



**SIERRA
CLUB**

VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Fall 2022

The Virginia Reliability Rip-Off Project and threats to community health by Lynn Godfrey

Virginia is facing yet another threat from the development of a gas pipeline project. It is called the Virginia Reliability Project by one of its developers, TC Energy, LLC, a division of Columbia Gas, Canada, but has been coined, the “Virginia Rip-Off Project” by those opposing it. Those opposed to any fossil fuel development because of the climate crisis, environmental justice or simply out of necessity or lack thereof have coined this phrase because there is no gas supply shortage in Hampton Roads despite the claim by TC Energy that this is the reason for the development.

The project proposes to replace 48-plus miles of 12-inch pipes with 24-inch pipes and provide upgrades to multiple compressor stations with increased horsepower for a Petersburg compressor station. It is a segmented project between two gas companies, TC Energy and Williams Transco, being undertaken in order to supply gas to the Hampton Roads Region and southeastern Virginia. The question is, is there really a gas supply shortage in Hampton Roads, and if there is, should we be developing fossil fuel infrastructure amid a climate crisis to remedy the problem? Or, if there is a shortage, is now actually the time to fulfill our obligation to protect the planet against its greatest existential threat?

After the cancellation of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline



FERC outreach on the Gulf Coast (photo courtesy of Sierra Club).

and several smaller, but no less significant, fossil fuel developments in the state (the Virginia Natural Gas Header Improvement Project and two gas plants in Charles City) plus the continuous struggle against the Mountain Valley Pipeline, it was hoped by those seeking clean energy sources for healthy communities that there would be no more fossil fuel pipeline development in the state. So, the question is, when will it end? When will we stop approving greenhouse gas emitting projects? When will fossil fuel projects stop? When will our country stop permitting fossil fuel infrastructure development?

A decade ago, these questions may have been rhetorical, but not today. Scientists say that limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius should help the world avoid the most dangerous effects of climate

change. And fossil fuel production needs to be on a steady decline of 3% every year until 2050. The Virginia Reliability Project would surely contribute to the climate crisis with increased gas pressure and increased compressor station horsepower.

While this project peddles the notion that there is a gas supply shortage in Hampton Roads, a white paper analysis commissioned by Mothers Out Front and conducted by the Applied Economics Clinic in 2019 reports that the gas supply shortage for Hampton Roads is actually an overstated forecast by Virginia Natural Gas, which predicts a 7.4% increase per year in its peak gas demand “when compared with other recent industry forecasts for the southeast.” With a 1.2-1.7% increase in peak gas demand being far more likely, it is highly questionable

whether such a shortage actually exists. The analysis concluded the following:

- Virginia Natural Gas has substantially overstated its annual peak demand growth forecasts. When more modest forecasts are applied, it has ample gas pipeline capacity to meet peak demand for the next five years or more.

- Even if gas supply constraints were to develop in the Hampton Roads area, there would be no effect on the area’s electricity supply.

- It does not appear that involuntary curtailment of the area’s industrial users has resulted in gas supply constraints in the Hampton Roads area. In 2017, Virginia Natural Gas reported to regulators that “no interruptions occurred on annual peak days during the last ten years.”

Climate change and crisis, environmental justice and necessity need to be front and center in the permitting decision process if we are to get to limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the permitting authority for the Virginia Reliability Project, has recently created the Office of Public Participation and amended their permitting process to include these factors, but it quickly backtracked after political push back. The 21-

See Rip-off Project on page 12.

From the chair

by Ralph Grove



This is the favorite time of year for many of us—a great time for hiking, camping, biking and all other outdoor activities. I'm looking forward to enjoying some cooler hiking weather for the next few months before winter sets in. We're fortunate to have so many beautiful outdoor spaces to enjoy in Virginia, and I hope that you can all find the opportunity to make use of them this fall.

Autumn is also election season, of course, and it's a great opportunity for us to help promote and elect legislators who support the Sierra Club agenda. This will be a crucial year for maintaining support for environmental action at both the federal and state levels. If you'd like to

find out how the candidates in your district voted in 2022, check out our 2022 Legislative Scorecard at vasierra.club/scores2022

It's a great resource for keeping up with what your legislators are doing and for giving them feedback, positive or negative, about their actions.

We're also holding group and chapter elections within the Sierra Club this fall, and I hope each of you will take the time to read about the candidates and cast your vote. It's very fast and easy to vote online now. Sierra Club is a grassroots democratic organization that thrives on participation and voting by its members so please take the time to cast your ballot.

