



Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Fall 2020

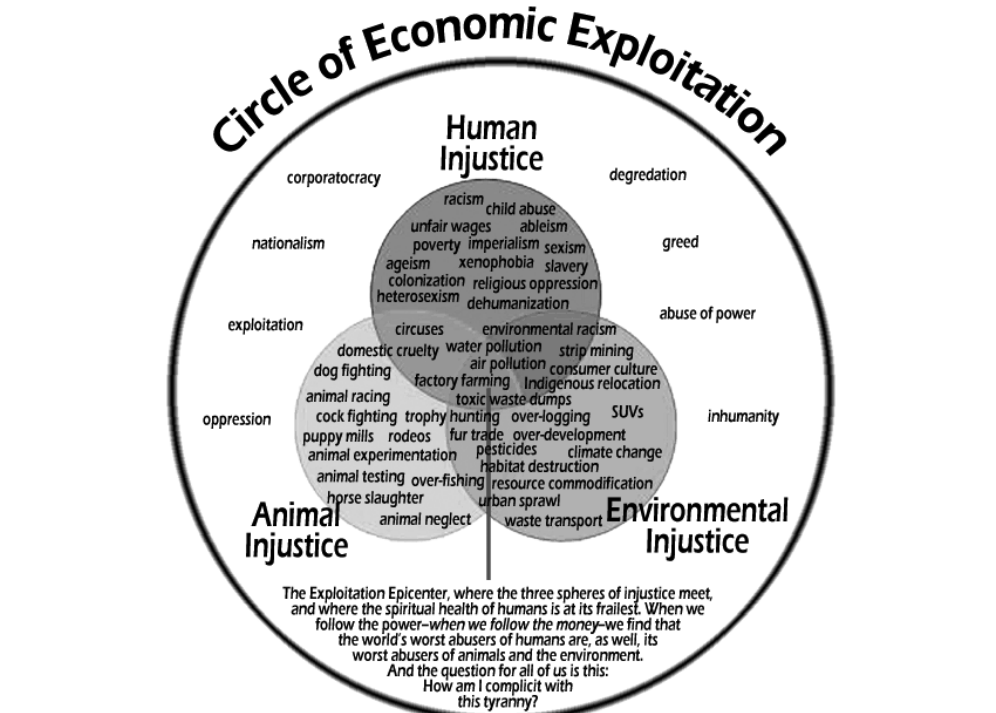
The intersectionality of racial justice and climate activism

by Lynn Godfrey

Climate change, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, “is one of the most devastating problems humanity will ever face—and the clock is running out.” Since the Industrial Revolution we have enjoyed the growth and advancement of our species with scientific breakthroughs for health and medicine, transportation, building technologies and overall improvement in our livelihoods but at a tremendous cost. Fossil fuel usage, such as oil, coal and gas, has provided the energy needed for this development; but it is also responsible for the devastation of our planet as the primary contributor to climate change. Climate change, as defined by NASA, is “a broad range of global phenomena created predominantly by burning fossil fuels, which add heat-trapping gases to Earth’s atmosphere. These phenomena include the increased temperature trends described by global warming, but also encompass changes such as sea-level rise; ice mass loss in Greenland, Antarctica, the Arctic and mountain glaciers worldwide; shifts in flower/plant blooming; and extreme weather events.” The carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels is one of the major greenhouse gases responsible for climate change.

With the increase of carbon dioxide, the planet warms up with dire consequences for its inhabitants—consequences with tremendous impacts for all living things but especially for the poor and people of color. Sea level rises and extreme weather patterns occur causing flooding, wildfires, drought and other out-of-the-ordinary occurrences not conducive to sustaining life on earth.

Just as climate change is not just one single thing but a phenomenon impacting many things, racial justice also covers a multitude of sins: police brutality, income inequalities, health disparities, and overall quality of life for BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color). The Union of



A meta-intersectionality graphic by Paul Gorski showing the intersections of human, environmental and animal injustice.

Concerned Scientists—a network of research scientists founded in 1969, during the height of the Vietnam War and at the time of one of the nation’s worst environmental disasters, the burning of the Cuyahoga River in Ohio from oil-soaked pollutants ignited from sparks from a passing train—asserts, “If we do nothing, these impacts will worsen. Large swaths of the world’s population will likely migrate. Entire island nations may disappear. The magnitude and range of impacts means that almost every human on Earth will be affected, if they’re not already. Low-income communities and people of color will be hit the hardest.”

Both racial justice and climate change activism are movements often on parallel paths that many do not think are interconnected or intersect. Some would say, “What in the world do greenhouse gases and global warming have to do with racism?” What is intersectionality and how is it applicable to the two movements? How and why are the poor and people of color more impacted by the phenomena of climate change?

Intersectionality is a term coined in the 1980s by law professor and

social justice activist Kimberle’ Crenshaw to describe a concept of two social justice factors overlapping often without acknowledgment from those working for social justice. It was when she and some colleagues were working on a job discrimination case brought by an African American woman based on race and gender that the concept was realized. The federal court judge did not rule in her favor, noting that her employer did hire blacks in significant quantities and the same was true for women. What Crenshaw and her colleagues noticed was that while that was true, the Blacks hired in significant quantities were men and the women hired in significant quantities were white. So, in this instance, race and gender intersect at employment discrimination delivering an unfair outcome for the disenfranchised black woman. A look at some of the consequences of climate change, such as sea-level rise, drought and pollution, illuminate the intersection of the two social movements and why the poor and people of color are at greater risks from the environmental impacts of climate change.

Sea level rise: The increase in

the level of the world’s oceans as a result of global warming seems to be an equal-opportunity disaster; however, poverty and place (geography) put poor people, often people of color, at a greater risk. In their article, “Risks of sea level rise to disadvantaged communities in the United States,” J. Martinich, J. Neumann, L. Ludwig, et al., use a Social Vulnerability Index to identify “where socially vulnerable populations would bear disproportionate costs of adaptation.”

Think hurricane Katrina and how it revealed the deep poverty in the United States. Those with the means and resources were able to adapt to the threat of the storm, while those without the means and resources, poor—mostly Black—people were not. While the storm and sea level rise are independent of racism, how it is experienced is not. Incidentally and ironically, the geography of impacted areas for sea level rise in the U.S. follows the placement of the majority of African Americans in this country as a direct consequence of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Drought: The prolonged lack of rain over extended periods of times/seasons presents tremendous hardships to communities already resource challenged. Drought impacts poor communities in the U.S. as well as worldwide, impacting water supply and food security. In the Southwest, the Navajo Nation in Arizona is experiencing prolonged periods of drought affecting their already short water supply. According to NASA, “more than 40 percent of homes lack running water, and many people haul water over 50 miles by truck to replenish their storage cisterns.”

Drought impacts agricultural production and is one of the driving forces behind South American immigration. Honduras and Nicaragua both are among the top 10 countries most impacted by extreme weather conditions between 1998 and 2017, per an NPR report.

See Racial justice on page 3.

Notes from the chair: EJ communities near us
by Daryl Downing



From the chair

In the circles in which the Sierra Club operates, there's the term EJ (environmental justice) communities. EJ communities are often comprised of low-income residents and/or residents of color who have been

disadvantaged for decades by having highly polluting facilities or infrastructure located nearby. Many EJ communities have come into being as a result of the systemic racism that was brought into light after the murder of George Floyd. EJ communities may have poor air quality, toxins in the soil or water, no grocery store with healthy food, a highway that divided an existing neighborhood, a lack of tree cover or green space or other serious problems that affect public health and quality of life. Many of our fights with polluters are efforts to protect EJ communities from further harm.

