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VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Virginia Sierran

The Official Newsletter of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Fall 2021

National parks, the Rural Crescent and Northern Virginia data center expansion

by Alex Rough and Ann Bennett



Prince William County has again reignited the data center debate as development encroaches upon Manassas Battlefield Park and Prince William Forest Park threatening the Rural Crescent. With data center demand skyrocketing, local land use decisions are threatening to impact our national and natural resources. Farm and forested lands now protected may soon house big box data centers, forever impacting the water quality and viewsheds of the parks.

On March 16, 2021, the Democratic-led Board of County Supervisors voted 5-3 to approve the Independent Hill Small Area Plan. This vote changed the Comprehensive Plan to allow industrial development, including data centers, on a property that is both inside the legislative border of Prince William Forest Park, which resides in the Rural Crescent, and is transected by Quantico Creek, one of our highest quality streams. In July, the board also voted to conduct an overall review of an 800-acre study area in the rural western part of the county along Pageland Lane for such data center expansion outside the already established Data Center Overlay District. Some residents are speculating that their land values will skyrocket

with the establishment of the Prince William Digital Gateway.

Environmentalists voiced concerns at a press conference on July 20, stating that planning for data centers directly adjacent to the two national parks will cause irreparable damage to the wildlife, vegetation and water supply in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and to the tourism and aesthetics of the national parks. The Great Falls Group has joined a coalition of six conservation groups seeking to protect the Rural Crescent and these two national parks. The website <https://growsmartpw.org> will soon highlight the campaign.

Data Center development in Northern Virginia has gone unabated and even accelerated during the course of the last year as the pandemic took grip. With more people working remotely around the world along with other variables, data center expansion has sped up where projects were proposed.

In 1998 county supervisors adopted the land use policy “rural boundary” as a stopgap to suburban sprawl, hence the Rural Crescent where only one home can be built per 10 acres. (However, smaller plots do exist). This splits the county into one distinct rural area and one developed

area. Now the commitment to that balance is threatened. Conservationists defend the strategy of land conservation as essential to the local ecosystem and keeping development in check. The parks not only preserve natural, recreational and historic resources, but visitors to the parks also annually spend over \$50 million in the local economy, create 700 jobs and generate \$700 million in economic output for the communities surrounding the parks.

Prince William County has long marketed itself to data center companies such as Amazon, Digital Realty, QTS and others. In 2016 the county created the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District where data center projects and supporting infrastructure should be concentrated. However, if located in the Rural Crescent, data centers would be significant visual intrusions on the historical landscape of Manassas Battlefield and negatively impact water quality and plant life in Prince William Forest Park. Both data centers would be built on currently undeveloped land, greenspace, forest and farmland, turned into concrete and impervious surfaces.

Why do a study to develop 800 acres in the Rural Crescent on behalf of data center companies such as Amazon? This spe-

cially designated area provides an essential role in preserving parks, farmland and the general water supply. It also is some of the most expansive green space in Northern Virginia and home to a myriad of animal and plant species. It helps combat climate change with large, forested areas.

With increasing urbanization and population growth throughout the region, counties in Northern Virginia including Prince William will need to be vigilant about protecting vital green space. Decision makers must stand up to the data center presence that is dictating much of the land use policy throughout multiple counties.

In addition to disciplined land use policy, Northern Virginia jurisdictions should be requiring that data centers use their leverage to demand 100% renewable energy. We may well be the internet capital of the world, but it shouldn't be at the cost of our environment, our communities and our ability to effectively plan our counties with the utmost care in light of climate change.

Alex Rough is an ExCom member of the Great Falls Group and Ann Bennett is an at-large ExCom member of the Virginia Chapter.



Virginia Chapter 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 twelve groups. The at-large members are elected by the general membership and serve two year terms.

The nominating committee is

still seeking candidates for the four at-large positions. Responsibilities include attending four ExCom meetings a year, participating in online voting when important issues arise and maintaining an understanding of the environmental issues in our state. **September 30** is the deadline for submitting a nomination.

This autumn we will hold elec-

tions for the Virginia Chapter ExCom at-large delegates. Ballots can be cast online or through the mail. We will be sending out emails to our members in October explaining how they can vote online. If you do not receive this email, please go to this website to cast your ballot: <https://vasierra.club/excomvote>

The deadline for voting is **No-**

vember 22.

If you would like to receive a paper ballot or submit a nomination, please contact me at jcruickshank4@gmail.com or **(434)973-0373**.

John Cruickshank is the chair of the nominating and election committee of the Virginia Chapter.

Our campaigns: Overcoming challenges together

by Kate Addleson

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter has eight active grassroots organizing campaigns bringing people together in community around issues across the state. Some of these you may have read about in our newsletter and received or seen action alerts on in recent months, others you may be less familiar with. But all of them are persevering through this challenging time and using innovative tools and strategies to achieve goals that bring real improvements to people's lives—now and for generations to come.

Our top priority right now is creating a just transition for Virginia to a clean energy economy by reimagining a future where all people benefit from a healthy planet and deepening our commitment to building an inclusive and equitable movement.

Here's how we're doing it:

- Clean Transit for All
- Stop the Pipelines
- Energy Equity
- Environmental Justice (with a focus on clean water and waste streams)
- Flood Preparedness and Resilience
- Residential Clean Energy
- Virginia for Wind
- School Electrification

We're making sure those hardest hit and most marginalized are included and encouraged to lead. We collaborate with local impacted communities on economic transition planning and decision-making to ensure that those historically excluded benefit from the wealth created from a clean energy economy. This means advocating for state investment in communities that

are rooted in the geographically concentrated regions suffering the heaviest consequences of job and economic loss associated with the closure of fossil fuel facilities.