You may have heard already about the personnel transitions taking place within our chapter staff, the latest of which is the departure of our director of many years, Kate West. Kate is moving up in the Sierra Club organization and will be taking on a larger role in chapter management.

We have a solid transition plan in place to manage things in the near future and

have already begun launching the hiring process for a new director, which should conclude in the first quarter of 2023. Though we'll miss having Kate as our director, it's nice to know that she'll still be a part of Sierra Club. I hope you'll join me in wishing

her the best in her new role and in expressing our gratitude for all that she has done for the Virginia Chapter.

Ralph Grove is the executive committee chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Chapter and group ExCom elections by John Cruickshank

Goal setting and policy decisions for the Sierra Club are made by volunteer leaders. The Virginia Chapter Executive Committee, or ExCom, has eight elected at-large delegates and one delegate from each of our eleven groups. The at-large members are elected by the general membership and serve two-year terms. Each group in the Virginia Chapter will also be electing ExCom members for two year terms.

This autumn we will hold elections for the Virginia Chapter ExCom at-large delegates and for the ExCom members of each group. Ballots can be cast online or through the mail. We will be sending out emails to our members in November explaining how they can vote online. If you do not receive this email, please go to this website to cast your ballot: vasierra.club/excom2023. The deadline for voting is December 2.

If you would like to receive a paper ballot for the Chapter ExCom election, please contact me at jcruickshank4@gmail.com or (434)973-0373. If you would like a paper ballot for group ExCom elections, please contact your group chair (listed on page 4).

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, editorvirginiasierra@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.

The road ahead: Leadership transition

by Kate West



After serving as your director for the past six years, I am moving into a new role at Sierra Club. It has been an incredible honor and privilege to lead the Virginia Chapter and work with you to advance our cause. Every victory has been hard-fought, and well worth it. Our air and water are cleaner; fewer people and wildlife are negatively impacted by pollution; our communities are getting healthier; access to affordable, renewable energy is more widespread; and more people are joining the environmental movement because of our collective efforts.

I am so proud of what we have achieved together and confident that our team is

well-equipped to further build on this success. (If you'd like to review our accomplishments, visit our website to find our annual reports and legislative scorecards under "Our Work" and "Resources," respectively.)

It has been one heck of a ride! As many of you know, I joined the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter in 2012 after working for three years as a community organizer with the Beyond Coal Campaign to defeat the proposed Surry County coal plant. The Chapter gave me the opportunity to stay with our organization and lead the state climate action coalition and clean energy campaigns after I successfully worked myself out of a job on the national team.

My experience is a terrific example of the invaluable role Sierra Club chapters play: building relationships and connecting people to timely opportunities for action, recognizing and seizing opportunities that others miss. Being able to enact effective solutions to address our environmental challenges requires being

well-connected and consistently tracking the changing political, policy and industry dynamics around us. This is what our chapter teams are doing every day.

In my new position as a Senior Manager, I will be serving in the Office of Chapter Support to help strengthen chapters across the country. And, although I will be in a new role, I will continue to be based in Richmond and active in the fight for climate action and justice. Nonetheless, this will be a big change for all of us. The leadership transition may bring some hardship in the short term due to capacity constraints, but it also provides a chance for growth.

Our staff team will be led by Gustavo Angeles, Acting Director, and Ann Creasy, Acting Deputy Director, until a new chapter director can be hired. I am deeply grateful for their willingness to step up, because we can't let up the fight. Gov. Glenn Youngkin and his allies—our adversaries—are doing everything in their power to roll back the progress we've made in recent years, and

we must stop them to keep Virginia moving toward justice and sustainability.

The Chapter's strategic plan, already implemented or underway in numerous initiatives, can continue to serve as a guide to help chart the course on the road ahead. This intentional, long-term planning has put our chapter ahead of the curve. Defining our organizational priorities prepared us to navigate the volatility of the past two years, and will help the Chapter further excel. I am particularly eager to see what improvements in equity and inclusion come from the Chapter's collaboration with Virginia Community Voice. Our organizing and advocacy will undoubtedly become stronger and more effective through ongoing assessment and learning and listening to those most impacted by pollution, propelling us toward our mission.