It occurred to me recently that I moved into an EJ community. Fulton and Rocketts (Landing) in Richmond were devastated by an "urban renewal" project in the 1970s

(see <https://vpm.org/news/articles/2408/indelible-roots-preserving-fultons-history> for more information about this project). Thousands of people were displaced and 850 structures were demolished.

In 2016 my 45-home solar community was built on land that had sat vacant since the 1970s. While energy efficient/solar development within a city is a good thing, the price that the previous residents of the area paid is unacceptable.

Why do I suggest that I live in an EJ community? Countless CSX trains pass through the neighborhood carrying coal and chemicals. The 100-year-old unused Fulton Gas Works site (which I pass when I walk my dog) is so polluted that they're going to remove all the buildings and dig up the below ground infrastructure and soil before the site can be repurposed. A developer that wants to build three apartment buildings will have to have the soil remediated

due to pollutants it's absorbed over the years. And a recycling company just down the street employs dozens of large diesel trucks to move construction debris.

While my family elected to move to Fulton and could elect to move out, countless families in EJ communities across the state and nation don't have this option due to the expenses associated with moving. Furthermore, many pollutants don't stay where they're dumped. Public health issues in one community affect the larger region in myriad ways.

I'm proud that the Club and the Chapter prioritize EJ communities. We can't undo the injustices that happened in the past, but we can ally with people who live in these communities to prevent new injustices from occurring.

Daryl Downing is the chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Volunteer spotlight: Hampton Roads LTEs
by Hunter Noffsinger

Despite the struggles of online organizing in the age of COVID-19, our volunteers and members have continued to show up and advocate for the environment from home. Just because we are now in a virtual space, it doesn't mean the important work stops.

One of the biggest ways we have stayed engaged in environmental issues is through writing letters to the editor to our local newspapers. Letters to the editor are a great way to facilitate conversations within the community about climate change and how it affects the people and environment. Writing letters to the editor is also a great way to call attention to issues where other members of your community, as well as staff for legislators, will see them. We need to continue to call attention to the issues that our communities

are facing in order to let legislators and community leaders know we care about them, and our volunteers and members have done just that!

Over the summer, volunteers and members from the Hampton Roads area have had 10 letters submitted and 7 letters published in the Virginian Pilot. The topics for letters have ranged from advocating for solar on schools and offshore wind, to racial justice and police reform.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our members on our Letter to the Editor Team, we've been able to highlight the need for clean energy, climate-forward legislation, the end of pipelines and police reform.

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

Virginia Chapter Annual Gathering
canceled due to Covid

The Virginia Chapter is very sorry to announce that, based on National Sierra Club's policy of canceling all in-person events due to Covid-19, the Chapter's Annual Gathering 2020 will not be taking place. Refunds have been issued to all who had purchased tickets.

Tremendous thanks go out to the planning committee, including Rich Eggeling, Suzanne Eggeling, John Cruickshank, Jim Lynch, Steve Carter-Lovejoy and Jessica Sims. We hope that 2021 will be more conducive to a successful Gathering.

Virginia Sierran

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<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, editorvirginiasierran@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.

Thank you Alice and Jess!

by Tim Cywinski

I am both happy and sad to report that two of our staff are moving on from the Virginia Chapter. Alice Redhead and Jessica Sims are two of the most effective and passionate individuals one can know. Both embodied the spirit of “powerful togeth-



Alice Redhead

er” in their own unique ways.

Alice was the Virginia Chapter’s Ready for 100 campaign organizer. Her responsibilities included promoting and organizing around 100% clean energy transition for any and all locality in the commonwealth, certainly not an easy task. Alice’s duty required her to build vast partnerships and connections among groups, oversee and participate in virtually limitless planning around

ambitious climate solutions for all her respective localities and serve as an informed and excited spokesperson for clean energy transitions in Virginia.

As the only organizer dedicated to Ready for 100, Alice was called to be a tenacious self-starter with her work in order to be effective, something for which she made accomplishing look easy. Under her watch, numerous localities across the commonwealth either adopted resolutions or policies around a 100% transition commitment, or began the process of planning for one. Among her many highlights, Alice was instrumental in securing Arlington’s bold and binding commitment to transition to 100% clean energy community wide by 2035. Alice worked on clean energy transitions “before it was cool,” as most of her work predates the passage of the Virginia Clean Economy Act. Alice’s work around climate solutions is far from over as she has accepted a position with the national office of the League of Conservation Voters.

Jessica Sims was one of our resident pipeline fighters, and if you have ever been to an event related to stopping the Atlantic Coast or Mountain Valley pipeline, odds

are Jessica was there to welcome you. “Passionate” is not a strong enough adjective to describe Jess.



Jessica Sims

If there was any opportunity to advocate against a polluting project or a method to empower a community in the crosshairs of a pipeline, Jess put in her all in making sure the Virginia Chapter was there to provide support.

As an artist, Jess was able to use her skills to broaden our view of activism, be it in the form of creative signs or cutouts at a protest or organizing an art show of local artists’ work that showcased the ongoing damage to our environment. I can’t tell you how many times I left the Richmond office late in the evening

only to find Jess still there, sipping on a freshly brewed cup of coffee while trying to find a new way to engage advocates. Her tenure at the Chapter included many accomplishments, including starting a regular “lunch and learn” program, playing a vital role in organizing the 2019 March to End Environmental Racism and, of course, doing her part in defeating the (now canceled) Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The last of which was the product of collective action, but we know that advocates like Jess—people willing to do everything they can without ever asking for credit—are the reasons the fight for people over polluter’s profits can be won.

There are always mixed emotions when staff members move on from their positions at the Virginia Chapter. We are happy to see them advance their careers and pursue their passion, while also knowing that their presence will be sorely missed. We are so thankful for the time Alice and Jess shared with us. We were better off for having them in our ranks, and the climate movement as a whole is that much stronger with them in it.

Tim Cywinski is the communications coordinator of the Virginia Chapter.

Racial justice continued from page 1

Pollution: Whether it is water or air contaminants from the emission of carbon dioxide or drinking water contamination from poisonous run-offs, the poor and people of color bear the greatest burden of the impact of pollution. In twenty-first century U.S., the most developed nation on earth, two highly populated cities, Flint, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey, have contaminated and non-consumable drinking water supplies. The levels of lead found in Newark’s drinking water were some of the highest recorded by a large water system. No amount of lead is safe. According to Natural Resources Defense Council, the causes of this contamination are violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act, failure to replace old pipes and failure to notify residents of the problem by city officials.

It is no coincidence that both Newark and Flint are predominately Black-populated urban cities at 49.73% and 57% African American, respectively. Most social scientists

posit that racism is at the center of both injustices. I do not think anyone would argue that the injustices experienced by these two communities over clean drinking water would have occurred in predominantly white communities.

So, where does racial justice and climate change intersect? Who is most impacted by climate change and where? I would posit they intersect at environmental (in)justice. Crenshaw also declares Intersectionality as a tool to mitigate the risk of not acknowledging the intersectionality of parallel social phenomena so that we may “better intervene in advocacy.”

At the Sierra Club, we are centering equality and inclusivity in our advocacy for climate change framed around environmental justice. We incorporate the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice adopted by the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in Washington, D.C., in 1991 and follow the Jemez principles for demo-

cratic organizing to carry out climate and social activism.

