

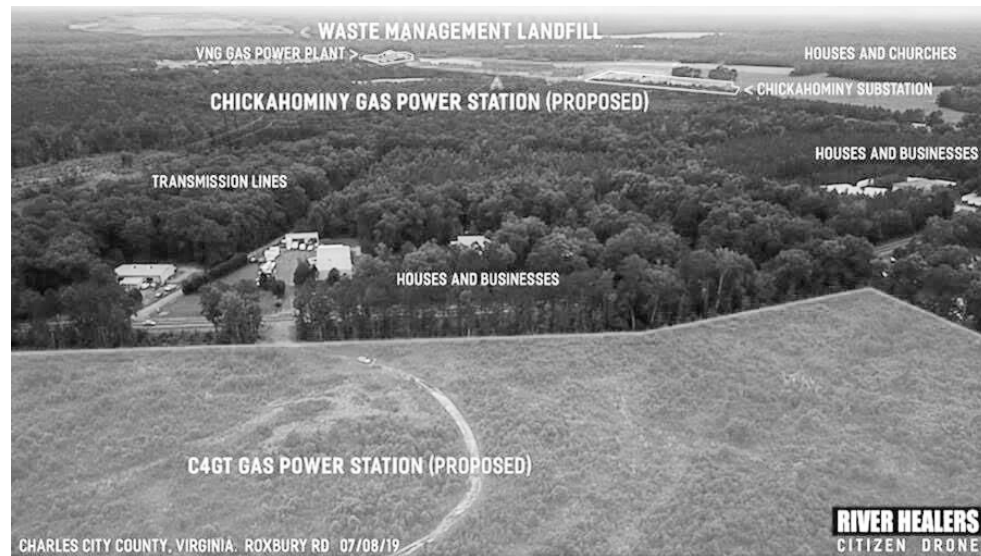


Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Winter 2019-2020

100% carbon-free electricity by 2050 with new fracked-gas power plants? by Gustavo Angeles

In addition to our continued environmental justice work with local groups and our EJ committees, the Sierra Club has begun working with other groups like Mothers Out Front to provide support to the group Concerned Citizens of Charles City County, or C5. C5, a group of directly impacted community members, is fighting the proposed Chickahominy fracked-gas power plant in Charles City County, a community of over 7,000 residents. This massive 1,650 megawatt facility will sell electricity to the PJM Interconnection wholesale market, the largest provider of electricity in the eastern United States. The Chickahominy plant, if permitted, will be located in close proximity (1.1 miles) to another plant known as C4GT, which was authorized by the Department of Environmental Quality in 2018 but has not yet been built. C4GT pow-



Aerial photograph of the sites of the proposed Chickahominy and C4GT gas power stations in Charles City County. The proposed sites are just over one mile apart from one another (photo courtesy of Virginia River Healers).

er plant would produce 1,050 MW. Combined, both plants would produce 2,700 MW and be the largest dirty fuel plants in Virginia, as well as some of the largest in the country. In addition, there is an existing Dominion substation and a landfill adjacent to the proposed location for

the Chickahominy power plant. The cumulative impact of these facilities would create higher-than-normal incidents of COPD and asthma in the community. This surplus of fossil fuel infrastructure has been placed in a majority-minority community that is disproportionately impacted and not in need of the electricity from this plant. Additionally, the new gas plant would require a significant amount of water that will be pulled from local sources.

The introduction of this potential gas plant is in contrast to the goals set by the current administration. While the administration released Executive Order 43 in September that set new goals to achieve 100% carbon-free electricity by 2050 and a goal of 30% renewable energy by 2030, it continues to authorize

See Power plants on page 7.

Community events, legal victories and the powerful continued fight against the pipelines by Jessica Sims

The Stop the Pipelines campaign, an important fight for Virginia's communities, water, air and ecosystems against the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines, finished 2019 with more milestones and opportunities to support and collaborate on amazing work by community-led groups. Fall brought the Fourth Annual Hands Across the Appalachian Trail events; significant legal updates; an announcement related to the attorney general's lawsuit against the Mountain Valley Pipeline; and continued, dedicated resistance to Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines from across the state and region.

Hundreds of Virginians celebrated the historic and treasured Appalachian Trail at the Fourth Annual Hands Across the Appalachian Trail events in Pearisburg, Lyndhurst and Bluemont, Virginia, in late September. This annual event helps call attention to the potential crossing of the Appalachian Trail by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the need to protect this environmental treasure.



People gathered for the Fourth Annual Hands Across the Appalachian Trail in Pearisburg, Virginia, last September (photo courtesy of Russell Chisholm, P.O.W.H.R. — Protect Our Water Heritage Rights).

Issue co-chair for the Virginia Chapter's Stop the Pipelines Campaign, Lee Williams, filled an invaluable role at the Lyndhurst event, leading chants and energizing the crowd in attendance. These celebratory events came just days before the October announcement that the Supreme Court of the United States

has decided to hear the appeal of the Fourth Circuit case, which addressed whether crossing the Appalachian Trail was permissible. The case is scheduled for February 24, 2020.

October brought multiple crucial pipelines updates, including the exciting announcement that on Octo-

ber 1, Del. Chris Hurst, along with 17 other state legislators, wrote the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission asking for a suspension of the Mountain Valley Pipeline's Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. The incredible work of Kirk Bowers, former Virginia Chapter staff member and current pipelines issue co-chair, helped make this elected official outreach possible. This continued engagement of elected officials has helped to further push the pipelines issue to the forefront and into the larger context of the climate crisis and continued fossil fuel dependence.

Among the other developments that month were multiple legal and punitive announcements for Mountain Valley Pipeline. On October 11, Attorney General Mark Herring's office announced a \$2.15M settlement for the lawsuit against Mountain Valley Pipeline, which was necessitated by the over 300 violations documented by the Department of

See Pipelines on page 10.

Notes from the chair: Effective engagement

by Daryl Downing



From the chair

On December 7, I had the opportunity to attend one of Virginia Conservation Network's General Assembly Preview sessions (VCN and its partners held 10 across the

state). It was very collaborative, with speakers (bona fide experts) from many environmental organizations speaking on topics like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the Transportation and Climate Initiative, Sierra's Solar Freedom efforts and many other areas we are hoping the 2020 General Assembly, which starts January 8, will address. I'll forward slides to Chapter leaders as soon as they're made available.

Sierra Club has a long history of partnering with like-minded organizations, community groups and others to accomplish important goals. This type of engagement allows the Club and the groups with which it partners to be more effective. Another way the Chapter increases its effectiveness is its legislative team,

all of whom are volunteers except for Corrina Beall, who's our legislative and political director. Not only do these folks work with staff and Chapter issue chairs, they also interact with dedicated staff and volunteers who are part of Virginia Conservation Network's legislative teams. We are definitely stronger and more effective when we work together.