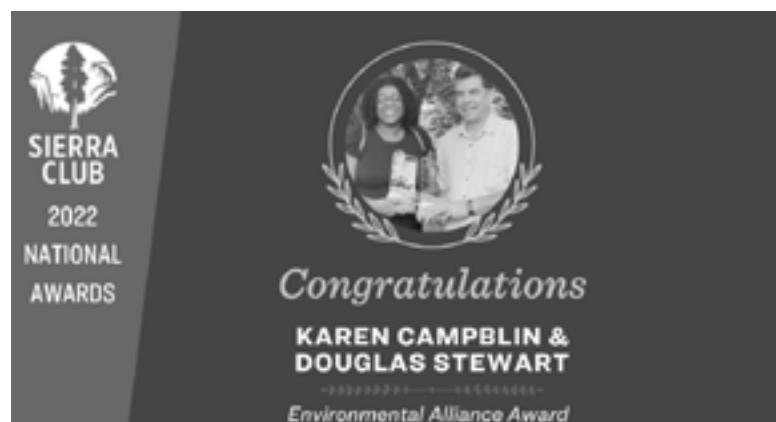
I hope to continue to see many of you around the state, enjoying nature and getting into "good trouble."

Kate West is the director of the Virginia Chapter.

2022 Sierra Club Awards

by Cheri Conca

Each September, Sierra Club celebrates environmental champions around the country who build community engagement, promote climate justice and equity and drive our work forward. The Chapter is proud to announce that Karen Campblin and Douglas Stewart were selected to receive the Club's 2022 Environmental Alliance Award. This award honors Club members or entities who have helped further environmental goals through collaboration with other, non-Sierra Club, constitu-



encies. Karen and Douglas received this award due to their work as Transportation and Smart Growth co-chairs of the Virginia Chapter.

Karen and Douglas are

a powerhouse team for clean transportation and smart growth in Virginia. Tackling these intricate issues is no easy task, but they do so tirelessly and collaborative-

ly, with an abundance of passion. Both are quick to include new partners and volunteers into the Chapter's work, and they selflessly devote time to explain the issues and potential solutions in easily understandable terms.

Thanks to Karen and Douglas for all of the time and effort they give to the Chapter, their communities and the planet.

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

Piedmont Group report

by Donna Shaunesey



Energy and Transportation Chair Scott Ziemer with Kay Ferguson of ARTivism (photo courtesy of Donna Shaunesey).

We are excited to announce that our efforts to get a plastic bag tax have been passed by both Charlottesville City Council and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. The 5 cent tax on single-use plastic bags will be charged at grocery stores beginning January 1, 2023. Our group, in collaboration with other volunteers working on solid waste and recycling issues, spent a year on this issue. Our volunteers have distributed cloth bags at local food banks and other places that assist low-income folks

in need of support.

In March we had two local experts on recycling join us to talk about how local recycling works and how to do a better job.

In collaboration with the local chapter of the National Organization of Women, we sponsored a local forum during Earth Month on climate plans in the works for the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and the University of Virginia.

Our biggest turnout for programs this summer was our July virtual presentation

on fireflies with Ariel Firebaugh. So many great questions!

A locally-based developer is planning a huge solar farm in southern Albemarle County and they presented their plans to us in August. When completed, it will provide enough electricity for half the county's homes.

We continued our won-

derful program of presenting Earth Flags to local unsung environmental heroes.

Finally, we held our first in-person ExCom meeting in person since the pandemic. Group events are free and open to the public.

Donna Shaunesey is the chair of the Piedmont Group.



The Piedmont Group team: (front row) Conservation Chair Kirk Bowers, Secretary and Communications Chair John Cruickshank, Political Chair Wren Olivier, Beth Hodsdon, Group Chair Donna Shaunesey, (back row) Energy and Transportation Chair Scott Ziemer, Energy Chair Michael Pillow, Treasurer Roxanne White and Transportation Chair Dave Redding. Not pictured, Vice Chair Audrey Dannenberg (off on a Sierra trip!). (Photo courtesy of Donna Shaunesey.)

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.

Chesapeake Bay:

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757-337-4092
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New River Valley:

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Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO):

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The One Day Hike rises again!

by Gary Kosciusko



A hiker departs from the Point of Rocks station . . . 50 miles down, 12 to go! (Photo courtesy of Gary Kosciusko.)

In the pre-dawn darkness of Saturday, April 23, 2022, 92 eager participants in the 100 km One Day Hike briskly set off from the Thompsons Boathouse parking lot in Washington, DC, shortly after 3 a.m., headed upstream next to the Potomac River

and the C&O Canal. Later, around 10 a.m., another 216 hikers hit the trail at Whites Ferry as part of the 50 km One Day Hike.

The common destination for both sets of hikers was the community center in Bolivar, West Virginia, where

they needed to arrive by midnight. That night 79 hikers from the first group and 198 from the second group made it to the finish. Hiking conditions were close to ideal.