As the Circle of Economic Exploitation graph (see page 1) portrays, we engage in opposing all forms of injustices—environmental, human and animal—with all the overlap and intersection associated with it to bring about a more just and livable planet for all to enjoy.

We cannot in earnest fight for climate justice for the planet without addressing all injustices, especially those impacting our fellow human

beings. As the father of the environmental justice movement, Professor Robert Bullard, states, “whether by conscious design or institutional neglect, communities of color in urban ghettos, in rural ‘poverty pockets’, or on economically impoverished Native-American reservations face some of the worst environmental devastation in the nation.”

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



There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde

Great Falls Group update
by Norbert Pink

We are working on reorganization, a new website, data center activity and more this quarter with GFG. We reached an informal agreement between Mount Vernon Group and GFG, awaiting Chapter approval, to move some members of the MVG into GFG for better member participation and representation. This will be a big challenge for GFG to develop a management structure to coordinate activities with this larger number of members.

The GFG website is going through a much-needed reformatting to accommodate the new national guidelines, and this will be a great opportunity to update the website with new content.

Natalie Pien is dusting off the data center issue and has coordinated an excellent meeting with Glen Besa, Ivy Main and others to develop a data center renewable energy strategy.

More member involvement is really needed with the above topics,

so please contact norbertsierra@aol.com with your interest.

Most members expressed disappointment with the public engagement activities by Fairfax County for the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, or CECAP, with the public meetings and survey. GFG provided many recommendations to Fairfax County.

Please read the GFG monthly newsletters at <https://bit.ly/33lpQVL> and the September Conservation Report at <https://bit.ly/35sZHHi> for more details on activities and more environmental information.

GFG is having its annual ExCom election. If you are interested in running for a position, please provide your background election statement to Linda at lnjstvns@aol.com by September 25.

Norbert Pink is the chair of the Great Falls Group.

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- Oct. 24-25 ... Alexandria, VA
- Nov. 14-15 ... Charlottesville, VA
- Nov. 21-22 ... Norfolk, VA
- Jan. 9-10 ... Charlottesville, VA
- Jan. 16-17 ... Norfolk, VA
- Jan. 23-24 ... Farmville, VA
- Jan. 30-31 ... Harrisonburg/Staunton, VA

Instruction by Matthew Rosefsky, Geo Medic, SOLO Instructor-Trainer, Sierra Club Outings Leader, and Volunteer Strategist for Sierra Club National's Outdoors for All campaign. Cost is \$215. See <https://solowfa.com> for more information and online registration.

Falls of the James Group upcoming events

FOJG's Fall 2020 programs will be virtual. You will find the same thought-provoking topics, same "everybody welcome" free programs and same dates and times (Second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm). Go to <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/falls-james> to register.

October 13, Sarah Vogelsong and Michael Martz, "Hot Election Issues—Green Choices." Get updates from the news reporters who cover Virginia's pipelines battles, the new VA Clean Economy Act, Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and wide ranging issues related to energy, the environment and politics.

November 10, Art Evans, "The Insect Apocalypse: Is the World's Entomofauna in Decline?" Hate those pesky insects? Entomologist Art Evans will make you think twice about the decline of insect populations' around the world.

January 12, Sarah Francisco, the Southern Environmental Law Center's director of the Virginia office, will discuss recent environmental lawsuits they have worked on, including the now-cancelled Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

How to request a paper ballot for your group
ExCom elections

This autumn brings many elections, including those within Sierra Club, for Virginia Chapter and local group executive committees. This article is to share with all members in Virginia how to vote by mail on a paper ballot for **local group elections**. We encourage all who possibly can to vote on the electronic ballot which will be emailed to you several times, in late October and November.

If you cannot access the electronic ballot of your local group and wish to vote by paper ballot for your ExCom candidates, please reach out to the contact person listed below for your group. Please have your Sierra Club member number, name and physical address ready to give the contact person.

Please note that deadlines to vote by mail will vary by group. Check with your local group for voting deadlines and candidate lists. Thank you.

February 9, Dr. Jeremy Hoffman, Science Museum scientist, will talk about urban heat islands and current efforts to ameliorate this effect in Richmond, as well as any new research he is doing.

March 9, Jay Epstein, builder and community developer of zero-energy homes, will focus on the past and present development of energy-efficient design, especially in Virginia.

April 13, Green New Deal Virginia updates from Lee Williams and her co-chair Karen Campblin. The Green New Deal Virginia is a recipient of a \$1,000 grant from FOJG.

ExCom elections

Any member who wishes to may run for a two-year term on our nine-member executive committee, which meets on the first Wednesday evening of each month from September through June. We are now meeting via Zoom. Please contact either Bruce Tarr at bruce.tarr@comcast.net or Steve Carter-Lovejoy at scarterlovejoy53@msn.com if you are interested in running for the FOJG ExCom.

Chesapeake Bay Group: Judy Hinch, (757)816-8989

Great Falls Group: Linda Stevens, (703)787-8861

Potomac River Group (Mount Vernon): Rick Keller, (703)532-3245

New River Valley Group: David Jenkins, 2907 Lancaster Drive, Blacksburg, VA 24060

Piedmont Group: John Cruickshank, (434)973-0373

Rappahannock Group: Linda Muller, (540)720-2848

York River Group: Tyla Matteson, (804)275-6476

Rappahannock Group holds virtual August presentations

by Paula Chow

"Climate Denialism" was presented by Dr. John Cook, research assistant professor at the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, where he is researching cognitive science. He is the co-author of "Climate Science: A Modern Synthesis" and "Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand."

Dr. Cook outlined techniques that climate deniers use. RGSC's summer intern Kayli Ottomanelli wrote an article for the Virginia Sierran Spring 2020 on this topic, having taken Dr. Cook's class. The presentation can be watched on RGSC's Facebook page.

"Nuclear Safety and Security Considerations in a Low-Carbon Future" was presented by Dr. Edwin Lyman, director of Nuclear Safety Climate and Energy Program at Union of Concerned Scientists. As an internationally recognized expert,

he co-authored "Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster," published in 2014. He is cited in thousands of news stories and articles and has testified many times before Congress and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The Union of Concerned Scientists is neither pro- nor anti-nuclear. It has been a nuclear energy watchdog for over 50 years. Nuclear power could play a role in helping to avert catastrophic global impacts of climate change, but it doesn't mean that nuclear power is essential. The union believes that nuclear power's safety, security and proliferation risks must be fully addressed if it is to play a significant role in the future. Mitigating these risks will come with a price tag that may make nuclear less attractive when competing against low-carbon alternatives.

After Fukushima, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission required

that nuclear power plants re-evaluate their flooding and seismic hazards and acquire additional portable equipment for use ("FLEX") during extended losses of alternating current power. But the commission decided **not** to require that the plants' permanent structures or their FLEX equipment be able to withstand the re-evaluated flooding and seismic hazards—undermining the basis for post-Fukushima protection.

Dr. Lyman addressed the North Anna nuclear plant issues. The findings and decisions by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the impact of Covid left us with grave concerns with the need for the Sierra Club to further discuss action plans.

The full presentation can be accessed via RGSC's Facebook page. All RGSC events are free and open to the public.

Paula Chow is the program chair of the Rappahannock Group.

Toward healthier communities: Streets for people

by Dan Marcin and Gary Kosciusko



Northern Virginia neighbor Montgomery County, Maryland, designated eight Shared Streets, where vehicles are limited to local traffic (photo from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation).