I encourage each of you to be engaged during the 2020 General Assembly session. (Actually, your state senator and delegate are likely more accessible now.) VCN published the 2020 issue education briefing book, Our Common Agenda, which lays out a lot of our priorities (go to <http://www.vcnva.org/our-common-agenda/> to see it for yourself). Try to attend one of the General Assembly edu-

cation and advocacy webinars or lobby day trainings. Two events are currently posted to the Chapter calendar on our website at <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/events-calendar> and more will be posted once dates are firmed up. While you'll be coached during a lobby day if you're new to this democratic process, I'll email you an Action Guide to Meet with Your Legislator if you're unsure of how you can be effective.

Be informed, stay engaged and we can be effective together in 2020.

May you enjoy the holiday season with your families and friends.

Daryl Downing is the chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Strategic plan implementation: Setting us up for success

by Kate Addleson

This quarter, Daryl and I have been touring the state on our "road show" of visits with all our local group leaders about the implementation of our chapter strategic plan, adopted earlier this year. While internal structure and processes may not be the most exciting topics, we have been delighted by the willingness of our volunteers to participate and help identify ways we can be more effective in our work. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our incredible state and local leaders again, as well as all those who replied to the member survey last year that informed the plan we are now enacting.

You may or may not know that the Virginia Chapter is one of the largest Sierra Club chapters in the country. We have 12 volunteer-led groups across the state that make up our local infrastructure and serve as the entry point for most of our members.

The groups lead grassroots engagement efforts through both advocacy and outings, playing a critical role alongside our staff. Local volunteer leadership — the cornerstone of our people power — is what sets Sierra Club apart from other environmental organizations. This core strength will be centered in our implementation as we build on the theme "Powerful, Together."

We look forward to developing a more robust relationship between the Virginia Chapter and our local groups through the process of implementing our strategic plan. These changes will benefit you — our current members and volunteers — and enable us to dramatically scale up to meet our goals in the years ahead in alignment with the national Sierra Club's strategic framework.

Together, we aim to be the most effective driving force for climate solutions in Virginia. To do this, the

Implementation Planning Committee will be developing new guidance, resources and trainings for our leaders and activists to clarify leadership roles, recruitment tools, volunteer opportunities and more. These include:

- Chapter-wide organizational chart "snapshot"
- 2021 outcomes (to define success in meeting our goals)
- Orientation and expectations for Chapter and group leaders
- Trainings on operations, governance and recruitment
- Virginia Chapter branding and marketing toolkit
- Recipe for success — best practices for engagement, allyship and mobilization

We will be completing our group visits in early 2020 and evaluating this additional input from leaders to ensure that the changes we propose will adequately address organiza-

tional needs at both the state and local levels. Being more focused will enable us to be more effective and secure climate solutions that protect our communities and health for generations to come. Areas we will focus on are leadership, communications, member engagement and climate solutions. Key components will include operations, governance, recruitment, diversity and equity.

I have relished the opportunity to learn more about our unique strengths and challenges in each group and region of our state, and I look forward to continuing this important work with you all. Stay tuned as we continue to roll out our implementation next steps in the weeks and months ahead. Check out the Chapter website at <http://vasierra.club/scvaplan> to read the plan and learn about our team.

Kate Addleson is the director of the Virginia Chapter.

Virginia Sierran

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The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club is over 20,000 members strong. We are your friends and neighbors working to build healthy, livable communities and to conserve and protect our climate and environment. The Virginia Chapter is part of the national Sierra Club, the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

Information about our staff, executive committee and environmental action chairs can be found on the Virginia Chapter website under "About."

Virginia Sierran Editor: Sevim Kalyoncu, editorvirginiasieran@gmail.com

The editor welcomes editorial contributions, photographs and art work. Submissions should pertain to Virginia's environment and/or climate change. Email the editor with questions on submissions.

Please contact member.care@sierraclub.org for membership and mailing issues and address.changes@sierraclub.org to change your mailing address.

Chapter adds three new staff members

by Tim Cywinski

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is pleased to announce the addition of three new staff members.

Our new development associate, Beth Roach, is an experienced fundraiser, community organizer, environmental justice advocate and storyteller on environmental issues. Before joining the staff, Beth worked in the environmental field for the James River Association, Mothers Out Front and Virginia State Parks. She is an enrolled member of the state-recognized Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia. Since 2010, Beth has served on the Tribal Council and managed environmental initiatives for the tribe. As a civil servant, Beth has chaired the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice since 2018. She is also a co-founder of the Alliance of Native Seedkeepers, which is an intertribal business that promotes preservation of indigenous seedkeeping and lifeways. Beth earned a B.A. in history from James Madison University. She is a native Virginian and currently resides in Richmond, where she enjoys outdoor life with her fiancée and indoor life with her cat.



Beth Roach, Virginia Chapter's new development associate.

Cheri Conca was hired as our new conservation program coordinator serving in Northern Virginia, working toward a just transition to clean energy and clean transportation through the Transit for All campaign. Prior to joining the Sierra Club, Cheri worked for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, where she developed and implemented a campaign for environmental policies in Loudoun County, Virginia's new comprehensive plan. Her work included policy research and analysis, advocacy at the grassroots and grassstops levels, collaboration with coalition partners

and planning and execution of digital and print communications. Cheri also has a wealth of experience lobbying in Richmond and on Capitol Hill for conservation legislation and funding. Her previous experience includes multimedia communications; database and website management; and event logistics across the corporate, government and non-profit



Cheri Conca, Virginia Chapter's new conservation program coordinator.

sectors. Cheri has a B.A. in advertising from the Penn State University School of Journalism. In her free time, Cheri enjoys mountain biking, hiking, paddling and birding.

Hunter Noffsinger serves as the new community outreach coordinator for Hampton Roads. She spends her time organizing with individuals and organizations around clean energy, climate change and offshore energy issues. Hunter has a background in grassroots organizing within the LGBTQ community, from serving as the volunteer coordinator for the Transgender Assistance Program of Virginia to co-founding the Hershee Action Coalition. Hunter has a passion for community service that is the driving force behind her work. In her free time, Hunter is an avid vegan baker and chef, running a recipe and food blog, Hippie Chick Vegan Foods.

Beth, Cheri and Hunter all display an unyielding passion for the climate and conservation move-



Hunter Noffsinger, Virginia Chapter's new community outreach coordinator.

ment. We are excited to see all that the new team members can accomplish at our chapter!

Tim Cywinski is the communications coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.

Attend Virginia's First Clean Energy Lobby Day!

Get ready to get inspired and make a difference on climate in Virginia.

We now have a clean energy majority in Virginia, but lobbyists for mega-polluter Dominion Energy are hard at work figuring out how to rig the new balance of power in their favor. We'll need to act fast if we want to make sure the people of Virginia are behind the wheel on the path to 100% clean energy.

That's why CCAN Action Fund, Sierra Club and other partners are joining forces to put on the biggest grassroots climate lobby day and rally that our legislature has ever seen — and we need you there!

