's RFP provided the opportunity to merge the group's advocacy for Solar on Schools (led by Susan Stillman) with its advocacy for solar on county buildings. A key to success in this initiative was long hours by Sierra Club members working with elected officials and county staff to become "trusted advisors" as well as the engagement of high school students in the community.

A presentation on energy initiatives at the February 12 meeting also summarized planned budget requests for energy efficiency initiatives in county buildings, street-light conversions to high-efficiency LEDs and the development of electric vehicle charging stations. See <https://fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-environmental-committee-meeting-feb-12-2019> for more details.

*Debra Jacobson is an at-large Ex-Com member of the Virginia Chapter.*



## 2019 General Assembly: A session like no other by Bob Shippee and Corrina Beall

The 2019 General Assembly “short session” adjourned a day late, on February 24, after completion of final negotiations on budget amendments and other late votes. A session that was marred by a string of scandals involving the top three statewide elected officials and contentious negotiations over tax policy nevertheless yielded a handful of environmental victories (and some stinging defeats).

### **Victories: Coal Ash**

After years of work, a long-term solution to Virginia’s coal ash problem was achieved this legislative session as a compromise was reached between environmental groups, the Northam administration, Dominion and key advocates in the Senate (Sen. Surovell) and House (Del. Carroll-Foy). A bill passed requiring Dominion to clean up its 27 million cubic yards of toxic ash currently sitting on the banks of Virginia’s rivers. All the ash must be removed from where it sits on Virginia’s riverbanks and either recycled or relocated to modern, lined landfills. This solution will ensure that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is protected from toxic coal ash.

While ratepayers will foot the bill for this environmental clean-up, the law does include restrictions on

what expenses qualify for an added rate of return and establishes a maximum monthly impact on customer bills.

### **Redistricting**

Virginia legislators voted for a new redistricting process that will include the public for the first time, correct the hyperpartisan process of the past and be transparent to the public. After different versions of reform passed each body, a conference committee agreed upon a compromise that increases transparency and creates a 12-person commission comprised of six legislators and six citizens to determine district boundaries after the 2020 census. To become enshrined in our constitution, the same resolution will have to be passed next year and approved by a majority of voters via the 2020 ballot.

### **Losses:**

#### **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative**

For years, one of the environmental community’s priorities has been to codify Virginia’s membership in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a consortium of nine eastern states (soon to be ten as New Jersey rejoins) with the goal of cutting emissions substantially year after year. The governor is promul-

gating regulations to mimic the auctioning of RGGI emission credits, but to gain full benefits Virginia must fully join. Once again, this initiative was defeated along party lines, and an “anti-RGGI” bill, which the governor is expected to veto, was passed instead.

#### **Solar Freedom**

One of the most robust bills in 2019 was the Solar Freedom Bill, a proposal to repeal eight obstacles to distributed solar energy codified in Virginia law. Provisions such as a lifting of the 1 percent net metering cap, raising caps on individual and aggregate projects and allowing expansion of power purchase agreements would jump-start an industry that is growing but hampered by these legal impediments.

HB2329 was defeated on party lines by one vote in the House Commerce and Labor Committee while companion bill SB1456 met its fate before the less-friendly Senate Commerce and Labor Committee. One noteworthy development was that several “solar freedom” provisions were included in the electric co-op net metering bill (HB2547) that overwhelmingly passed the General Assembly, raising the net metering limit in co-op territories to 5 percent, increasing to 125 percent of prior year usage the residential system size

limit and improving ability to implement power purchase agreements (while imposing a new demand charge after five years).

### **In the trenches:**

Smaller wins were achieved, such as the expansion of electric vehicle charging stations on government facilities (HB1934), improvements to energy efficiency programs (HB2292/2293) and enhancements to Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy, or C-PACE, loans for shoreline resiliency and stormwater improvement projects (SB1400/SB1559).

Many thanks to all of the volunteers and partners who worked so hard to help achieve these successes.