From our perspective in the D.C. metropolitan area, if there's one thing the current novel coronavirus pandemic has highlighted, it's how important our outdoor spaces are to our physical and psychological well-being. Gov. Northam, like Mayor Bowser of Washington, D.C., and Gov. Hogan of Maryland, recognized this and made exceptions for outdoor exercising (provided proper social distancing is maintained) in his stay-at-home executive order of March 30. Indeed, people have been heading to parks and trails in numbers not ordinarily seen.

We welcome the Virginia Trails Alliance's recent recommendations to improve and support trail development across the commonwealth. (See <https://www.virginiacapitaltrail.org/news-posts/2020/8/5/h5fvejhaq6wf6oxn98oek7nduexav1> for the recommendations.)

But Virginia could be doing more

to provide more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly options in the near term. Consider for a moment our neighbors to the north. In Montgomery County, Maryland, a successful Open Streets initiative has closed some streets to cars and, in the process, opened them to everybody else.

For example, the lightly-driven Sligo Creek Parkway runs adjacent to the Sligo Creek Trail for much of its length, until the creek empties into the Anacostia's Northwest Branch. On weekends, the more confident cyclists take to the parkway, while families on bikes, runners of all abilities, rollerbladers and parents pulling children in bike trailers crowd onto the narrow multi-use trail. You can imagine that there would be many bottlenecks. But with the parkway closed to cars—or should we say, open to people—the street is now home to every type of outdoor

activity, all carried out with little conflict and appropriate distancing. It's amazing what we can do when we give just a bit of space to those who aren't trapped in a metal box.

Montgomery's Open Streets will continue indefinitely, with parts of Sligo Creek Parkway and Beach Drive closed to cars from 9 a.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Sunday, every weekend, and Little Falls Parkway closed to cars from 7 a.m. Saturday to 6 p.m. Sunday (source <https://www.montgomeryparks.org/montgomeryparks-to-continue-open-parkways-program-on-weekends-until-further-notice/>).

Montgomery County has also designated eight Shared Streets where vehicles are limited to local traffic only. (See <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/shared-streets/> for more information.) While signs are not magic and cars may disobey this directive, the initiative encourages the transformation of these areas into "neighborhood greenways."

Perhaps we could learn a lesson from our neighbors and start weaning some of our streets off of cars, even temporarily, and see how much healthier we can get.

Gary Kosciusko is the chair and Dan Marcin is the vice-chair of Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings.

Group Directory

Groups are organized to conduct the work of Sierra Club in local areas, cities and towns.

The information listed below is for the chair of each group.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO): Gary Kosciusko
703-946-8111
novahiker@cox.net

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

The EPA today

by Bill Johnson

The Environmental Protection Agency was signed into law in 1970 by President Nixon, so EPA added an updated webpage (<https://www.epa.gov/50>) to celebrate its 50th anniversary. It says, “EPA was established on December 2, 1970 to consolidate in one agency a variety of federal research, monitoring, standard-setting, and enforcement activities to ensure environmental protection. Since its inception, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people.”

The first sentence focuses on EPA’s role in ensuring environmental protection, using research, monitoring, standard-setting and enforcement. Under the Trump administration, however, while EPA is doing those tasks, it is no longer working for a cleaner, healthier environment. It is working to ensure that polluters can pollute without ramifications, at the expense of the American people.

Andrew Wheeler, current head of the EPA, spoke at the Nixon library on September 3, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9LEhj2gAPk>). During the speech, Wheeler said, “Some members of former administrations and progressives in Congress have elevated single issue advocacy—in many cases

focused just on climate change to virtue single signal foreign capital, over the interests of communities within their own country. ... EPA has, at times, forgotten important parts of its mission.”

The irony is Wheeler and Trump are directly responsible for EPA forgetting its mission. They are directly responsible for EPA’s “current lack of effectiveness” in protecting the environment or resolving environmental justice issues, concerned only with speeding up the demise of regulations that meet Clean Air and Clean Water mandates or any other legal mandates that reduce a business’s profits.

Trump told Wheeler to do three things: continue to clean our air and water and eliminate or change any regulations that stand in the way of businesses revitalizing communities and creating jobs. Wheeler’s actions show he is focused on the third goal and ignoring the first two.

“How do we get to where we want to be?” Wheeler asked. But he focuses on how we get there, without considering where “there” is. We all want a safe, just and clean environment to live in, not one where corporate profit is prioritized over the health and welfare of all living creatures. We want the future to be built on the principles of environ-

mental justice, not on the backs of poor communities.

Wheeler says EPA must focus on “community-driven environmentalism”—revitalization, instead of climate change. If Trump is re-elected, EPA will focus on: “(1) Creating a community-driven environmentalism that promotes community revitalization; (2) meeting the 21st century’s demand for water; (3) reimagining superfund as a project-oriented program; (4) reforming the permitting process to empower the states; (5) create a holistic pesticide program for the future.”

He basically says the federal government will abdicate its role in protecting the environment, delegating authority to the states and thereby creating many different, often conflicting regulations that states will enforce, rather than one national standard. He wants business unfettered from the responsibilities of clean air, water and land without having to implement science-based, best-case solutions. He is for business over health and against science that disagrees with him; he wants water, but not necessarily clean water; limited environmental oversight that delays business permits; and pesticides, pesticides, pesticides.

He has created five new EPA “pillars,” including implementing cost/

benefit and science transparency rules that are to apply consistently when publishing regulations; publishing and rescinding current regulations; reorganizing EPA regional offices by creating Air, Water, Land, and Chemical Divisions; and implementing lean management systems to improve operations.

What he is actually doing is requiring that cost/benefit studies not consider any negative impacts on health and the environment. He would prevent EPA from considering many science-based analyses as part of the impact analysis. He is eliminating long-standing regulations that have proven to be effective over the years, making it cheaper to pollute with less accountability. And he is decentralizing operations and adding a lot of bureaucratic overhead (political appointees), while reducing technical staffing that had been addressing science.

Bill Johnson is a co-chair of the Rapahannock Group.

The troubling consequences of Trump’s environmental rollbacks

by Kayli Ottomanelli

In less than 60 days, Americans will vote in the fall presidential election. This election will have a far greater impact on peoples’ lives than many voters realize. Since Donald Trump assumed the presidency in 2017, he has made it his top priority to dismantle many of the environmental protections established under previous administrations. The New York Times, in a July 15, 2020 article, published a running count of every environmental law Trump has modified or reversed during his tenure. The count now stands at approximately 100 environmental rollbacks. What the article will not tell you, however, is that these rollbacks will cause over 79,700 premature deaths annually and put another 73.6 million Americans at risk of serious injury or illness. The damning statistics are based on research from many different sources, including the Times, Environmental

Defense Fund, Environmental Integrity Project, New York State Attorney General, US Department Of Labor, E&E News, Western Resource Advocates, Natural Resources Defense Council and others. If the current administration’s reckless policies are not reversed, these deaths and debilitating illnesses will continue to climb precipitously.

Many might wonder how such a shockingly large death count could go overlooked and unreported. The answer? Until now, the media has only reviewed the costs of individual environmental rollbacks, not the cumulative effects of every action combined. In some cases, the consequences of an environmental rollback have been easy to identify due to widespread media coverage. For example, Trump’s replacement of the Clean Power Plan made headlines when the Environmental Protection Agency predicted the

plan would result in 1,400 premature deaths. It reappeared in the news when Natural Resources Defense Council found this number to be closer to 5,200 premature deaths annually.

Another New York Times story describes how Trump’s EPA gutted the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, even though these standards are responsible for saving up to 11,000 lives every year. The Environmental Integrity Project reports that weakening these protections will result in an increase in hazardous air pollution linked to breathing illnesses, heart disease and cancer.