This won't be your typical environmental lobby day on January 14. You'll hear directly from legislators and activists about how you can most effectively make your voice heard. And we'll have meetings set up for you to lobby on important policies like Solar Freedom, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and an equitable pathway to 100% clean energy. Finally, of course, we'll have a big rally.

By the year 2030, we've got to cut total greenhouse gas emissions in Virginia and nationwide by close to 60%. It's going to take all of us working together to make that happen. It's going to take all of us to make sure that we're not leaving anyone behind in that shift. It all starts on January 14, 2020.

Co-sponsored by Sierra Club Virginia Chapter and Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

Time: 7:30am-2:00pm

Location: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 815 E Grace St., Richmond, VA 23219

Coffee, snacks and lunch will be provided.

There will be a limited number of free tickets available to students and those in need. Or you can choose to cover the cost of someone else's ticket in addition to your own when you check out.

You don't want to miss this. RSVP and claim your spot today! Visit <https://tinyurl.com/t4mnkjy> to register now.

Contact Mary-Stuart.Torbeck@sierraclub.org for more details.

New River Valley Group engages climate solutions, pipeline opposition and more!

by Richard Shingles

The New River Valley Group is fully committed to Virginia Chapter goals and priorities. We have committed to making our group the most effective driving force for climate solutions in the New River Valley and a reliable partner in the fight against fracked gas pipelines while pursuing traditional Sierra Club goals. In that vein we are proud of what we have accomplished over the past year. Here are the highlights of our 2019 events, which were free and open to the public:

- February 27, Mountain Valley Pipeline Information Meeting

At our first public meeting of the year, Kirk Bowers (pipelines campaign manager for the Virginia Chapter) and Jason Shelton (director of Mountain Valley Watch) discussed the current status of the fight to stop the Mountain Valley Pipeline.

- June-October, NRV Climate Collaboration

The NRV Group joined with other volunteer NRV environmental groups (Sustainable Blacksburg, Sustain Floyd, the Blacksburg Citizens Climate Lobby, Preserve Giles and Preserve Montgomery County VA) in forming a regional coalition to work with local governments in identifying (with the goal of eventually monitoring) regional policies and procedures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The NRV Group initiated and led this enterprise.

Throughout the summer, NRV Climate Collaboration representatives met with elected officials and administrators of NRV counties and towns and the City of Radford to inquire about current and planned policies. One result has been the development of an Adverse Climate Readiness Policy Inventory which will be made available online for



High school and college students marched at Virginia Tech for the September 20 youth climate strike (photo copyright, The Roanoke Times, republished by permission).

climate conscious NRV residents to learn of their local governments' efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and compare them to those of other localities. The NRVCC currently is working with the NRV Regional Commission to integrate this type of review into regional decennial hazard mitigation planning.

- August 28, Forum: Best Environmental Practices in the New River Valley, Challenges and Opportunities

This environmental forum, held in the Blacksburg Public Library, featured the panelists Ed Tulcher, Shelter Alternatives; Patrick Feucht, Baseline Solar Solutions; Carol Davis, sustainability officer of the Town of Blacksburg; Teresa Sweeney, education and training coordinator for Montgomery Regional Waste Authority; Dan McKeague, U.S. Forest Service; David Horton, Mayor of the City of Radford; Mike Barber, Mayor of Christiansburg; Dennis Cochrane, sustainability officer of Virginia Tech; Larry E. Jackson, director of external

affairs for Appalachian Power, Roanoke; and Joseph Scarpaci, organizer and emcee. The event was well attended (approximately 72 people) and very well received (judging from audience participation and a post event SurveyMonkey email questionnaire).

- September 20, NRV Group support for the youth climate strike on the Virginia Tech campus

We actively sought out student organizers with offers of assistance, which eventually took the form of encouraging our membership to come to the campus and show their support. The Roanoke Times estimated approximately 500 participants. Virginia Tech students were joined by a contingent of approximately 50 Blacksburg High School students and approximately 150 Blacksburg residents, including the mayor and vice-mayor of Blacksburg. Our group contacted the Virginia Tech chief of police prior to the event to inform him that a large number of non-students would be entering the campus on that day; he welcomed our participation.

Students who led the strike have since organized themselves as Virginia Tech for Climate Justice; met the faculty senate, staff senate and other campus student groups; and visited twice with the university president, which led to the November 8 statement by President Sands reemphasizing the university's "climate action commitment." NRV continues to communicate with Virginia Tech for Climate Justice and is discussing with them other ways we can provide support.

- October 3, Hands Across the

Appalachian Trail Initiative

The NRV Group coordinated with Preserve Giles County in advertising the annual Hands Across the Appalachian Trail in Pearisburg. As Tom Valltin noted in his piece on the Sierra Club website, "More than 200 Sierra Clubbers and other environmental and community activists, youth leaders, and elected officials participated" in this and two other gatherings at key intersection where the AT is threatened by fracked gas pipelines.

The event in Pearisburg was co-hosted by the Chapter's own Jessica Sims. Speakers included Russell Chisholm, co-chair of POWHR (Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights); Maury Johnson of Preserve Monroe; Ryan Wesdock, chair of the New River Valley Greens; Rachel Spector of the newly created Virginia Tech Environmental Coalition; and Shayla Utzinger and Christian Shushok of the Appalachian Youth Climate Coalition. Moving forward, the NRV Group hopes to take a more active role in organizing future Hands Across the AT activities.

- December 31, ExCom Elections

The group has a slate of five nominees (four of them first-time candidates) for the December election, which will expand the ExCom from four to six officers and strengthen our ability to effectively engage the climate threat and the Mountain Valley Pipeline.

Moving Forward

Plans are underway for a March 2020 free and open public forum entitled "Best Environmental Practices for Reducing GHG Emissions." The first Best Practices forum included a panel comprised of Virginia Tech, Appalachian Power and forest representatives as well as officials from local municipalities. We are currently planning a second forum for the four counties comprising the New River Valley.

The NRV Group, along with other members of NRV Climate Collaboration, will be working closely with the Regional Commission to address greenhouse gas emission reduction in the 2020 regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Richard Shingles is an ExCom member of the New River Valley Group.

Great Falls Group ExCom election

The Great Falls Group is holding its annual election to select members of the group's executive committee. Members of the Great Falls Group are eligible to vote. The Great Falls Group covers most of Prince William and Fairfax counties and all of Loudoun and Fauquier counties. Go to <https://virginia2.sierraclub.org/content/gfg-map> to find a map online.

This year the chapter will be sending out the ballot by email. To

receive a paper ballot by regular mail, contact Norbert Pink at norbertsierra@aol.com or 314-724-8842, or Catherine Carver at ccarver37@gmail.com or 703-655-5069.

Visit the Great Falls Group website at <https://virginia2.sierraclub.org/greatfalls> to find candidate statements and voting information.

Voting deadline is December 31, 2019.