Please contact Bob at [rsoxbob@gmail.com](mailto:rsoxbob@gmail.com) or Corrina at [corrina.beall@sierraclub.org](mailto:corrina.beall@sierraclub.org) if you have any questions about this year’s General Assembly or our legislative program.

*Bob Shippee is the legislative chair and political vice chair and Corrina Beall is the legislative and political director 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 folks 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 4th 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 2nd Wednesday at 11 a.m. and 2nd Thursday at 5:30 p.m.\* **Contact Zach Jarjoura at [zachary.jarjoura@sierraclub.org](mailto:zachary.jarjoura@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 Zach Jarjoura at [zachary.jarjoura@sierraclub.org](mailto:zachary.jarjoura@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**

This email list contains 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 Kelsey Crane at [kelsey.crane@sierraclub.org](mailto:kelsey.crane@sierraclub.org)** or visit <https://vasierra.club/nova>



## Keeping watch over two timber projects on public lands

by Sherman Bamford

In February, the Virginia Chapter came to an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service on the Nettle Patch timber project near Norton and Coeburn, in southwestern Virginia. But things will not be slowing down on our Virginia national forests. We are keeping our eyes open and our boots on the ground. Later this year, the Forest Service planning activity on the North Shenandoah Mountain timber project northwest of Harrisonburg is expected to resume.

The Nettle Patch project and the North Shenandoah Mountain project were both initially sizable projects sprawling across landscapes with over a thousand acres of logging.

### Nettle Patch

Thanks to a combination of our efforts and those of our allies Southern Environmental Law Center and the Clinch Coalition, roughly two-thirds of the over 1,400 acres of log-

ging originally proposed in the Nettle Patch project was eliminated.

Logging was stopped in the Eagle Knob area, which includes some of the highest elevations of the Cumberland Mountains of Appalachia. Forest habitat was saved around forest plan-identified old growth areas surrounding the Pickem Mountain Natural Heritage conservation area. Riparian buffers were increased. Habitat for a rare salamander was protected. The general area where this timber project is proposed is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the lower 48 states according to the Nature Conservancy.

The Sierra Club was encouraged by the Forest Service's expressed willingness to take a closer look at roads in the future. The vast network of roads in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are expensive to maintain. Poorly designed roads impacting environ-

mental resources like water quality and fish and mussel habitat are important to anglers. It remains to be seen what the actual results will be, but we hope to see progress in this area in the future as the result of our discussions.

### North Shenandoah Mountain

The North Shenandoah Mountain project is massive. It could include 4,750 or more acres of logging across a wide cross-section of the Shenandoah Mountain landscape (This is according to the last public notice on the project, over a year and a half ago).

Some of the wildest lands in Virginia are in the neighborhood. Several Virginia Mountain Treasure areas are nearby, including the 17,152-acre Beech Lick Knob area, the 5,335-acre Little Cow Knob area, the 9,299-acre Hogpen Mountain area and the 6,677-acre Kretchie

Mountain area. There are extensive tracts of potential old growth forest throughout the Mitchell Knob/Camp Run section of the project and, to a lesser extent, throughout other sections of the project. Three class ii and iii trout streams could be impacted—Camp Rader Run, Bible Run and Rocky Run. The project area spans some of the upper reaches both the Shenandoah and Potomac river systems. There are some positive aspects of the project as well. The agency does also plan some extensive road decommissioning as part of it.

To get involved with these and other forest issues, contact us and write to District Ranger, North River RD-GWJNFs-FS-USDA, 401 Oakwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

*Sherman Bamford is the forest issues chair of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Inclusion: Why pronouns are so important

by Carolyn N. Lyle and Ben Weiner

The English language has a lengthy list of words that can be used to represent people or things. These are called pronouns. Grammatically there are several categories of pronouns. Pronouns that refer to persons are called personal pronouns. Personal pronouns also reference a person's gender. Historically, these are pronouns such as he, she, him, her, his, hers, himself and herself.