Other reversals have received less attention. Case in point, the Times reported that the new EPA regulations on lead and copper in drinking water doubled the time allotted to replace poisonous lead pipes. That made fewer headlines despite increasing the risk of lead poisoning

for the 18 million Americans whose water service lines still contain levels of lead in violation of the EPA’s rules, as noted by CBS News. It can be difficult to comprehend the collective effects of 100 individual actions on our health and livelihoods. Regardless, actions do accumulate, and the consequences are far worse than we ever imagined.

The death count we face now is not due to benign neglect or sheer ignorance. Vermont Law School Professor Patrick Parenteau has noted in a New York Times article, that in virtually every environmental rollback, Trump’s EPA has acknowledged in the fine print that its rule changes will cause increased pollution, resulting in an enormous surge in health problems and deaths. Donald Trump is willfully exchanging

See Rollbacks on page 10.

The fight against evictions

by Gustavo Angeles

You may have heard the news about the recent increase in evictions as a one of the consequences of Covid-19. Two years ago, The New York Times published an article indicating that evictions in Virginia were three or four times higher than the national average; the rate of evictions in this state has always been high. If neither you nor anyone in your social network has gone through this unfortunate experience, then you are likely unfamiliar with the scope and impact of evictions, both on a personal and a general level. Now is the time to take stock of the impact of evictions on our community and how the fight against evictions ties into our larger struggle for environmental justice.

There is a high correlation between people at high risk of contracting Covid and families vulnerable to eviction. This correlation is neither new nor coincidental. It has been exacerbated by the pandemic. If we removed Covid from the equation, 80% of people facing eviction are persons of color (source: RVA Eviction Lab). People at risk of getting evicted are also experiencing racial health disparities. To be more specific, Black, Latinx and brown people are disproportionately facing these issues.

A report published earlier this year by the RVA Eviction Lab indicated that neighborhood racial composition is a significant factor in determining evictions. The higher the African American population in a neighborhood, the higher the rate of evictions.

Why is there a correlation between evictions, race and the population at risk for Covid? To understand these disparities, it is necessary to acknowledge current and past policies, like redlining and eviction procedures. These policies strategically undermine people of color and perpetuate inequality. Nationwide, there is a scarcity of housing assistance for qualified families. According to the RVA Eviction Lab, 75% of qualified families do not receive the housing assistance they need. Moreover, there has been a loss of 4 million units of affordable housing during the last decade.

When an eviction occurs, the individuals or families that are evicted are not the only ones affected. There is a ripple effect that reaches far beyond those losing their homes. When rents are not paid, property taxes and mortgage payments will fall also, as will building maintenance. When property taxes are not paid, our public schools suffer a decrease in funding.

So what do evictions have to do with the environment, and why is the Sierra Club supporting our allies in this fight? When the Sierra Club first began fighting for environmental protection, Americans were enjoying the benefits of material consumption, and part of our job as advocates was to promote the idea that the health of our environment impacts everything: places where we live, play and work.

But not all Americans were enjoying the privileges of consumption equally, nor were all Americans

equally influential in the health of our environment. In fact, white Americans held almost all the reins of power, including access to land, water and air, and the right to extract and alter those areas as they saw fit. When their activities caused environmental damage, white Americans often felt none of the detrimental effects. Hence the Sierra Club's desire to educate the public about our connectedness with the natural world and our responsibility to protect it.

Meanwhile, communities of color were not sharing equally in the new consumer economy, but they were already feeling the ill effects of mismanagement of natural resources and blatant disregard for human and ecological health. Fast forward to Sierra Club 2020, and communities of color are a much larger portion of our national population. Yet their representation in corporations, government and even environmental organizations like the Club has not risen apace. We can no longer feign ignorance of racial oppression or dispossession of indigenous or exclusion of non-white voices from environmental struggles.

We need to recognize that fighting alongside communities of color against racist policies like eviction helps us build community health and restore the civic voices of our most vulnerable community members. With stable housing, Black Virginians can begin to fight for justice in our commonwealth, on all the fronts that affect them. Who feels the effects of poor air quality and lack

of green space in the urban environment? Residents of Black neighborhoods are the first to suffer from environmental degradation and have the fewest avenues of recourse, whether through health care, legal support or the ability to move to a better situation. Standing with these communities against eviction means that we are taking the first steps towards restoring the civic voices of these individuals and families, so that when we articulate our vision for a better Virginia, we are all at the table.

While the state is debating who will get help to resist eviction, let's remember that last year Amazon enjoyed a \$750 million incentive package from the state for putting their second headquarters in Virginia. Let's remember that our most vulnerable residents deserve the most support, as we move closer to environmental justice.

Through the next issues of the Virginia Sierran, we are going to be publishing articles about systemic racism and why we at the Sierra Club are working on dismantling this burden on communities of color. Thus, we will continue our exploration of the links between solidarity with communities of color and our overarching goal of environmental protection and restoration.

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

How offshore wind can improve public health

by Eileen Woll

Experts from Harvard University School of Public Health calculate that a 1,100 megawatt wind farm off New Jersey's coast, once connected to the grid, would make carbon emissions decline by around 2.2 million tons every year. Dominion is on course to deliver 2,600 MW of offshore wind by 2026. Using my junior high algebra, I figure that translates to 5.2 million tons of carbon emissions averted by our Virginia offshore wind project.

The Harvard experts monetized the climate and health benefits to about \$54 to \$120 per megawatt-hour. They then simulated a 3,000 MW offshore wind farm off New Jersey's coast and calculated

health benefits of about \$690 million over the course of a year. They also calculated that the reduction in carbon emissions and air pollution from 3,000 MW of offshore wind would save 55 lives each year, a total of 1,650 lives saved over the 30-year life span of that wind farm.

Everyone benefits from cleaner air and lower carbon pollution, but the biggest benefits will go where they are needed most: to low income neighborhoods and communities of color. Members of these communities have greater and more direct exposure to air pollutants and are most impacted by environmental harms and risks associated with burning fossil fuels.

Not only does offshore wind replace dirty energy that causes too many to get sick and die, but it also directly confronts the world's climate crisis. The Global Wind Energy Council forecasts that through 2030, more than 205,000 MW of new offshore wind capacity will be added globally. I'll spare you the application of my junior high algebra again and just say that's a lot of carbon emissions offset and air pollutants displaced, as well as tens of thousands of lives saved.

And it's not just the direct impacts of carbon emissions and air pollutants affecting these communities. Many communities like Hampton Roads face a greater vulnerability

to an accumulation of environmental and socioeconomic stressors caused by climate change—in particular, flooding and sea level rise—that directly affect health and wellness.

With its capacity to create thousands of good, family-supporting, wealth-building jobs, offshore wind offers Hampton Roads the opportunity to rebrand itself. Instead of being a poster child for climate change, we can be one for hope, health and sustainability through clean energy.

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

Prioritizing an inclusive and environmentally just Sierra Club agenda

by Richard Shingles

We are at a critical juncture in the United States. Patently brutal treatment of Black, Latinx and Indigenous Americans by police is only the tip of the iceberg. The criminal justice system is a reflection of systemic racism, as are all American institutions. This is the inevitable heritage of a nation built on European settler colonialism and the subordination and exploitation of peoples of color (Alexander, 2010; Veracini, 2010; Shingles, 1992). Now it appears that a majority of white Americans are being re-awakened to racial injustice. This provides an opportunity for mainstream conservation groups, including the Sierra Club, to take a hard look at their own agendas and organizations as to their effectiveness in addressing healthy environments for all Americans.