SCPRO: End of year update

by Ellen Hill

As 2019 races to a busy close, the Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings Group races right along with it. This year, as in most, the number of outings increased. And plans are already being made for the 2020 One Day Hike, which SCPRO has sponsored for over 40 years. Although this 50k and 100K hike does not take place until May, training hikes for the event start immediately after New Year's. Every Saturday from the beginning of January until the day of the hike, outings leaders guide participants on urban hikes of increasing distance.

Our Fall Leaders' Hike/Potluck/Meeting was held in October with

Kris Unger and William Maxwell from the Sierra Club DC ICO (formerly Inner City Outings; now Inspiring Connections Outdoors) in attendance as our guest speakers. Leader and ExCom Secretary Dave Torraca, aka Highlander, then regaled our group with a fascinating account of his recently completed thru-hike on the Appalachian Trail.

Another item on the day's agenda was to decide on end-of-year donations which will, as always, include one to the Virginia Chapter with which we are affiliated and so respectfully supported. As a delightful conclusion to the afternoon, every leader was given a newly up-

dated edition of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club's "Circuit Hikes in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania." This fine hiking guide was written and edited by leaders Larry Broadwell and William Needham with additional input from Glenn Gillis. Barbara Southworth, also a SCPRO leader, is credited with the cover photo. A touching detail is that, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the guides were given to us at no cost. We are so proud of these leaders — indeed ALL of our leaders — for their enthusiasm, dedication and contributions to the hiking community and Sierra Club ideals.

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

Great Falls Group makes connections

by Norbert Pink



People gathered for a Great Falls Group volunteer night (photo courtesy of Susan Bonney).

Over the past three months, the Great Falls Group has continued to make progress on several fronts. In particular, we've been getting more members involved via the successful Volunteer Night meetings focusing on environmental action. We've worked to resolve new land-use issues as well, and we've educated members about the importance of preserving our wilderness with a presentation on the Red Rock area in Southern Utah. We've been continuing our pipeline activities with Hands Across the Appalachian Trail. We've also worked with the Sierra Club's Virginia Chapter on a successful PAC fundraiser and held discussions to improve communication and coordinate efforts between the two organizations, including discussing the implementation of the Chapter's strategic plan. GFG members started getting involved in a yearly innovative STEM air monitoring project with local students.

Finally, we've networked with other local conservation groups at two December events. First, we co-hosted a watch party for the community for the 2019 General Assembly Preview on Saturday, December 7 and Community Conversations: The Path to Advocacy. At our holiday party on December 9, we celebrated our successes in 2019 while planning for next year, including more volunteer nights and our participation in the BOS task force and related focus groups for Fairfax County's Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan. Data centers will be another future focus area.

You can find out more about our events by visiting the GFG website and subscribing to the NoVa Environmental Events List email. Unless otherwise noted, GFG events are free and open to the public.

Norbert Pink is the chair of the Great Falls Group.

Piedmont Group ExCom nominations and election

The Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club serves Charlottesville City and the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock in central Virginia.

Leadership of this group is the responsibility of an executive committee, or ExCom, elected by the general membership. Any member of the Piedmont Group may be a candidate for election to the ExCom. A nominating committee will submit a slate of candidates to the membership on a ballot to be available online to members on January 6, 2020.

Candidates not selected by this committee may be nominated by petition. To submit a recommendation or petition, contact Audrey Dannenberg at aadann@gmail.com or (434) 293-4232. Submission deadline is December 31, 2019.

Members of the Piedmont Group are eligible to vote in the annual election to select members of the ExCom. In addition to the digital ballot the Chapter has emailed out, Piedmont Group ballots and voting instructions are available online at <https://sierraclub.org/virginia/piedmont/> from January 6 through January 13, 2020. You do not need to vote on the Piedmont Group's website if you already voted via the Chapter ballot.

To receive a ballot by postal mail, contact Audrey Dannenberg at (434) 293-4232. The voting deadline is January 13.

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
716-489-8891
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Falls of the James: Joe Brancoli
804-502-9502
omethid@hotmail.com

Great Falls: Norbert Pink
703-264-7445
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Mount Vernon: Rick Keller
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New River Valley: Joe Scarpaci
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Piedmont: Donna Shaunesey
434-996-0392
shaunesey@hotmail.com

Rappahannock: Linda Muller
540-720-2848
lcmuller@mindspring.com

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

Big wins for the environment in Virginia elections

by Corrina Beall and Glen Besa



Virginia Chapter staff and volunteers canvassed for Ghazala Hashmi prior to the November elections (photo courtesy of Corrina Beall).

The votes are in and one thing is clear — Virginians want bold leadership on climate. For the first time in 26 years, the Democrats hold a majority in both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly, and 58 of our General Assembly members are endorsed by the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter. We are excited to move past business as usual at the state capitol and enact transformational policy to move Virginia into our clean energy future.

Of 25 Sierra Club-endorsed candidates running for the Senate of Virginia, 11 won on election night. Of these, nine were incumbents and two were challengers. Sierra Club endorsed and prioritized for electioneering activities both Democratic pick-ups in the Senate:

1. Senator-elect Ghazala Hashmi (D) decisively won a sprawling central Virginia suburban district covering Chesterfield, Richmond and Powhatan. The race for the 10th Senate District was the second-highest profile race in the state, with over \$2M spent on media buys alone. This was a priority race for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

2. Former Delegate and now Senator-elect John Bell (D) won an open contest in Northern Virginia in Loudoun and Prince William Counties. The Bell campaign spent over \$2M. This was a priority race for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

Of 68 Sierra Club-endorsed candidates running for the House of Delegates, 47 won on election night. Of these, 38 were incumbents, 6 were challengers and 3 won in open seats previously occupied by Democrats.

Sierra Club endorsed all 9 freshman delegates who will be sworn into office this January.

Pick-ups:

1. Delegate-elect Joshua Cole (D) won the Stafford County, Fredericksburg City contest to fill an open seat. This is Josh Cole's second bid to win the 28th District after losing by just 82 votes in 2017 in spite of the fact that his opponent out-raised him 3:1 and the Democratic Party of Virginia wrote off his campaign early on and did not provide support in the race.

2. Delegate-elect Dan Helmer (D) trounced nine-term incumbent Tim Hugo in the 40th District — the last Republican holding elected office in the legislature in Northern Virginia. In this multi-million dollar contest, Dan came out on top by a comfortable margin of 6.7 points. This was a priority race for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

3. Delegate-elect Clinton Jenkins (D) won in a re-drawn 76th District encompassing the cities of Suffolk and Chesapeake. Formerly a suburban ring around the City of Suffolk, the newly drawn lines approved by the courts earlier this year moved the partisan performance in the district an amazing 27.4 points. Defeated incumbent Chris Jones (R) has served in the Virginia House of Delegates since 1998 and is chair of the all-important House Appropriations Committee.

4. Nancy Guy's (D) victory by the slimmest of margins (18 votes) in the 83rd District will likely be contested by incumbent Chris Stolle (R). The Stolle family is an institution in Virginia Beach, with several mem-

bers serving in elected positions both locally and in the state legislature.