Sponsored by Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings, or SCPRO, the One Day Hike is SCPRO's premier annual event. This year's event, however, was the first One Day Hike since the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to be canceled in 2020 and 2021. Following its debut in 1974, the One Day Hike has had its route modified on several occasions due to damaged trail conditions, but it had never been canceled outright before the recent pandemic-induced in-person event shutdown.

Although the event attracts hikers mainly from the mid-Atlantic region, there are some who fly long distances

to participate, either as hikers or as support volunteers. Due to its all-volunteer nature, the One Day Hike can handle no more than 350 participants.

This year was the first time the hikers carried GPS tracking devices. Hike director Mike Darzi introduced this innovation to eliminate the need for human-assisted manual check-ins and -outs at each of the seven support stations along the route, as had been done for many years. This in turn reduced the overall number of volunteers needed to support the event without jeopardizing safety. In fact, this likely enhanced safety, since we were able to track hikers in real time. We still had our reliable bike patrols as extra

See One Day Hike on page 6.

2022 EV Showcase

by Cheri Conca



On September 25, the Potomac River Group, Great Falls Group and Virginia Chapter celebrated National Drive Electric Week by hosting the National Drive Electric Week EV Showcase at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. The hundreds of people who attended had an opportunity to see and learn about dozens of electric vehicles, including a school bus and transit bus. Highlights included the GMU Hypernova solar race car team and a mobile EV charging service (photos courtesy of Cheri Conca).

The Wilderness Act turns 60

by Vicky Hoover



The Neighbor Mountain Trail off Skyline Drive, overlooking the Shenandoah Valley (photo courtesy of Gary Kosciusko).

The 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act that established America's National Wilderness Preservation System is just around the corner!

Wait a minute! Didn't we just celebrate the 50th?

Our gala events in 2014 may seem like "just" past, but it's eight years later, and on September 3, 2022 we hail the 58th anniversary of

President Lyndon Johnson's signing the Wilderness Act. That gives us just over a year to prepare for the big six-oh. How will we take advantage of public attention to a big round-number anniversary to get the word out broadly on how vital wilderness protection for wild nature is?

During 2014, for the 50th, many chapters conducted outings in honor of wilder-

ness, held joint events with one or more federal wilderness-managing agencies or in-state wilderness organizations and wrote up descriptions of trips to wilderness areas in their state. They got speakers to talk of the history of wilderness.

The six states that have no federal wilderness can promote their wild natural places—in many cases state lands. The Maryland Chapter has done especially well in assuring their wild state lands get managed as protectively as federal wilderness.

States without federal wilderness can also schedule hikes into neighboring states with wilderness.

Now we have 10 more years to reflect how far we have come since 1964. The original act brought into being 54 wilderness areas in 13 states—places that had already been administratively protected by the Forest Service. But administrative protection was temporary and

haphazard, and defenders of wildlands saw that a national law was needed to protect wild, natural land from development—by law.

New awareness that preserving nature can combat the climate crisis and fight the world's species extinction crisis gives us even more reason to fight to protect nature—in our national 30 by 30 campaign. Let's start by celebrating what we have achieved! Today, our country has 803 wilderness areas in 44 states plus Puerto Rico—with stewardship by all 4 federal land agencies. Plenty of reason to celebrate—and to work for even more.

To join the Sierra Club's nationwide effort in YOUR chapter, contact Vicky Hoover, Wildlands Team Sixtieth co-coordinator, at vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org

Vicky Hoover is the Wildlands Team Sixtieth co-coordinator of the Sierra Club.

One Day Hike

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backup. Fortunately, though there were plenty of the usual blistered feet, there were no serious medical incidents.

Everyone who made it to the finish received a well-earned One Day Hike patch and plenty of food and beverage. Those who have not witnessed or participated in the One Day Hike may think all hikers go home, never to return. On the contrary, we get many repeat hikers who cherish the unique challenge, the day-long immersion in nature, and the infectious camaraderie that

develops between everyone involved.

SCPRO strongly encourages all who register to take advantage of our time-tested regimen of training hikes, which start the Saturday after New Years Day.

Gary Kosciusko is the chair of Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings.



Some of the volunteers at the Point of Rocks support station pose for the camera (photo courtesy of Gary Kosciusko).

Transportation and Smart Growth issue chair needed

by Cheri Conca

Are you a climate activist? If so, consider volunteering to become the Chapter's next Transportation and Smart Growth Issue Chair! Issue chairs are responsible for identifying and championing priorities related to their issue area and ensuring that all Chapter work related to their issue area follows Club policy. Because transportation is the #1 source of Virginia's climate pollution, this position is critical to our climate advocacy.