Doing so must place environmental justice on an equal footing with the traditional Sierra Club goals of safeguarding wilderness areas through the creation and maintenance of public parks, conservation of these natural resources and protection of endangered species. Mainstream environmental groups have not performed well in this regard (Taylor, 2014a; Finney, 2014). Nor can they do so as long as their leadership, staff and volunteers remain predominantly white. As such, their agendas and their definitions of “environment” and “environmentalism” will reflect the lived experi-

ences whites have enjoyed at the expense of predominantly minority communities. This is the main reason many people of color perceive environmentalists as biased and irrelevant to their lived experiences.

“Environmentalism” is best conceived as protecting and promoting any outdoor green space, whether natural or constructed, as it pertains to beautiful and healthy environments, climate change and endangered species, including all humans (Finney, 2014: 1-10; Scanlan, p. 4).

Racist laws and selectively applied impartial laws impose environmental injustice by placing a disproportionate burden on minority communities. Federal and state governments, including independent environmental regulatory agencies ostensibly created to fairly protect the environments of all Americans, capitulate to the pressure of powerful corporations, which largely control the regulatory process. Too often, legally required public participation in siting is a *pro forma*, perfunctory and ineffective exercise. Least influential are poor and minority communities, making them paths of least political resistance. They unwillingly serve as sacrifice zones protecting affluent, predominantly white communities that have long enjoyed the benefits of industrial development, but not in their own back yards.

Environmental racism is inseparable from other forms of system-

ic racism in the United States. The common denominator is white supremacy. That privilege has always focused on the creation and privileging of white communities. Historically, European settlers first appropriated lands of native peoples and later Mexican mestizos in what is now the American southwest. African slaves in the south and Mexican peons in southwest provided cheap labor to work the land. All three minorities were kept landless or relegated to the least desirable real estate. Minority enclaves were intentionally separated from white communities and left behind in the nation’s development. Today segregated impoverished ghettos, barrios and tribal reservations are the heritage. Significantly, the unequal status of minority communities has been enforced by state coercion. Michelle Alexander (2010) provides a brilliant discussion of the contemporary, legally sanctioned system of racialized social control identified as the “New Jim Crow.”

Thus, the environmental costs of economic development have never been born equally. Healthy, beautiful white neighborhoods are maintained, in good part, at the expense of minority environments. Primary mechanisms include zoning and siting locations selected by industry, and approved by governments, for concentrating the health and safety costs of “development.” Minority

enclaves are disproportionately poisoned by extraction industries and toxic treatment, storage and disposal facilities (Taylor, 2014b). White communities turn a blind eye to the costs born by others for their privilege, while resisting taxes to help fund essential public services in minority communities, including the creation and maintenance of healthy environments through the provision of non-toxic working and living conditions, portable water, flood control, green street canopies and parks and recreation. This is environmental racism. Redressing it should be at the forefront of the Sierra Club’s agenda.

Less we forget, environmental injustice is not confined solely to peoples of color. The siting processes for extraction and infrastructure projects have also degraded and poisoned selected rural white communities, particularly in Appalachia (Morrone and Buckley, 2011). The areas most easily targeted for environmental degradation in the name of “development” are debased by poverty and ethnic tensions. As with racial minorities, to the extent they are not seen or are perceived as “not like ‘us,’” they remain politically isolated and vulnerable.

Residents of sacrifice zones are most easily demeaned and victim-

See Inclusive agenda 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 people active in the Virginia climate movement. You can receive and send emails on climate-related news, events, webinars and actions going on across the state. *Monthly call on the fourth Tuesday at 12 p.m. and 7 p.m.* Contact Mary-Stuart Torbeck at mary-stuart.torbeck@sierraclub.org
Virginia Environmental Justice	Join our email list to work towards achieving environmental justice in Virginia. Our purpose is to identify environmental justice communities across the state, to develop EJ leadership, to provide room at the table for these organizations in statewide policy discussions and to share resources. *Monthly call on the second Wednesday at 11 a.m. and the second Thursday at 5:30 p.m.* Contact 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	Join this list to get updates about actions, events and ways to get involved in the Richmond metropolitan area. Contact Tim Cywinski at tim.cywinski@sierraclub.org or visit https://vasierra.club/rva
Northern Virginia	Join this list to get updates about actions, events and ways to get involved in Northern Virginia. Contact Cheri Conca at cheri.conca@sierraclub.org or visit https://vasierra.club/nova

Intersections of risk: The impact of flooding, food deserts and housing demolition on Norfolk's Black communities

by Ann Creasy

There is a compounding of stressors and injustices for residents of St. Paul's Quadrant in Norfolk, including loss of housing, lack of access to food and the regular threat of severe flooding. This situation, and the burden it places on the people facing it, is a clear example of systemic racism. The reality is glaringly apparent for the predominantly Black communities of St. Paul's in Norfolk.

In St. Paul's there are 1,700 public housing units and all are located in a severe flood zone. Norfolk has experienced twice as many instances of tidal flooding in the past two decades compared to the three decades before. With climate change, heavy rains are more frequent and seas are rising faster. Norfolk has one of the fastest rising sea levels in the nation—half a foot since 1992. The global average is around 2.6 inches.

In order to save the low-income community of St. Paul's from flooding, the city has decided to demolish it. For the people living there, this could mean permanent displacement. In its place will go housing for middle- to upper-income residents and other attractions like a casino. Only 600 (approximately one-third of the 1,700 units) in the reconstruction will be designated as low-income housing. So, where will the people of St. Paul's go? There is a shortage

in availability for places to use section 8 housing vouchers and a long waitlist for already full public housing. The options for a home after the demolition are starkly unclear.

Though promises have been made that current residents may return to St. Paul's, the plans by the city have provided no peace of mind for residents who have all-along been demanding a one-to-one replacement of the 1,700 units to ensure that all families have somewhere to live that is close to the location where they have built their lives. People in this area depend on their location for their jobs, child care and ability to care for elderly family members. Displacement is a serious threat of instability.

The city of Norfolk is using the People's First program to give information to residents and facilitate their relocation. It has recently contracted Urban Strategies, Inc. (rather than employing people of the community) to inform the process. Since the announcement of the demolition, neither the city nor the People's First program have made indication that one-to-one replacement of housing units is on the table.

Why is this happening? The relocation of people out of a flood-zone is a necessity, of course. However, the way that this is occurring points towards gentrification and profits to be made. The whole of the St. Paul's

area is in an Economic Tax Opportunity zone. This means that capital investments will be tax-free in a decade's time. As major financial institutions begin investing in the developments that will replace St. Paul's current establishments, tax-exempt capital gains promise an enticing profit. If we consider that the pursuit of profit is often without morals, we can reach an understanding of the situation we face in Norfolk.

As if the very real threats of displacement, flooding and loss of housing (paired with the pandemic and police brutality) weren't enough, this area has now become a food desert. A food desert is an urban area in which it is difficult to buy affordable or good-quality fresh food. The only grocery store in St. Paul's, a Save-a-Lot, closed in June of this year, leaving no other grocery stores within a reasonable distance.

This situation and its implications can be very frustrating, inconvenient and upsetting to learn about or engage with. For people who are in a more stable living situation, attention to circumstances like those faced by St. Paul's residents can be draining and easy to ignore because it is emotionally taxing. The people living this reality have no choice but to face it. Yet, they are facing it with tact, commitment and fortitude.