Cases of misgendering (assuming someone is a gender other than the one they identify with) and subsequent use of the wrong pronouns can happen to anyone of any gender identity. For example, if someone who identifies as a woman is referred to as a man, she may be offended and hurt at this inaccuracy. Using the wrong pronoun can be considered not only disrespectful but also extremely uncomfortable. Identifying one's own pronouns during an introduction is a new thing to many people, and while it's okay to make mistakes, it's not okay to be mean or disrespectful. Bottom line, it's absolutely necessary to try in good faith to understand and accurately use people's pronouns. You can listen and ask explicitly, "What are your pronouns?" when meeting

someone new, just like you ask for their name, and then use the pronouns they provide.

While out in the world doing your job, volunteering or shopping at the grocery store, put an ear out for gendered language. You'll be surprised by how much of the language we use is needlessly gendered. Notice that often people will assume an individual's pronoun based on criteria other than appearance. Person A in a conversation may say, "I just got back from the doctor's office," and Person B responds with, "What did he say?" By listening, you will find that gendered language surrounds you and can shed light on other aspects of gender dynamics and the subtle ways in which we can all unintentionally reinforce traditional but often harmful binary gender norms.

The use of gender inclusive pronouns is critical to the Sierra Club's vision of becoming a truly multicultural organization. At the Sierra Club, among the protected classes of our organization is gender identity and expression, and one of our Virginia Chapter norms is to share what we'd like to be called in spaces, including both our name and our pronouns. Because our first chapter norm is to

understand how the impact of our actions can differ from the intent of our actions, it's important to remember that even innocent, accidental mistakes can cause harm and taking responsibility for changing your own behavior is appropriate and encouraged.

The good news is that the English language has gender inclusive pronouns that do not label or associate the person with either the male or female gender. During the course of this piece, we have referred to an individual as they/them/theirs, words that have been used to refer to singular people since at least the 1300s according to Dictionary.com. People often, in modern language, use "they" to refer to someone whose pronouns they do not already know. For example, you may note in a restaurant that "someone left their backpack here." They/them/theirs are the most popular gender-neutral pronouns, perfect for referring to a person who has not yet mentioned their pronouns to you or identifies as non-binary, genderqueer or any other identity outside of the traditional gender binary.

The second portion of our mission says that we are "to educate and en-

list humanity" in our quest to do the first part of our mission, to "protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment." From our very core as an organization, we have set forth that we must do everything in our power to include others in this vital mission. During the course of your work with the Virginia Chapter and the Sierra Club as a whole, you will be asked to identify your pronouns. By taking part in this process (which may be new and somewhat uncomfortable for you) in a respectful way, you can help make this a safer, more inclusive place for everyone to do the great work they do and respect others' identities. And always remember, if you need help, ask for it!

*Carolyn N. Lyle is the equity chair and Ben Weiner is the former communications coordinator of the Virginia Chapter. Ben currently serves as a program specialist for the national office of Sierra Club.*

## Despite turmoil, Virginia's political landscape offers opportunity for environmentalists

by Bob Shippee, Glen Besa and Corrina Beall

It would be easy, with the string of scandals involving Virginia's top three elected officials, to forget that we face a crucial election this year. That would be a mistake. The Chapter's legislative agenda is at stake this November as all 140 seats in the General Assembly will be on the ballot. And, despite the turmoil in the executive branch, with Republicans holding narrow margins of 21-19 in the Senate and 51-49 in the House, there is an opportunity to gain environmentally friendly majorities in both chambers.

The U.S. Eastern District Court has redrawn the boundaries of 25 House of Delegates districts, a move that could have a major impact on the partisan balance of power in the General Assembly. The plan would move at least 370,000 voters to new districts and make it more difficult this November for House Republicans to defend their current majority.