Purpose of Position:

The goal of the Virginia Sierra Club's Smart Growth and Transportation efforts is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution from the transportation sector. We work toward this goal through advocacy and public education for: (1) transportation policies, plans and projects that prioritize walking, bicycling, transit and other

clean transportation options; (2) land use policies that encourage walkable, bikeable and transit-friendly communities; and (3) the accelerated production and adoption of zero-emissions vehicles. The Smart Growth and Transportation Chair works with Sierra Club staff and volunteers to develop, coordinate and implement these strategies.

Responsibilities:

- Facilitate regular meetings of the Virginia Sierra Club's Transportation Committee. Work with Sierra Club's Transportation staff point of contact to develop meeting agendas.
- Recruit new transportation advocates, and work with them to develop campaigns that fit their interests and align with the Sierra Club's smart growth and transportation priorities.
- Coordinate advocacy

for priority legislation and against threatening legislation on transportation, growth and development and housing by working with allies, meeting with legislators, participating in legislative committee calls and mobilizing members through action alerts and other means.

- Work with Club members to monitor the development of important local and regional transportation and land-use plans and projects, such as transit projects, new highway proposals and regional transportation plans.

- Help prepare positions on key projects and plans and speak at public hearings.

- Apprise Club leaders of smart growth and transportation issues and the nexus with climate, energy, water and other Club priorities through bi-monthly written reports, email updates, etc.

Qualifications:

- Basic understanding of the transportation decision-making and land-use planning processes.

- Ability to work effectively with others on a range of different activities such as developing position statements and planning meetings with policymakers.

- Opportunities to engage range from hyperlocal issues such as safer street crossings in disadvantaged neighborhoods to advocating for federal clean truck standards and raising awareness for transit equity.

If you're interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Cheri Conca, the Transportation and Smart Growth Program Manager, at cheri.conca@sierraclub.org

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

Virginia Chapter email lists

Virginia Climate Movement: Join this list of people active in the Virginia climate movement to 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 this list to work towards achieving environmental justice in Virginia. Our purpose is to identify environmental justice communities across the state, to develop EJ leadership, to provide room at the table for these organizations in statewide policy discussions and to share resources. *Monthly call on the second Wednesday at 11 a.m. and the second Thursday at 5:30 p.m.* **Contact Gustavo Angeles at gustavo.angeles@sierraclub.org**

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

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

Richmond: Join this list to get updates about actions, events and ways to get involved in the Richmond metropolitan area. **Contact Tim Cywinski at tim.cywinski@sierraclub.org** or visit <https://vasierra.club/rva>

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

Legislature to convene in January with priorities and progress under attack by Connor Kish

The Virginia General Assembly will convene in January for a “short” 45-day legislative session. Legislators will arrive in Richmond to find our priorities and incredible climate progress made in the last few years under attack. The Chapter will set out on an all-out defense of our legislative accomplishments from the last few years. We will pull out all the stops in defense of the Virginia Clean Economy Act, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the Virginia Environmental Justice Act and advanced clean car standards.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin is still pursuing his reckless and illegal attempt to withdraw Virginia as a member-state of RGGI, and the legislature will need to stand strong and not allow a bill repealing it to pass. We are mobilizing our grassroots base of

thousands of members and supporters to inform and educate lawmakers about the governor’s illegal proposal.

We know that in addition to RGGI our other climate progress is under attack. The Virginia Clean Economy Act, the foremost expansion of clean energy and pollution reduction in the South, will need to be defended against the polluting industry’s desire to see it repealed.

The Virginia Environmental Justice Act, which finally defines how impacted communities can have a voice when projects are proposed in their communities, will also need to be defended against the same dirty-interests.

Gov. Youngkin is also on a separate reckless crusade against Virginia’s adoption of advanced clean car standards, or ACCS. Despite the automotive industry almost

unanimously making a commitment to manufacture only electric vehicles by 2035, Gov. Youngkin wants to hurt Virginia consumers and Virginia dealerships through a bill to repeal ACCS. It makes no sense. Without ACCS, Virginia dealerships won’t get EVs delivered to their lots to sell; consumers won’t see increased competition and inventory; and ultimately, Virginia won’t see the needed education in tailpipe pollution. ACCS is so common sense that it is hard to see why Gov. Youngkin is making its repeal a priority.

We will continue our efforts to expand environmental justice and meaningful engagement of impacted communities. Additionally, we will continue to work on our campaign to expand rooftop solar and get more solar on more buildings in Virgin-

ia to lower energy costs and decrease the need for dirty energy production.