5. Hampton City came out big for Delegate-elect Martha Mugler (D) in the 91st District where district lines were re-drawn to favor Democrats by 19.8 points. An open contest, Mugler out-raised her opponent 5:1.

6. In the closely watched 94th District re-match, challenger Shelly Simonds (D) came out on top with an incredible 17 point margin, defeating Republican incumbent David Yancey in Newport News City. In 2017, the tied result was broken by drawing a name from a bowl on live TV. This was a priority race for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

New members:

1. Alex Askew (D) will serve in the 85th District in Virginia Beach, where Del. Cheryl Turpin (D) served her first term. Del. Turpin stepped down to run in an unsuccessful Senate bid in the 7th District.

2. Rodney Willett (D) won the 73rd District in Henrico and Richmond by comfortable margins, stepping in to an open seat vacated by Del. Debra Rodman (D) who ran an unsuccessful campaign for Senate

in the 12th District.

3. Suhas Subramanyam (D) rode overwhelming support in Loudoun County to victory in the 87th District, where Senator-elect John Bell (D) stepped down.

On Election Day, Virginians did more than just elect politicians; we passed a mandate on climate action. It is now possible to enact laws that address the climate crisis, expand clean energy and prioritize people and front-line communities above polluters' profits. Accomplishing these goals won't be easy. We know polluters like Dominion aren't ready to embrace the truly transformational change we need to meet the challenges of our climate crisis.

Securing the change we need does not end with a ballot — it starts with one. Virginia can become a beacon of clean energy and climate leadership. The upcoming General Assembly session is our chance to make the commonwealth a better, fairer and cleaner place for all Virginians.

Corrina Beall is the political and legislative director and Glen Besa is the political chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Virginia offshore wind done right!

by Eileen Woll

Virginia's offshore wind project is not just another energy project; this is the first project in a new industry that will be key to Virginia's transition to 100% clean energy and to shaping the commonwealth as a national leader of clean energy.

Most importantly, it is a Virginia project, not a Dominion project.

Since 2009, thousands of Virginia climate activists and hundreds of stakeholders (businesses, government reps, elected officials and university leaders) have worked together to see wind energy development off Virginia's coast. The Sierra Club's decade-long grassroots and grassroots campaigns to promote offshore wind resulted in some big wins recently. In his Executive Order 43, Gov. Northam called for development of 2,600 megawatts of offshore wind by 2026. Within days, Dominion Energy announced its plans to build that 2,600 MW of offshore wind in three phases in 2024, 2025 and 2026.

Offshore wind, with its capacity

to easily provide 50 to 60% of the East Coast's electric power, represents an opportunity for Dominion to help create a clean energy future that prioritizes people as much as profits.

Dominion Energy owns the lease of the area best suited to build offshore wind. Therefore, it must be part of this process. But Virginia's leaders must ensure oversight and transparency of the project so we can be confident that Dominion is acting in the best interest of its customers. While we have a long and successful history of working with Dominion on offshore wind specifically, the Sierra Club will always hold Dominion accountable for transitioning away from fossil fuels in a way that is cost-effective, transparent and beneficial to the customers and communities it serves.

Go to <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/offshore-wind> to learn more.

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

Power plants continued from page 1

fracked gas power plants. How would this plant help achieve the 2050 goal? It appears that the governor's announcement will be homework for the next administration. It is always easier to make promises for which one will not be held accountable.

The Department of Environmental Quality has opened a comment period for the "special exception" water withdrawal for the plant during the month of December — while community members are focusing on the holidays and spending time with their families. The open comment period is slated to last 30 days, and because it would occur during weeks with multiple holidays, it would impact the amount of time available to ask questions or to contact DEQ with concerns. DEQ staff availability is likely to be low at this

time, as employees may take days off to use their accumulated comp time before it's lost at the end of the year.

Only one meeting has been scheduled by DEQ to talk with the community about this special exception water withdrawal. It was held on December 5 in Charles City County. Directly impacted residents were given one two-hour informational session to find out and understand what a special exception is and what it means to have up to 30 million gallons of water per year, or 3.5 million gallons per month, taken from the community's local water sources. The application for the water permit was submitted in 2018, and DEQ has been working with the applicant, Balico, for over a year on this water permit. Charles City County residents were given only

two hours.

I do not know how much knowledge you have about gas power plants or what it means to live right next to, not one, but two gas power plants, but imagine if you, along with other people, would have only two hours to try to understand this and then only a month to submit a comment expressing your concerns. This is how DEQ has chosen to inform and work with this community.

The Chickahominy gas power plant will withdraw water from the Potomac Aquifer through wells. Earlier this year DEQ reduced the amount of water of the 14 largest water users in Virginia. For four of them, it set a withdrawal target below the actual current usage: the International Paper Mill, the WestRock Paper Mill in West Point, the WestRock Paper Mill in Colonial Williamsburg and one other in James City County. All of them withdraw water from the same aquifer that the Chickahominy power plant is asking to withdraw from.

James City County was withdrawing 8.83 million gallons per day; the new authorization only lets it withdraw 6 million gallons, and for

the next permit cycle, it will get cut to 4 million. The purpose of these cuts is to preserve the aquifer and perhaps reach sustainable levels of water for the long term. Looking at the numbers and cuts that DEQ has made to preserve the aquifer this year and in previous years, it is curious that it even entertains the notion that a new industry can withdraw up to 30 million gallons per year, especially when water for human consumption is cut, which is the case of James City County.

These circumstances help us see how DEQ helps make Virginia #1 for business while minority and rural communities bear disproportionate burdens for the profit of polluting companies.

Regardless of whether or not you are an expert on gas power plants, please reach out to me at gustavo.angeles@sierraclub.org if you would like to help us fight them.

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

2020 General Assembly priorities by Corrina Beall and Bob Shippee

As we prepare for the 2020 General Assembly session, the results of November's election have the Virginia Chapter and our environmental partners cautiously optimistic that we can finally gain traction on clean energy and climate goals. The Legislative Committee met in November to discuss our most important priorities for the upcoming session, and here is a brief rundown:

A primary focus in the 2019 General Assembly session was the Solar Freedom Bill, which would have removed barriers to distributed solar that exist in the current Virginia law: obstacles such as the 1% limit on net-metered solar, restrictions on system size, discriminatory standby charges and burdensome rules on power purchase agreements. This bill remains a top priority in 2020, and we will advocate for passage with the new majorities in each chamber, starting with the newly-comprised Commerce and Labor Committee.

As in the past few years, another key priority is to fully join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative with nine (and, soon, 10) other eastern states. RGGI membership is critical to reducing Virginia's carbon footprint, and this bill is needed so that proceeds from carbon emission allowance auctions are used for investments in energy efficiency and other measures benefiting low-income residents rather than being

returned to the utilities.