Building on our tremendous success in mobilizing grassroots supporters in 2017 and 2018, the Chapter is planning to spotlight key races in three geographical hubs:

### Northern Virginia

Sen. Dick Black's retirement leaves the 13th District (Loudoun, Prince William) an open seat in a region won decisively by Clinton in

2016 and Northam in 2017. The 40th District (Fairfax, Prince William), represented currently by Del. Tim Hugo (R), was also won by Clinton. Hugo won re-election in 2017 by less than one point. Our strong grassroots and staff presence in northern Virginia will help us focus on these key races.

### Greater Richmond

The Richmond suburbs include two competitive Senate districts currently represented by Republicans that Clinton and Northam won in 2016 and 2017. Incumbent Sens. Glen Sturtevant (R-Chesterfield, Powhatan) and Siobhan Dunnavant (R-Henrico) are vulnerable. In addition, the region includes several House districts that promise to be competitive:

- 27th District, represented by Del. Roxanne Robinson (R).
- 72nd District, represented by Del. Schuyler VanValkenburg (D).
- 73rd District, currently an open seat as Del. Debra Rodman (D) seeks the Democratic nomination in the 12th Senate District.
- 62nd District, an open seat due to Del. Riley Ingram's retirement.
- Perhaps even the newly redrawn (due to court order in the recent gerrymandering case cited

above) 66th District, currently represented by Speaker Kirk Cox (R).

### Hampton Roads:

Sen. Frank Wagner's retirement creates an open seat in the 7th Senate District (Norfolk, Virginia Beach), where Northam won more votes in the 2017 election. In addition, several House districts in this area will be battlegrounds:

- 83rd District, represented by Del. Chris Stolle (R) who may vacate the seat to run for the Republican nomination in the 7th Senate District.
- 84th District, represented by Del. Glenn Davis (R).
- 91st District, open due to Del. Gordon Helsel's retirement.
- 94th District, which became infamous in 2017 as incumbent Del. David Yancey (R) retained his seat only after his name was drawn out of a bowl following a tied election result.

In recent years, Virginia has elected Democrats to every statewide office, taken the congressional majority and flipped numerous seats in the state legislature. Particularly since President Trump's election in 2016, high voter turnout has driven a "blue wave" of pick-ups. In 2017, Virginia shocked the nation as Democrats netted 15 seats in the House

of Delegates, going from a Republican supermajority to near parity in one fell swoop. This year, Virginia has a chance to build on that momentum to build an environmental majority in our capitol in 2020.

Note: this spring, Glen will become chair of the Chapter's political committee as Bob steps into the committee's vice chair role. In addition, in June, Dean Amel, former chapter chair and current Great Falls Group political chair, will take the PAC treasurer role that Bob has filled for the past year. Please contact Glen at [glenbesa@gmail.com](mailto:glenbesa@gmail.com) or Bob at [rsoxbob@gmail.com](mailto:rsoxbob@gmail.com) or Corrina at [corrina.beall@sierraclub.org](mailto:corrina.beall@sierraclub.org) if you have any questions about our political program.

Please support our political efforts this year with a contribution. Visit <https://scvapac.org> or make checks payable to Virginia Chapter Sierra Club PAC. Mail to:

Sierra Club, ATTN: PAC  
100 W Franklin St  
Mezzanine  
Richmond, Virginia 23220

*Bob Shippee is the political vice chair, Glen Besa is the political chair and Corrina Beall is the legislative and political director of the Virginia Chapter.*

## Reverend Barber and Al Gore speak in Buckingham County

by Jessica Sims

On Tuesday, February 19, Reverend William J. Barber of the Poor People's Campaign and Repairers of the Breach and former Vice-President Al Gore visited Buckingham County, Virginia, meeting with residents and drawing attention to the proposed siting of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline's compressor station in Union Hill.