As always, the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is ready to take on the challenge of the legislative session. We will utilize our thousands of members and supporters to build the case for action, because as always, we are stronger when we act in unison together and with one voice for meaningful change. It will take all of us to protect and advance our progress in 2023.

You can reach Legislative and Political Director Connor Kish at connor.kish@sierraclub.org

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

Annual Gathering 2022 by Ralph Grove



The Virginia Chapter has a history of holding annual gatherings, in which members get together to meet other activists in the Chapter and share our stories. The gathering wasn’t held for the past few years due to the pandemic, but this year we decided to have a low-key one-day event to keep up the tradition. The gathering was held at Pocahontas State Park in mid-September, with about 25 folks in attendance. Our agenda included a talk by park rangers on the history and management of the park, a panel discussion on environmental justice, and plenty of time to socialize and enjoy a beautiful day outdoors. Hopefully we’ll be able to get together again in 2023. (Photos courtesy of Tyla Matteson and Donna Shaunese.)

Environmental justice and the Sierra Club

by Richard Shingles

The Virginia Chapter is committed to “a just transition for Virginia to a clean energy economy.... Our strategies center racial justice by supporting climate solutions that repair historic racism....” (Virginia Sierran, “Our campaigns,” by Kate West, Fall 2021).

Are you thinking, “I don’t recognize the Sierra Club. Why is an environmental organization addressing racial issues?”

To appreciate the necessity of the Sierra Club prioritizing equity, in particular racial equity, one must understand environmental racism as a consequence of what was originally intended to be a racial-caste system in British settler colonies that later became the United States—a system designed by the founders and intentionally maintained by succeeding generations of European (“white”) Americans.

Systemic racism is a fact, not a theory. It runs the course of American history, permeating our culture and institutions. It is most evident in the histories of African

and Indigenous Americans. They have a very different experience than other racial-ethnic groups who initially were incorporated into the United States *voluntarily* as individuals or family units. African slaves and Indigenous peoples were *forcibly* incorporated en masse solely to privilege European colonists, providing them good land and cheap labor to work it. There was no intention for these involuntary minorities ever to become citizens. Manifest Destiny and the “American Dream” were for whites only. In the 19th century, the United States invaded and annexed half of Mexico with a predominantly mestizo (mixed race of Spanish, Indigenous and African ancestry) population. The propertied lands of the Spanish elite were quickly transferred to Anglo ownership and the mestizo population largely relegated to peon labor.

For generations, most European Americans insisted on maintaining white privilege by systemically blocking upward mobility

for, and competition from, “black” and “brown” peoples, by means of social conventions, laws, vigilantism and state-sanctioned violence. Though there have been significant periods of reform and progress towards a more equitable nation, they were followed by Thermidorian reactions bent on maintaining the racial status quo. And now the unthinkable: the prospect of the United States abandoning democracy over the racial divide and the fear of many whites of losing status and political control.

What has this to do with the Sierra Club? Environmental racism is both a consequence and a pillar of an historic racial-caste system. From the start and until relatively recently, these involuntary minorities were not considered worthy of citizenship and most were forced into separate, segregated, resource-inferior communities—reservations, ghettos and barrios—on the least desirable and least healthy real estate—out of sight and out of the minds of most whites for whom “not

in my backyard” meant “in their backyards.” The despoiled vestiges of the fossil fuel age—including polluting mines, factories, landfills and infrastructure projects and consignment to lowlands subject to flooding—have been largely relegated to paths of least resistance which are relatively powerless poor and disproportionately minority communities.

The 20th century Sierra Club, largely established by affluent whites during Jim Crow and the Eugenics movement, turned a blind eye to this travesty and was complicit in the forced removal of the Indigenous from their homelands to remote reservations during the creation of the national park system.

This is not the Sierra Club required for the 21st century. Why should the Sierra Club be any less concerned with the health and safety of human habitat than wildlife habitat? Threats posed by global warming do not allow the distinction. The necessity

See EJ on page 10.

EJ updates: The road ahead

by Gustavo Angeles

During the month of September, we had an action alert to submit comments to the Army Corps of Engineers for a proposed Green Ridge mega-landfill in Cumberland County. Thank you for acting on it and sending your comments. I have been working with two local groups that are fighting this proposed mega-landfill.

Also, during the few last months, I have been working with the Brown Grove community, which is fighting the already approved Wegmans

distribution center. There is a lawsuit that the Brown Grove group has against the water permit granted by the Department of Environmental Quality. There is also a Title VI complaint at the EPA against the DEQ. In coordination with the Virginia Poverty Law Center and the Environmental Law Program, we are providing support on the Title VI complaint.