Our third major priority will be passage of a mandatory renewable energy portfolio standard and a mandatory energy efficiency standard. Virginia's current voluntary goals have achieved nothing, and a binding path to zero energy sector pollution is crucial if we are to seriously address the climate crisis. Details of this proposal are still being discussed by a broad group of stakeholders as this is an area of monumental importance to businesses and environmentalists alike.

While the above will take much of our attention, the Chapter will also be involved in other important legislation, including passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, environmental justice measures, redistricting reform, toxics, electric vehicles and budget allocations for wind and solar programs. Bills are being pre-filed as of this writing, and the Legislative Committee will review all relevant legislation to determine the Chapter's position. Please stay tuned for progress as session unfolds!

If you have any questions about the Chapter's legislative program, please reach out to Corrina or Bob.

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

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Virginia's residential energy code update

by Ross Shearer

Our Virginia government relies heavily on establishing boards and commissions to isolate important technical decision-making processes from political tampering. I have occasionally read where a Virginia politician speaks of a "citizens committee" when seeking to pass the buck about some politically charged controversy such as a zoning issue. Updating the Virginia Uniform State-wide Building Code falls under such a convention, specifically under the Board of Housing and Community Development. The board's authority to amend the building code is all encompassing, ranging from commercial high-rises to amusement park rides. Its jurisdiction may include about every design aspect of every structure built in the state save the uniquely specific structures designed for national security or nuclear energy production.

Given this range, one would not expect the history of appointments to the board to reflect a parochial focus of persons representing the residential housing industry, but it has and, to a reduced extent, still does. For example, the current board chairman also has been the president of the New River Homebuilders Association. However, appointments by Govs. Northam and McAuliffe somewhat diversified the membership sufficiently to open the door for incrementally progressive results that gained Virginia two significant residential energy efficiency code amendments this year.

The reference code: In the 1990s the International Code Council was established by code officials to develop a single model construction code for the United States and other nations to consider for adoption. In 2012 the council released a substantially robust set of cost-effective energy-efficiency proposals for residential construction. The model energy code's main features include mechanical tests for house and duct air leakage and significant insulation upgrades, shown to be cost effective at a rate exceeding the long-term average of the stock market. These proposals were entirely rejected in 2012 by the Board of Housing and Community Development and the work group process then controlled by Virginia's homebuilder groups.

The 2019 code update cycle: Updates of model amendments are released on a three-year cycle, which presents the opportunity for energy efficiency stakeholders to submit the previously denied model amendments for reconsideration. Virginia relies on a process of stakeholder workgroups to wade through each proposed code amendment.

This year's endeavors led to an agreement among the stakeholders to require houses to conform to the model code's rigorous mechanical blower door test, limiting air leakage to no more than four air changes per hour. (The current code's exemption for permitting a visual inspection in lieu of the mechanical blower door

test will be eliminated.) Another positive development is that Virginia's current watered-down adoption of the alternative compliance model known as ResCheck will be changed to match the model's standards.

Once these new requirements are effective under the code, Virginia's homebuilders will be required to use the technical tools necessary for rating the energy requirements of houses they build using the Home Energy Rating System. This system informs prospective home buyers about the expected energy requirements to heat and cool the house.

I believe market choice will encourage more home builders to take the few additional steps needed to obtain the Home Energy Rating System scores for the houses they build and use the results in marketing their new houses. If my expectation is realized, the power of market forces will operate to advance energy efficiency beyond the Virginia code minimum, perhaps even for a majority of future houses.

Who are our heroes: These and other successes are attributed to the intrepid persistence of a core group of talented efficiency advocates, particularly Eric Lacey and Andrew Grigsby. Mr. Lacy resubmitted the International Code Council model amendments this year, which, had they all been approved, would have brought Virginia's USBC into alignment with the model.

What was defeated and by what craftiness: The results from

four workgroup meetings earlier this year had their usual defeats due to the influence from homebuilders. Two of the model's most cost-effective insulation upgrades, one for walls and the other for the attic, were rejected as "non-consensus" for the third time. The code for wall insulation is little changed from the 1970s. Under the consensus process used, objections by the two homebuilder representatives were allowed to prevail although the two representatives were outnumbered in attendance by a ratio of over 10:1. The homebuilder representatives supported their objections by using a single, cynically narrow, oft-repeated statement to the effect, "Let those buyers who want those features pay for them, but don't impose their costs on those who don't want them." These energy-saving features have about a 5 to 7-year payback period for improving a structure promising a 100-year lifespan. Who could be the buyers who wittingly reject the costs of these features?

Permitting built-in obsolescence: We know more is at stake than the lost opportunities for cost-effective reductions in the operating costs of a building. In addition to better comfort and indoor air quality, it has been shown that higher efficiency houses are more resistant to mortgage default and the associated consequences that defaults impose for families and
See Residential energy code on page 9.

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**

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 Tim Cywinski at 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**

Hampton Roads

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

Richmond

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** 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** or visit <https://vasierra.club/nova>

Remaining resilient as Virginia Beach takes on climate change

by Ann Creasy

The word “resiliency” as it is nestled in conversations around climate change frequently refers to adaptations that we can make to prepare for the impacts of climate change. In Hampton Roads this tends to take form in our plans to deal with impending water: flood walls, changes in architecture, considerations in city planning, etc. For people in Hampton Roads and other coastal areas, the word “resilience” surely brings a rush of associations and connotations pointing to some sort of response to climate change; the word is frequently paired with “coastal” to bring us the pressing issue of “coastal resiliency” — a common item of discussion in Hampton Roads. With flooding and other ever-present reminders of encroaching water all around, the demands of climate change are embedded within the word resilience for the people in Virginia Beach.

So, why this peek into different notions of the word resilience? When I reflect on the work that has occurred in 2019 in Virginia Beach, I see first hand the growth of climate-preparing communities in all senses of the word resilient. There is another way to consider resilience in a way that is directly related to, but can be separate from, conversations on climate change. If we separate the themes of flooding mitigation and emission reduction plans from the resiliency, what does it truly mean to be a resilient community?

Resilience is rooted in a commu-



On September 20, Virginia Beach residents joined people all over the world to strike against climate change (photo courtesy of Lauren Landis, CCAN).

nity’s ability to recover and restore in the face of adverse situations. This deals in terms of passion, human connection and willingness. I have seen an abundance of evidence that these traits are pillars of what will prepare people in Virginia Beach to face climate change. I have witnessed a rush of interest, concern and commitment to progress in building community. I have seen this from the Seatak Civic League partnering with Sierra Club to host a coastal conversation on climate change at their local recreation center. The community organized itself, and members supported each other to respond to the industrial overdevelopment of a historically black community with factories and storage units. The Environmental Justice Committee of the Chesapeake Bay Group of Sierra Club worked

with Seatak and city officials to help ensure the development of Seatak is considerate of climate issues and fair to the needs of those living in the community. The cohesive and active nature of people living in Seatak indicated a community that was willing to respond, willing to ask questions and willing to face adversity; they are resilient.