In the early afternoon, Rev. Barber, Al Gore and Karenna Gore met with local residents at Union Grove Church and heard testimonials from directly impacted community members. This meeting was followed by the large public event "The Moral Call for Ecological Justice in Buckingham," which highlighted the inherent environmental racism of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

An engaged crowd of over 1,000 people filled the Buckingham Middle School at the evening event and heard a program of music; an interfaith litany; the history and culture of



*Rev. Barber and Al Gore spoke to a crowd of over 1,000 at Buckingham Middle School in February (photo courtesy of Lee Williams).*

Buckingham and presentations from community members, including John Laury and Richard Walker, and from Rev. Barber and Al Gore. The negative moral, health and environmental impacts of the potential compressor station were communicated to the attendees. Rev. Barber deliv-

ered a dynamic speech, uniting the crowd and addressing the "scandalous" nature of support for the pipeline. Al Gore engaged the responsive crowd, describing the Atlantic Coast Pipeline as a "reckless, racist ripoff." The event concluded with requests to the public to share the his-

tory of Buckingham, bring economic growth to communities and request that public officials no longer accept donations from fossil fuel developers.

Staff of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter were present in support roles at the event, an opportunity greatly appreciated and made possible by the event's other host, Friends of Buckingham. The event received significant media coverage, helping to bring greater national attention to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the unjust treatment of the Union Hill community.

Please visit <https://friendsofbuckinghamva.org> to connect and learn more, and reach out to [jessica.sims@sierraclub.org](mailto:jessica.sims@sierraclub.org) to engage on this issue.

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



## Offshore wind: Made in Virginia

by Eileen Woll

According to a Department of Energy report released in August 2018, there are 25,464 megawatts of offshore wind projects—enough to power about 8 million homes—planned in 13 states, with most planned to be online by 2030. Researchers estimate that five states with large ports—New York, New Jersey, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina—would reap \$3.6 billion in economic benefits by building out new offshore wind farms. No wonder three wind energy lease areas off the coast of Massachusetts recently sold for a record-breaking \$405 million. America is on the brink of a new exciting frontier with offshore wind power. Everyone wants a piece of the action, including oil companies who now hold a handful of Atlantic lease areas.

Granted the first few projects will be erected with largely European parts and labor. But with over 25,000 MW in the pipeline, massive job creation on the line, the urgent need to combat the climate crisis and a lot of American ingenuity, the evolution towards having these parts, labor and energy be Made in America is guaranteed. The question now is how much of this exciting industry will be Made in Virginia.

One of the greatest advantages for Hampton Roads is our best-on-the-East-Coast capacity to handle very large pieces of steel. There are over 8,000 large and small parts that go into one wind turbine. Steel makes up most of the large parts, including turbine blades (today's version standing taller than the Washington Monument), towers, tur-



*Wind turbines under construction off Block Island (photo courtesy of Deep-water Wind).*

bine foundations and offshore substations. Two port sites in Hampton Roads could be upgraded for \$15 million and within two years stand ready for investment by a steel fabricator (or two) keen on selling key component parts to the first wave of offshore wind projects in the northeast. That fabricator would also serve as an anchor tenant supporting and drawing to Hampton Roads businesses manufacturing any number of the other 8,000 parts, the miles of cables bringing the power to shore or the Jones Act-compliant ships constructing and maintaining these massive machines.

Virginia has the largest East Coast pool of experienced maritime workers, with more than 24,000 full-time jobs in shipbuilding and ship repair alone—more than New York and all New England states combined. Maritime workers have the right skills for the offshore wind industry;

both industries require steel-working talent, mechanical and electrical technicians and welders.

However, companies like Newport News Shipbuilding and Huntington Ingalls have plans to expand their skilled labor force to build and maintain even more of the nation's aircraft carriers and submarines. Add in the offshore wind industry and that demand for skilled workers will increase. To ready thousands more Virginians for these high-paying, family-supporting jobs, the commonwealth must work with labor unions, industry partners, community colleges and state universities to develop and implement as soon as possible an exhaustive workforce development plan.