Internally, with our leaders, we continue our meetings to talk about dismantling racism, learning how this

systemic issue is embedded in the different areas of government. With this knowledge, we are understanding that our priorities have to take into consideration how we will start moving away from it and leave no one behind, because everybody deserves clean air and water. Please send me an email at gustavo.angeles@sierraclub.org if you would like to join our EJ group. We meet twice a month for one hour.

After a successful training on equity provided by Vir-

ginia Community Voices, we are currently in the process of finalizing our contract to continue working with them. This time Virginia Community Voices will provide us with coaching on how to reach out to impacted community groups and how to work with those communities. This lines up with our plan to increase and diversify our local membership.

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

Teamwork makes the dream work

by Eileen Woll

I have shared two huge multi-tab spreadsheets charting the numerous funding opportunities benefiting clean energy generation available with both the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Some of the opportunities in the Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, while wonderful, are pretty cut-and-dry, like tax credits. Other opportunities are only available to state and local governments. A number of opportunities in the IRA directly benefit the clean-energy industry with manufacturing grants and monies supporting its infrastructure (transmission, siting, etc.).

While the IRA enjoys “new kid” celebrity status, many opportunities within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or continue to roll out that are worthy of a deeper look. I want to point to one recent opportunity, specifically the Advancing

Equity Through Workforce Partnerships grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. It’s brilliant and a good example of what DOE is looking for when awarding federal dollars.

With this particular grant, DOE is looking to the fact that the solar industry will need to grow from 300,000 workers today to between 500,000 and 1.5 million workers by 2035 in order to achieve decarbonization goals. Thus, the goal with this \$10 million grant program is to facilitate the rapid deployment of solar energy technologies by supporting an inclusive workforce and “enabl[ing] more members of disadvantaged communities and energy justice populations to pursue careers in the solar energy industry.” Amen!

Areas of interest include: (1) apprenticeship readiness (pre-apprenticeship) or apprenticeship partnerships; (2) community-led training partnerships; and (3) clean

energy sector partnerships.

DOE seeks applications from a diverse team, to include training providers, labor unions, NGO community-based organizations, solar developers, educational institutions, tribal entities and local governments.

For many years, the Sierra Club has worked in partnership with members of what DOE considers a diverse team. And while we don’t directly apply for federal grants, we can do what Sierra Club does best, organize! We are in an excellent

position to tap into the great existing working relationships we have with a wide variety of partners, alert all to the funding opportunities, help convene all the necessary team members, dream big and bold and then help put pen to paper and apply for these funds!

As always, team work makes the dream work. We’re going for it!

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

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of moving entirely to a zero carbon-based economy provides us with the opportunity to come to terms with the social, economic and political inequities solidified during the fossil fuel age and to commit to a racially inclusive and equitable green future.

To be a relevant environmental organization in the 21st century, the Chapter must address three issues: the organization’s traditional lack of diversity, conscious and subconscious racial biases stemming from that tradition, and structural biases that may impede both the internal reforms necessary to diversify and the ability of

the Sierra Club to become a trusted ally of minority communities. Such problems can impair the capacity of the Sierra Club to work effectively with all communities (including its own volunteer groups).

Environmental injustice is not peripheral to environmentalism. It is an original reason for the creation of the racial-caste system that produced extreme inequities in human habitat and a key to their persistence.

Richard Shingles is the equity and inclusion chair of the Virginia Chapter.

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Feb 25-26 ... Richmond, VA

Mar 4 - 5 ... Washington DC area

Mar 25-26 ... Blacksburg, VA

Brought to you by Matthew Rosefsky, Geo Medic, street medic, SOLO Instructor-Trainer, Sierra Club Outings leader and volunteer strategist for Sierra Club National “Outdoors for All” campaign. See <https://solowfa.com> for more information and online registration.

Applications now open for Young Leaders Council

by Hunter Noffsinger

Over the summer of 2021, the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter launched our very first Young Leaders Council, or YLC. Our goal was to cultivate a space where young folks from across the state had a place to make their voices heard about what they want to see happening in Virginia. We worked with the inaugural Young Leaders Council over the course of the year to put together skills workshops, guest presentations and more for the council members.

We were met with great enthusiasm and so many amazing ideas from the

council members, and I can't wait to continue to grow the YLC and its efforts to influence the work happening in Virginia. This year, we are reopening applications to join the council for Virginians ages 18 to 25.

We've made a few changes here and there to better facilitate growth and learning for council members. As a member of the YLC, folks will have the opportunity to attend an advocacy summit, hear from guest speakers, build leadership skills, plan projects and events and more!