On August 26, people of St. Paul's and allies across Norfolk rallied out-

side of city hall to demand one-to-one housing replacements. Members of the community have been showing up to city council meetings for years and speaking about what a just housing transition would look like. With a lack of proper response from the city, Norfolk residents filed a lawsuit against the city of Norfolk for what is occurring. In response to lack of access to food, the community came together and hosted huge food drives/block parties in the parking lot of the closed Save-a-Lot throughout June and July.

The conviction of people and their resilience is inspiring. We must harness that towards progress on fronts of climate activism, housing justice and food access. It will take all of us paying attention, raising awareness, caring for each other and holding our elected officials accountable to ensure that we see a shift away from systemic oppression. With continued effort, healthy communities for everyone can become a truth rather than a goal.

Source: <https://theurcnorfolk.com/flooding-the-poor>

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

Inclusive agenda

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ized when cast as an "other" by negative cultural stereotypes fostered for the purpose of devaluing victims. We all know the stereotypes—certainly the racial imagery which stigmatizes entire populations as dirty, dumb, lazy, immoral and unworthy. Similar stereotypes also have been applied—on basis of region, class and ethnicity—to rural whites in communities with natural resources valued by extraction industries. White Appalachians are disparaged as "hillbillies," "rednecks" and "crackers." They are by no means as defamed or oppressed as rural, Black, Latinx or Native Americans; for no matter how poor and degraded, they benefit from white privilege.

That said, in the words of Matt Wray (2006), rural Appalachian whites are perceived as "not quite White" in the national consciousness, making them acceptable paths of least resistance.

Recommended Readings:

- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
- Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*
- Michele Morrone and Geoffrey L. Buckley, eds., *Mountains of Injustice: Social and Environmental Justice in Appalachia*

- Stephen Scanlan, "The Theoretical Roots and Sociology of Environmental Justice in Appalachia," in *Mountains of Injustice: Social and Environmental Justice in Appalachia*
- Richard Shingles, "Minority Consciousness and Political Action: A Comparative Approach" in *Ethnic and Racial Minorities in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, edited by Anthony Messina, Laurie Rhodebeck, Frederick Wright and Luis Fraga

- Dorcetta E. Taylor, *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations and Government Agencies*
- Taylor, Dorcetta E., *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism,*

Industrial Pollution and Residential Mobility

- Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*
- Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness*

Richard Shingles is the chair of the New River Valley Group.

Hampton Roads Transit update

by Judy Hinch

Regional Hampton Roads Transit was successful in obtaining dedicated funding from the General Assembly this year; public transit in Hampton Roads gets zero funding from the gasoline tax (regional gasoline tax in Hampton Roads can only go to roads, bridges, and tunnels). They also will get \$60 million from the CARES act. CARES act funding will go towards supporting COVID-19 related costs impacting operations, administrations and preventive maintenance. The funds can be used to cover salaries, wages and benefits.

The federal funding was authorized by the Federal Transit Authority Urbanized Area Formula Program under the CARES Act which was supported by U.S. Sens. Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine. “Throughout this crisis, our community’s transportation systems have been forced to deal with extraordinary challenges to meet the needs of their passengers while protecting their workers,” said the senators. “We’re pleased to know that these federal dollars will help provide the necessary equipment and resources to protect Virginians as we continue to navigate through this crisis.”

Speaking of roads, bridges and tunnels, the most expensive VDOT project ever is underway in Hampton Roads. On Tuesday, August 11, 2020, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers formally issued Permit #NAO 1994-1166 (VMRC permit number #19-1577, DEQ Individual Permit Number 19-1577) for the widening of Interstate 64 between Hampton and Norfolk (9.9 miles) and the construction of twin two-lane bored tunnels next to the existing Hampton



Seasonal nesting birds have settled at Fort Wool as construction work on the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project takes place at South Island (photo from DWR Virginia website).

Roads Bridge-Tunnel.

This project is the largest transportation project ever undertaken in Virginia and will cost at least \$3.8 billion (<https://www.hrbtexpansion.org/documents/hrbt-fact-sheet-10-1-2019.pdf>) with expected completion in November, 2025. The bridge-tunnel expansion project will widen four-lane sections in Hampton and Norfolk to six lanes plus two part-time drivable shoulder lanes during peak travel. Two lanes in each direction will be free general-purpose lanes. One lane and one drivable shoulder in each direction will be variably-priced tolled lanes (HOT lanes). Project is enabled 100% with public funds. Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission is the primary funding agent, with commission funds to be provided through the Hampton Roads Transportation Fund from regional sales and gas taxes.

A proposal to add a dedicated HOT lane and part-time shoulder lane for HOT traffic—lanes equipped to charge variable tolls depending on how fast traffic is moving—on Interstate 64 from Jefferson Avenue in Newport News through an expanded Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel and on to Bowers Hill in Chesapeake, would add an additional \$800 million cost.

The Interstate 64 High Rise Bridge Project in Chesapeake, over the Elizabeth River near the old (coal-burning) Chesapeake Energy Center, with expansion of Interstate 64 to Bowers Hill is already under construction and would have to be modified to accommodate these HOT lanes. The price tag of the new High Rise Bridge and lane expansion is not included in the \$3.8 billion estimated price tag for the I-64/Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel expansion. The cost of the new

High Rise Bridge is at least another \$ 0.4 billion, and expected completion is 2021. Funding was provided by Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission, Virginia’s SMART SCALE Program and the Federal Highway Administration.

Food for thought: All this money spent on the expansion of roads, bridges, tunnels and express/managed lanes will only offer temporary relief. Projections are that we will be back to congestion hot spots during rush hours by 2025.

The Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project’s bird management plan successfully relocated migratory shorebirds such as terns, skimmers and gulls. This plan worked to address the needs of the birds that return each spring; in previous years, they used the South Island of the tunnel for nesting. However, the Virginia Department of Transportation paved over the island to house its equipment for the expansion, so it agreed to foot the bill to create new nesting sites over the winter at nearby island Fort Wool.

These efforts involved extensive coordination between VDOT and the Department of Wildlife Resources (formerly known as the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries) as well as ongoing projects by the latter designed to provide alternative nesting habitat for these birds.

Judy Hinch is the vice chair of the Chesapeake Bay Group.

Rollbacks

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American lives for the favor of industrial leaders.

Trump defends his environmental policy decisions by citing their benefits to the economy. An Environmental Health News article describes how EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler has boasted that the Trump Administration’s environmental rollbacks have saved American businesses \$6.5 billion. However, economic gains mean little if they require the illness and death of thou-

sands of Americans.

Government agencies currently value a statistical human life at \$10 million, per Sarah Gonzalez of National Public Radio. Using that valuation, Trump has cost the nation \$797 billion from his environmental rollbacks alone. How many more Americans must sicken and die due to Trump’s environmental policies and gross mismanagement of the pandemic? He will force American taxpayers to shoulder trillions of

dollars in future costs to remedy his inaction in addressing the effects of climate change, such as relocations required because of rising sea levels, drought’s impact on food sources, increasingly worsening tropical storms and heat waves and the horrific impact of wildfires.

Trump’s environmental policies have caused this nation irreparable damage. He has only prolonged the slow death of the oil, gas and coal industries, while dramatically reduc-

ing the resiliency of our lands and waterways in the process. Our nation will never be great as long as we have a president who favors power and profit over human well-being.

Kayli Ottomanelli is an intern with the Rappahannock Group.