Finally, to make Virginia attractive to the wind industry and attract manufacturing firms to Hampton Roads, Virginia must demonstrate confidence in its own offshore wind

projects. While Virginia currently has a goal of fully building out the Virginia Wind Energy Area by 2028, there is currently no plan to achieve it. A clear path is needed to give the industry the certainty it needs in order to invest.

Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind, the country's first turbines in federal waters, will be installed next year. This is an important first step, but it must only be the start if Virginia is to realize the full economic and environmental benefits of offshore wind. These turbines, erected 25 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach, will provide critical technical, logistical and construction lessons learned that will lower costs for the larger project.

Offshore wind has the transformative power to reinvent Hampton Roads, allowing our community to evolve from being the poster child for sea level rise to instead being best known for answering the climate crisis with an even bigger solution. Our evolution towards being the mid-Atlantic hub for offshore wind depends on political will. To reduce our carbon footprint, we need Dominion powering over 500,000 Virginia homes with offshore wind. We need the thousands of good-paying, family-supporting, community-sustaining jobs to diversify and transform Hampton Roads' economy. We need offshore wind "Made in Virginia." Are Virginia's public officials ready to make that happen?

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

## LTE: Net-zero on a faith budget

by Dave Pruett

Thank you for Jeff Heie's heartwarming story (Winter 2018/2019) of Harrisonburg's Give Solar project—"helping non-profits go solar."

I'd like to call readers' attention to another solar success story in the Harrisonburg locale. On November 14, 2018, Valley Friends (Quaker) Meeting in Dayton, Virginia, attained its goal of a net-zero carbon footprint. Quakers are nothing if not deliberate, and this milestone marked the culmination of a five-year, multi-phase process.

VFM's process began in April 2014 when several members, concerned about climate change, organized a small committee to study the issue. In August 2014, the committee

issued a "Minute (Statement) on Climate Change," which was approved by the Meeting and published as a call to action in Harrisonburg's Daily News-Record.

Recognizing the need to "practice what we preach," VFM established a second committee to quantify the meetinghouse's energy needs and recommend carbon-reduction options. This assessment revealed a tantalizing possibility—net-zero emissions (exclusive of transportation)—by replacing an antiquated oil furnace with a modern heat pump followed by installing a solar array on the south-facing roof sufficient for all electrical needs, including heating.

Although initial cost estimates far exceeded VFM's modest finances, the Meeting charged the committee to seek "way forward." Following a year of internal and external fundraising and a competitive best-value bid, a vendor was selected to install a high-efficiency heat pump. This phase was completed in December 2016, making the meetinghouse fully electric.

How then to finance the next phase, a solar array? The process foundered for a year until power purchase agreements became available in our locale in January 2017. A second competitive bid produced a solar installer and PPA provider.

Sometimes the right thing and

the smart thing coincide. VFM is saving more than \$1,000 annually in utility costs. From these savings we've been able to pay forward some of the community support we received by contributing to Give Solar. Win, win, win, win. With hindsight comes clarity. Perhaps our experience can benefit other faith-based organizations or nonprofits in their carbon-reduction efforts.

Dave Pruett  
Valley Friends Meeting  
Dayton, Virginia  
<https://valleyfriends.org/>

# Growth in data centers overpowers Virginia's renewable energy gains

by Ivy Main

Almost 70 percent of the world's internet traffic passes through data centers in Loudoun County, Virginia, on a daily basis. More than 100 massive data centers, with over 10 million square feet of building space, dot the Northern Virginia landscape around Dulles Airport in what is known as "Data Center Alley," and the industry is growing fast.

Local governments welcome the contribution to their tax revenues, but these data centers come with a dark downside: they are energy hogs, and the fossil energy they consume is driving climate change.

A new report from Greenpeace called Clicking Clean Virginia: The Dirty Energy Powering Data Center Alley describes the magnitude of the problem:

"Not including government data centers, we estimate the potential electricity demand of both existing data centers and those under development in Virginia to be approaching 4.5 gigawatts, or roughly the same power output as nine large (500-megawatt) coal power plants."