You may be wondering

what the overall goal of the Young Leaders Council is, and the beauty of it is the work is largely driven by the ideas and goals of the council members. While we facilitate trainings and workshops that we think would be helpful, council members ultimately decide the direction of the YLC. Our goal is simply to engage with and lift up the voices of young people in Virginia who deserve to have their ideas listened to and implemented.

Young voices are essential to every movement. They provide different perspectives and new ideas, and

young people are the ones who often have to bear the long-term effects of issues like climate change. I'm excited to continue to work with young leaders in Virginia to shape the YLC and our work at the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

Applications for the Young Leaders Council are open now until October 20! If you or someone you know is interested in applying, go to vasierra.club/ylc

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

Nuclear safety for Virginians

by John Cruickshank

On August 20, 2020 Dominion Energy applied for a subsequent license renewal that would permit the nuclear reactors at North Anna Power Station to operate for up to 80 years, Unit 1 from 2038 to 2058 and Unit 2 from 2040 to 2060.

The Piedmont Group and the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club have been working with Beyond Nuclear to ensure that Dominion and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission complete a thorough environmental review before approving this license renewal.

In February 2022, the board of the commission initiated a 24-month rulemaking for the Generic Environmental Impact Statement reviews for the subsequent license renewals. This was the result of our petition to the board.

However, Dominion may choose to move forward with their license renewal

application by submitting a supplemental site-specific environmental report. If this is approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, there will be a public hearing and Beyond Nuclear and Sierra Club will be able to send experts to testify. We are looking for a seismic expert who would be interested in reviewing Dominion's submission.

Our efforts are paying off, and we will continue to work to promote safety at the North Anna Nuclear Power Station.

For more information, please go to the Piedmont Group website or check out this link:

vasierra.club/vanukes

John Cruickshank is an Ex-Com member of the Virginia Chapter and a member of the Piedmont Group.

Announcing the 2023 Virginia Environmental Film Contest

The 13th annual Richmond Virginia Environmental Film Festival (RVA EFF) is announcing the 2023 Virginia Environmental Film Contest. Help us get the word out by telling your friends and family...whether experienced filmmakers or those who want to give it a try for the first time, all are welcome!

The contest is open to Virginia filmmakers submitting films on environmental topics focusing on Virginia. A juried panel will select the winning films and announce them on February 15, 2023 on our website, RVAEFF.org and through a press release. Prize money will be awarded to the filmmakers as follows:

\$800 + Laurel Logo - First Place

\$100 + Laurel Logo - Best Teen Submission (13-18)

\$100 + Laurel Logo - Best "Environmental Call to Action"

All films are to be submitted November 16, 2022 through January 15, 2023 through FilmFreeway, a website where filmmakers submit their films to hundreds of film festivals. Filmmakers will find full details regarding contest rules and deadlines and how to submit their film at:

filmfreeway.com/RVAenvironmentalfilmfestival

Selected winners will be shown on Sunday, March 18, 2023 (tentative) at The Byrd Theatre.

Admission to the festival is free and open to the public due to generous community sponsors. More information on the festival can be found at RVAEFF.org

Inside Virginia Sierran



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day comment period afforded this docket (CP22-502/3-000) is much too short for any meaningful participation by the public, including impacted communities. The application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a certificate of public convenience and necessity is over 1000 pages long.

This project is segmented into three parts and is divided between two gas giants. Transco's leg of the project is southwest of Hampton Roads in the Greensville and Emporia areas of the state, where they are proposing compressor station upgrades and 6-plus miles of new 24-inch pipeline. This project is a threat to cumulatively disadvantaged communities. It would disrupt wetlands and

bottomlands and contaminate water bodies critical to the region's ecosystems.

It would also potentially disturb lands and spaces of cultural and historic significance for Indigenous peoples, specifically the Nansemond Indian Nation in Suffolk. They are requesting that FERC conduct a "traditional cultural property survey" so that the full impact of the project on their cultural and historic resources are fully acknowledged.

Additionally, public trust has been eroded because of a Virginia Marine Resources Commissioner's involvement in promoting a project that the commission is responsible for permitting.

If we are to move closer to a just energy transition,

we must incorporate the impacts of any fossil fuel infrastructure development through the three-pronged lens of necessity, environmental justice and climate change. This project fails on all three prongs. It is not necessary, and even if it were, renewables could be used to remedy the problem; it violates Virginia's environmental justice law because it disproportionately impacts the health of already cumulatively disadvantaged communities; and it would not help to maintain global temperature rise at 1.5 degrees Celsius.

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