Virginia Chapter Executive Committee at-large candidates for 2021-2022

There are four at-large positions for the executive committee of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club up for election for the 2021-2022 period. At-large members serve two-year terms and join group delegates to make up the Virginia Chapter ExCom and help elect Chapter officers. The Chapter ExCom sets policy not already determined by the Sierra Club National board and conducts the affairs of the Chapter. This year there are six candidates running for the at-large delegate positions. All members of Sierra Club Virginia Chapter are encouraged to vote for up to four candidates.

This year you can choose one of two options to vote. Choose only one option:

Option 1: Mail paper ballot. Please refer to the paper ballot printed below for complete instructions.

Option 2: Electronic ballots via email. The Chapter will issue special election emails in October with a link to the Virginia Chapter ExCom at-large election site. Electronic ballots must be received by **November 22, 2020**.

We hope that by having two voting options, we encourage as many of our Chapter members as possible to participate in the voting process!

See candidate descriptions and paper ballot (with instructions) below.

Ann Bennett

I have been a member of Sierra Club since 1988 and actively engaged with the Great Falls Group to address the climate crisis and local environmental issues. I am part of the Clean Energy for Fairfax Now team that advocates on the urgency to act on climate and to adopt clean energy policies; we successfully pushed Fairfax County to establish a climate planning process last year. I co-led the successful effort by the Great Falls Group to have the county establish the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy program.

I have a master's in environment and resource policy with a background in federal lands issues, and I have extensive experience in nonprofit governance and strategic planning and leadership. I worked as a legislative staff in the U.S. House of Representatives and was part of the congressional team that expanded the Manassas National Battlefield Park in 1988 and protected Alaska's arctic wilderness.

Ralph Grove

Ralph Grove has been a Sierra Club member for over 30 years and is now a life member. He has lived in Virginia (Harrisonburg, Richmond, Norfolk) for the past 20 years and has served as an ExCom member for the Shenandoah and Chesapeake Bay groups, as Chapter treasurer and as Chapter outings chair. He is a retired college professor (JMU, ODU), and now devotes time to outdoor recreation, travel and volunteering.

John Schengber

John Schengber is a collaborative problem-solver with experience in management consulting, entrepreneurship and community organizing. Raised in Yorktown and currently living in Richmond, John has studied and cared for Virginia's environment since childhood and is now applying his diverse professional skill set as Community Engagement Manager for Capital Region Land Conservancy. As candidate for the Chapter's ExCom, John promises to bring a uniquely thoughtful and creative energy to the team, with hopes of contributing most directly to the political and legislative committees.

Susan Stillman

I am a life member of the Sierra Club and very active in climate mitigation activities. We are at a critical juncture in the Virginia Chapter and in the Sierra Club as a whole. We need to be effective in our declared strategic goal of mitigating climate change, and we need to be certain that we achieve these ends while ensuring equity to perennially harmed peoples of color. As an ExCom member I will work to achieve these ends.

My proudest effort, in affiliation with the Virginia Chapter, has been to work with high school students to successfully lobby the Fairfax County School Board to put significant solar on the 200 schools in the system. I look forward to serving on the ExCom.

Matt Summey

I have been a member of the Sierra Club for 21 years and have served as the Chapter treasurer for the past four years. I am from the Richmond area and enjoy hiking with my family. As a parent of a toddler, I understand the importance of working to preserve the environment

for future generations. If elected, I will listen and work to increase membership.

Robin van Tine

Robin van Tine holds a doctorate in marine ecology from William & Mary's Virginia Institute of Marine Science. He is an emeritus professor of biology (environmental studies, human ecology, natural sciences). He has done environmental research in the Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Florida Everglades and the Yucatan. He has worked on impact studies of nuclear power on an estuary in the Gulf of Mexico, the kepone spill in the James River and the effects of runoff of soil and nutrients on the underwater light and seagrass ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay.

He is chair of York River Group's environmental justice committee, a member of the group's executive committee and vice-president of Citizens for Riverview Farm Park. He has advocated frequently for parks, environmental and social justice legislation before Newport News City Council and Virginia legislators.

Ballot for the 2021-2022 Virginia Chapter ExCom at-large members

Vote for up to **four** candidates (more than four votes will nullify the ballot). **Use only the boxes on the left for single membership. Use both columns for joint membership** (two names appear on your membership label).

This election ballot **must** have your printed membership label on the back. If you choose, you may ink out your name(s) and mailing address on the reverse side of this ballot. Please do not ink out the bar code. Cut out and mail this ballot, **postmarked by November 14, 2020**, to the following address:

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter ExCom
c/o Linda Muller
P.O. Box 305
Stafford, VA 22555

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ann Bennett
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ralph Grove
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	John Schengber
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Susan Stillman
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Matt Summey
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robin van Tine

Please note that Sierra Club offices are closed through February 2021 to protect our staff, volunteers and activists during the pandemic. **Please DO NOT send your ballot to our office but to the address provided above.** If mailed to the wrong address, your vote may not be counted.

We need to talk about transportation: It’s making us sick

by Cheri Conca

Asthma, heart and lung disease, diabetes...and climate change. It’s not just people who are negatively affected by conventional transportation planning; even the planet is sick from our transportation choices as traffic is the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in Virginia. Unfortunately, it’s people of color and lower-income folks who suffer the most from car-focused communities. But it doesn’t have to be this way. There are better transportation choices our leaders and planners can make that would boost people’s health, reduce vehicle miles traveled and improve air quality in an equitable manner.

Our transportation and land use habits are unhealthy in ways that go far beyond poor air quality. Consider the consequences of a system that focuses on moving cars rather than people:

- People who live in neighborhoods that are hemmed in by heavily-traveled roads have a hard time getting to grocery stores that stock

a variety of reasonably priced, high quality fruits and vegetables. Workplace, healthcare and recreational facilities are likewise difficult to access.

- Lack of bicycle and pedestrian trails and sidewalks limits people’s ability to actively move from place to place. Physical inactivity contributes to obesity, diabetes and other illnesses that are rampant in our society.
- Constant worry about the risks of being run over in heavy traffic can negatively impact mental health.

These obstacles disproportionately affect lower-income people, who are less likely to own cars.

Fortunately, solutions exist. Local and regional governments can significantly improve public health and reduce fossil fuel pollution from vehicles via plans and policies that focus on active transportation, such as walking and bicycling. “If there was a single silver bullet in complex city-making, walkability would be it,”

says international planning and design dynamo Brent Toderian. “Studies show that walkable cities are much more successful, competitive, healthy, sustainable, livable, sociable and creative—cities designed to honour the pedestrian work better for everyone.”

Active transportation planning isn’t just for cities. Think about how Virginia’s counties, towns, suburbs and urban areas could benefit from a system of trails and paths that safely move people from where they are to where they need to go. Changing our transportation system starts with a change in perspective. By focusing first on public health, local planners and officials can invest in infrastructure that gives everyone convenient, affordable access to homes, jobs, schools, shopping, healthcare and recreation. Development decisions should maximize opportunities for physical activity and cleaner air, for example walkable distances between destinations, safe crosswalks, sufficient bicycle parking and bicycle/pedestrian paths that are linked

to public transit stops. The sea change that is needed to transform our transportation system into a healthy, equitable one begins with people like you. Keep an eye out for local opportunities to comment on transportation and parks and recreation plans. Join a trails coalition. Email your county supervisors or town council members.


Such a small number of people actually take part in the public input process that often the words of those who do speak are amplified. You don’t have to be an expert to weigh in. Your own words about the intersection of active, equitable transportation, climate change and public health can have a great impact on those who make decisions that will affect how we travel for generations to come.

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

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