Following the Coastal Conversations in Seatak that were hosted in March 2019, we witnessed a strong response against offshore oil drilling leading into May 2019 with Hands Across the Sand at the Oceanfront. Residents rallied at Green Drinks and in coalition meetings to help make our resistance to offshore drilling well known. Parents, children, students, surfers, business-owners and environmentalists gathered to demand a halt to the threat of fossil

fuel infrastructure in the form of oil rigs off our coast. These events led to a growing movement and a network of support among communities who were learning about problems and getting together to do something about them.

This building momentum has been channeled into a network of partners and task groups who are working with the city and their communities to ask the right questions. For example, we’ve seen a peak of interest and willingness in Virginia Beach amongst grassroots activists to see the city move towards 100% clean energy by 2050. In August, a room full of about 20 people spent nearly two hours planning for goals and objectives to make the city of Virginia Beach more resilient and prepared to respond to climate change. Virginia Beach students, parents, professionals and residents of many varieties showed up to the climate strike on September 20. As I write this, there is another climate strike planned for Friday, December 6 outside Elaine Luria’s office.

Virginia Beach is working together to prepare for climate change in the truest sense. With the foundation we’ve set so far, 2020 will surely be an exciting year of progress in an equitable and just movement towards communities that are even more prepared for climate change.

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

Residential energy code continued from page 8

neighborhoods during economic recessions.

During storm-related electric utility disruptions, buildings with high-efficiency envelopes retain heat longer. Moreover, it’s clear that global security requires all new residential and commercial construction be built to a carbon-neutral or net-zero-ready standard, starting now. (Twenty years ago would have been prognostic.) The failure of the commonwealth’s code updating process to move decisively towards a net-zero goal by rapidly adopting model provisions introduced over seven years ago and demonstrated to be resolutely cost effective is a public service failure. When considering that higher-efficiency buildings will compete more effectively at resale in the fast approaching climate-chal-

lenging real estate markets, this code amendment failure effectively sanctions an apparent homebuilder industry preference for planned obsolescence of the energy profile of new housing stock.

A secret homebuilder industry agreement exposed: The next big steps by the International Code Council are expected to focus on higher insulation values for walls, attics and floors, the very focus areas where the lag under Virginia’s Uniform Statewide Building Code amendment process has been unrepentantly builder biased. Sadly the bias is not uniquely Virginian. The New York Times reported on October 26, 2019 that with respect to residential energy efficiency, the International Code Council made a secret written agreement with the

National Homebuilders Association to resist progress on energy efficiency and disaster resistance by guaranteeing to “industry representatives four of the 11 voting seats on [the] two powerful committees that approve [model] building codes” for states to adopt.

What you can do:

- Become informed about the Home Energy Rating System, or HERS.
- Get a home energy audit of your house that includes the duct blaster and blower door tests. Cost is about \$400.

What is a blower door test? Properly designed houses have an air barrier envelope that isolates the interior from the outdoors. If it is excessively leaky there will be comfort issues and the heating and cooling

systems will run longer. A blower door test places the house under a vacuum to measure the leakage expressed in air changes per hour. During testing, a thermal camera is used to locate leaks for repair. Since some air change is required, very tight houses require mechanisms to allow outdoor air to enter, when, for example, a kitchen exhaust fan is running. Learn more from the article “Home Energy Audit Presentation Fascinates Audience” in the January 2009 Great Falls Group Cascade or the RESNET website.

- Implement the energy auditor’s cost-effective recommendations.

Ross Shearer is a member of the Great Falls Group of the Virginia Chapter.

Working towards fossil-free transportation in Virginia

by Kelsey Crane

When I came into the Virginia Chapter, I had spent years organizing with youth in the Southeast to grow a movement for 100% clean energy. We were fearful of how living on a climate-changed planet would impact our futures and of the impact of fossil fuel extraction, a dying coal industry and corporate power on our communities.

I had the privilege of taking on our transportation work and figuring out how we were going to advocate for solutions that brought benefit to all Virginians. The passionate call for a clean transportation revolution is not being heard loudly, but it is just as critical a climate solution as reducing our energy demand and transitioning to clean energy in a rapid, fair and equitable way. Virginia's transportation system, heavily reliant on gas-powered vehicles, is our No. 1 source of climate change pollution, accounting for 45% of Virginia's carbon pollution and contributing to extreme weather events, high asthma rates and economic costs. Transportation fuels are Virginia's largest source of carbon pollution and other harmful air pollutants, accounting for 47.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2016.

Pipelines

continued from page 1

Environmental Quality in 2018. This decision opened a public comment period through November 27 on the "consent decree," or settlement decision. Hundreds of comments were submitted, citing concerns about the lack of financial impact the settlement would actually have on a \$5B+ project and the absence of substantive action taken against the pipeline company in light of hundreds of violations.

That same day brought the welcome announcement that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit put a hold on two permits required by MVP for construction activities. These positive announcements continued on October 15, when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ordered that the construction activities along the entire 303-mile route of the Mountain Valley Pipeline must stop. This announcement is owed to MVP losing key permits under the Endangered Species Act. Currently, MVP is only allowed to complete work necessary to stabilize the right-of-way in previously disturbed areas. Dedicated on-the-

ground community monitoring continues to keep watch of MVP's activities in the area.

What would it look like to build a fossil free transportation system for Virginia? Setting ambitious goals to cut carbon pollution from transportation; investing in public transit and walkable, bikeable communities; and creating policies that prioritize clean vehicles and fuels, efficiency and mass transit would position Virginia as a model for 100% clean transportation. Residents would be able to "live, work, play," with affordable housing, job opportunities, parks and trails and public transportation options. A carbon-free transportation sector would bolster Virginia's clean energy economy and provide a safe and healthy place to live now and for future generations.

Virginia is shaping new policies and investments in response to public demand to cut carbon pollution. In 2017, the Volkswagen settlement funds provided Virginia \$97M to invest in clear air. To date, \$50M has been allocated, with all of the funds advancing electrification of our transportation sector. This includes maximizing the 15% available for electric vehicle chargers with a \$14M grant awarded to EVGo to create a statewide network of EV chargers. An additional \$15M was

provided to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to create a program for electric buses, and this year \$20M was allocated for EV school buses, weeks after an announcement for a program that could convert 13,000 out of 17,000 diesel school buses to electric by 2030, with a commitment to funds to convert at least 1,050 buses in the next five years.