As these data center operations continue to grow, they are providing the excuse for utilities, primarily Dominion Energy Virginia, to build new

fracked-gas infrastructure, including gas generating plants and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Many of these same tech companies have publicly committed to using renewable energy, and in some cases they have invested heavily in solar and wind power in other states. With the exception of Apple, however, all these data center operators are falling far short in meeting their Virginia energy demand with renewables. Intentionally or not, that makes them complicit in Dominion's fossil fuel expansion.

One tech company in particular stands out in the report due to the sheer size of its operations. Greenpeace calculates that Amazon Web Services, the largest provider of cloud hosting services in the world, has a larger energy load than the next four largest companies combined.

Amazon currently buys the output of 280 MW of solar in Virginia. But to match all of its Virginia energy demand with solar energy, it would need more than 7,000 MW of solar—at least 15 times the amount in all of Virginia today.

For a company whose website promises a commitment to 100 per-

cent renewable energy, that's a major fail.

The Greenpeace report shows Amazon is not alone in data center operators that are dragging their feet on clean energy. It is simply, by far, the largest. The next three biggest data center operators—Cloud HQ, Digital Reality and QTS—have no renewable energy at all in Virginia.

Better-known names like Microsoft and Facebook also operate Virginia data centers. Although both have invested in Virginia solar farms, they also fall well short of meeting their energy needs with renewables.

The fact that Amazon doesn't even seem to be trying should be of great concern to Virginians. As Greenpeace puts it, "AWS's decision to continue its rapid expansion in Virginia without any additional supply of renewable energy is a powerful endorsement of the energy pathway Dominion has chosen, including the building of the ACP, and a clear signal that its commitment to 100% renewable energy will not serve as a meaningful basis for deciding how its data centers are powered."

Amazon has already fired back

at the Greenpeace report. In a statement, it asserts that "Greenpeace's estimates overstate both AWS's current and projected energy usage"; however, the statement did not offer a different estimate. It also points to its investments in Virginia renewable energy (the same ones described in the report) and concludes, "AWS remains firmly committed to achieving 100% renewable energy across our global network, achieving 50% renewable energy in 2018. We have a lot of exciting initiatives planned for 2019 as we work towards our goal and are nowhere near done."

Well, that's nice.

But meanwhile, those data centers are using electricity generated from burning fossil fuels, driving climate change and providing an excuse for new fracked gas infrastructure. Given the rapid pace of data center construction in Virginia, it's going to take a lot of exciting initiatives from Amazon Web Services—and all the other data center operators—to make any kind of meaningful impact.

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

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
Richmond, VA  
Permit #1673

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter  
100 W. Franklin St, Mezzanine  
Richmond, Virginia 23220

Time Sensitive Information  
Please Mail Immediately



## Inside Virginia Sierran

### Page 1

Pipeline diary: Continuing opposition to MVP and ACP  
Virginia Chapter ExCom elections

### Page 2

From the chair  
Carbon market proposal for power plants

### Page 3

Protecting the Atlantic from drilling  
Final thoughts from the chair

### Page 4 • Group Updates

Piedmont Group at KidVenture  
Roanoke Group Earth Friendly Friday  
New River Group pipelines talk

### Page 5 • Group Updates

Rappahannock Group events  
Falls of the James Group events

### Page 6

SCPRO: An ode to winter  
John Muir in France?

### Page 7

Fairfax County moves forward on clean energy

### Page 8

2019 General Assembly

### Page 9

Keeping watch over timber projects  
Why pronouns are important

### Page 10

Political landscape offers opportunity  
Barber and Gore come to Buckingham

### Page 11

Offshore wind: Made in Virginia  
LTE: Net-zero on a faith budget

### Page 12

Data centers overpower renewable energy gains