In 2018, Virginia joined the Transportation and Climate Initiative to develop a cap-and-invest model policy for reducing carbon from the transportation sector. The rule would create a new regional, low-carbon transportation policy proposal that would cap and reduce carbon pollution from the transportation sector and invest proceeds from the program into a low-carbon and more resilient transportation system. Setting a cap on transportation emissions, investing the revenue in communities with poor air quality and funding electric transit buses supported the transition started by the Volkswagen mitigation trust funds. Participating in regional programs ensures that reductions are accomplished more effectively and efficiently at the lowest possible cost or even at no net

support to the ACP during a monthly meeting, and owing to the high number of public comments received that shared concerns against ACP, the commission decided to remove the ACP from that day's agenda and form a committee to more closely study the project. A coalition of groups, including Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, Mothers Out Front, Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, Chesapeake Climate Action Network and the Southern Environmental Law Center, and outstanding volunteer leaders Glen Besa and Tyla Matternson helped facilitate the submission of hundreds of comments. Ann Creasy in the Norfolk office played a crucial role in working with local groups and communicating with allies about this agenda item. This decision from the commission will allow more careful consideration of the harmful impacts of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

October saw the Atlantic Coast Pipeline on the agenda for the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, whose members represent a large number of localities in the Hampton Roads area. The commission was asked to lend public

cost. Over 73% of Virginia voters agree the state should prioritize investments in renewable energy.

Transitioning and expanding access to clean vehicles, providing public transportation, creating multimodal communities where people can walk and bike safely and access mass transit, joining the Transportation and Climate Initiative and equitably investing revenue in ways that further cut carbon are all achievable, common sense goals that benefit not only the environment but also people's quality of life, health and economy. Communities need to be consistently engaged in making decisions at all levels, and investments should be prioritized to areas with the lowest air quality that are suffering the health, environmental and economic impacts of pollution.

Moving into 2020, when leaders in our state legislature say they are looking to boldly address climate change, we need to ask them to include transportation in those solutions.

Kelsey Crane is the campaign and policy director of the Virginia Chapter.

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Control Board related to the air permitting decision for the siting of the ACP compressor station in Union Hill. The judges' decisions will be announced in 2020. The Buckingham community continues to increase awareness of the environmental injustices occurring in our state, and has recently been visited by national social justice advocates.

What comes next in the Stop the Pipelines Campaign as we close 2020? Educational outreach about the ACP, MVP, MVP Southgate and fossil fuel infrastructure in Virginia continues, and the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is privileged to continue working alongside a coalition of communities and groups across the region. Next year brings new opportunities to engage on this campaign, and I encourage you to reach out to me at jessica.sims@sierraclub.org to learn more and participate in this work!

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

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

We saved the Mattaponi

by Tyla Matteson and Glen Besa

It was a beautiful day at Gene and Suzanne Campbell's place in King William County on September 28, 2019, where about 100 people gathered to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of saving the Mattaponi, on the banks of the river we saved.

Through ups and downs, battles won and lost over 13-plus years, we defeated the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the City of Newport News. We stopped an unneeded drinking water reservoir that would have destroyed more than 400 acres of valuable wetlands, harmed fisheries in the river, broken a 1677 treaty with the local

Native American tribes and flooded archaeological sites of importance to them.

The victory was a result of efforts by the Alliance to Save the Mattaponi along with the Sierra Club, Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers Association, Southern Environmental Law Center, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Mattaponi and other Virginia tribes, courageous elected officials, other organizations and hundreds of citizens working together. At our 10-year celebration, we heard from many of these people and enjoyed music from the TinCatFishBand, delicious catered food and a canon

blast finale by Tom Rubino.

This was a major campaign of the Virginia Chapter, and many members attended, including former chapter chair Roger Diedrich, now living in North Carolina, and Bill Grant, former York River Group chair, from San Francisco. It represents one of the greatest environ-

mental victories of the century and gives those waging present and future campaigns the courage to never quit.

Tyla Matteson is the chair of the York River Group and Glen Besa is the political chair of the Virginia Chapter.



Parade attendees march to save the Mattaponi River (photo courtesy of Saving the Mattaponi archives, date unknown).

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*A tear can no more purify a river
Than a firefly can hold back the darkness,
But a soul weeping against injustice
Must take action to save that which it loves.*

*More than 23 years ago
We took action.
The reservoir proposed by Newport News would have
Stolen water from the Mattaponi River,
Harmed fish,
Flooded sacred sites and graves,
Destroyed forests and wetlands.*

*We spoke for the River at rallies and blessings and hearings.
We marched for the River
With its people, the Mattaponi Tribe,
Following the Trail of Hope through Virginia and New York.
We walked in rhythm with the Mattaponi Drum,
The heartbeat of its people.*

*Our hearts, silent drums,
Implored all people and any gods they worshipped
To save the Mattaponi River
From the forces of greed.*

*We danced furiously,
Willing our feet to shatter the foundations of establishment.
Noise and tears,
Screams and cheers,
Crowds of memories from 13 years,
And we were victorious!*

*A decade later,
We stand again on the bank of the River.
The water swirls its thanks.
We stare at our reflections,
The ripples and wrinkles,
And sunshine that twinkles.*

*We see faces of those who have passed on.
They are smiling.
Water is life.
We're older now.
We want the world to be wiser.*

Frances Broaddus-Crutchfield, September 22, 2019

Green Power for Suckers program wins SCC approval

by Ivy Main

Virginia's State Corporation Commission has approved Dominion Energy Virginia's request to offer a new product to electric utility customers who want to buy renewable energy at a discount but lack the knowledge to understand when they are being taken for chumps.

Rider REC is an ultra-cheap version of the company's Green Power Program (itself of questionable value). For less than a buck a month on their electric bills, customers will be able to buy renewable energy certificates that cost Dominion next to nothing because no one else wants them. And for good reason: these are the dregs of the renewable energy category.

You won't find any wind or solar in Rider REC, but you might find paper mill waste, trees burned after clear-cutting or century-old hydro dams — all officially "renewable" under the generous provisions of Virginia law. Dominion will scrounge up these old and dirty leftovers, package them up and put a green bow on them.



Trees burned after clearcutting are officially considered "renewable" energy sources under Virginia law (photo by Calibas, Creative Commons).

"*Caveat emptor*," says the SCC with a shrug. The SCC seems to think anyone dumb enough to pay extra voluntarily deserves whatever they get.

This is not the first time the SCC has shown disregard for eco-conscious consumers. Four years ago it gave Dominion the nod for a program the company was calling "community solar," which wasn't actually selling any solar and had nothing

to do with communities. Dominion never did roll out that program, perhaps because there was no way to market it without courting accusations of consumer fraud, but it had the SCC's blessing for it!

(In case you are confused: this was before the company's most recent iteration of community solar, also approved, also not actually community solar, and which we are still waiting for. Dominion executives

could probably do with a thesaurus.)

In response to concerns that customers wouldn't know what they are getting, the SCC order did impose one labeling requirement. Dominion's marketing materials must "clearly identify the source of the RECs available for purchase under Rider REC (i.e., the less expensive of PJM Tier II RECs or national Green-eligible RECs)."

Perhaps Dominion will even tell buyers what those things mean, though the SCC doesn't seem to be saying it has to. In the interests of clarity, Dominion could explain that "PJM Tier II RECs" translates to "some stuff we found behind the refrigerator and think might still be edible." But it probably won't.

That's because, just as with the old community solar thing, the problem is that if buyers understand what's in it, they won't be buyers.

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

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Dominion's other "Green Power"