Our strategies center racial justice by supporting clean energy and climate solutions that repair historic racism, creating safeguards to prevent environmental injustices and disrupting the influence of polluters in Virginia's democracy. Communities that shoulder the greatest burden of pollution are most often the same communities most impacted by historic injustices. Centering and empowering these communities, and sharing our platform, knowledge and resources results in improved solutions and less power for the polluters who thrive in underserved areas of Virginia.

I urge you to share these strat-

egies with your family and friends and consider ways that you can get involved or start new initiatives in your community that build on these strategies. By working together to elect environmental champions and put pressure on our public officials to strengthen policies that reduce pollution, fight climate change and restore justice, we can all make a huge difference in the world we see ahead.

For more information about our action campaigns, please reach out to our staff or conservation and issue chairs. If you have any questions, please contact kelly.adams@sierraclub.org and she can help direct you.

Kate Addleson is the director of the Virginia Chapter.

Virginia Sierran

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

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

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

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

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.

From the (former) chair: If not me, who? If not now, when?

by Daryl Downing

I was arrested July 9 for interfering with the Mountain Valley Pipeline, and I'd like to share some of the story with you.

I receive too many emails, but a recent one from a partner organization captured my attention. It discussed a four-day trip that included an action against the MVP. I checked my calendar and checked with my wife and decided to sign up for a nonviolent direct action. (An NVDA is a form of civil disobedience.) There are many tools in an environmentalist's toolkit, and I decided it was my turn to use this one.

I caught a ride from Richmond with another participant and we headed to a site four hours west of Richmond where we met other activists. What an amazing weekend! There was training, role playing and discussions about what lay ahead. There were 100 some odd people from a large geographic area. There were children and dogs in the mix.

As you probably know, the Sierra Club is working hard to increase the diversity of its leaders and members, which is proving challenging. I landed in a sea of diversity because these activists are very accepting of the things that make each of us unique. There were a lot of young people, plenty of LGBTQ folks, people of color, as well as other older white folks. Everyone was welcomed and accepted because the adversary was the MVP, not the things that make us different.

Nearly everyone was a volunteer who gave their time and money to be part of this action. There were medics, police liaisons, legal observers, activists who'd been arrested in similar protests, cooks, builders, etc. I was amazed at the organization, cooperation and sense of community.

After two days of preparation, 10 volunteers agreed to stay on the MVP property—most were young and two were middle-aged. Five of us had one or both arms locked in a very substantial steel pipe with other materials to impede easy removal. Five people were locked to heavy equipment.

On the morning of July 9 several dozen of us walked onto the site in Elliston, Virginia, where

the pipeline is under construction. The support for the 10 who were going to stay on site was phenomenal. A couple hours after we arrived, when there were many state police and Montgomery County sheriffs on site, the support group left the site so they wouldn't be arrested. I had a 5-gallon bucket for a seat with a piece of foam rubber as a cushion. I had water and food.

I was very thankful one of the medics loaned me an umbrella. I sat down at 6:30 as the sun began to rise. I could see cows grazing on the hillside not far away. It was going to be a hot day in Elliston, for multiple reasons. The sun rose and I and others baked. There was no relief. The cows disappeared from view as they sought shelter from the sun. We waited and sweated.

When the State Police were ready, they sawed the wooden yellow finch art piece to which we were secured. Three of us were secured together so we walked awkwardly to the location where the police would cut open the steel pipe. It was a day of waiting.

I opted to unclip myself at this point and was handcuffed and taken to the police vehicle that would take us to the jail in Christiansburg. Eventually, other activists joined me in the patrol wagon and we headed off. Two folks who were in a separate compartment were singing which was welcome.

We were put in a holding cell until the magistrate was ready to speak with us which was done via a video connection. The first two of us seen were from Virginia and had clean records, so we were released on our own recognition. A dozen or so activists were waiting for me when I exited the jailhouse—talk about a sight for sore eyes! I had been asked the previous day to write down what I wanted when I was released. I'd originally left it blank, but eventually wrote down "a dark chocolate bar" when I was encouraged to write something. Wouldn't you know it, a dark chocolate bar magically appeared and was shared.

We waited several hours for the remaining eight activists to be released. Cash bail had to be

paid but everyone was released that day. After eating and talking about our experiences, we still had a couple-hour drive back to "camp." My ride and I departed from camp the next morning for Richmond.

There are several groups working in this space (Sierra Club is even a member of one: U.S. Climate Action Network). I wasn't familiar with all of them before this action and am getting to know them better now. They are offering legal assistance (some of those arrested qualify for a public defender and some do not). In short, we're still being supported as we navigate our way through the legal system. I've hired an attorney for the first time in my life. This is definitely a learning experience.

My court appearance is in October—it remains to be seen what will happen there. I'll try to give you an update in the next

Virginia Sierran.

In summary, I don't regret my decision to participate in this NVDA (which I did without identifying myself as a Sierran). I met an amazing group of very capable, dedicated and supportive individuals who are willing to defend the environment even if it means they're going to be arrested. Some live quite far away and have to return to Christiansburg for arraignment and again for "their day in court."

While it's difficult to get Sierra Club to approve an NVDA, there are other respected organizations that are using this tactic. #NoMVP

Daryl Downing is an ExCom member and former chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Make a contribution to protect Little River Roadless Area

by Sherman Bamford

Shenandoah Mountain, here in the heart of Virginia, is one of the largest roadless and wild areas in the Appalachians, and it needs protection. We have been working for over 20 years in cooperation with our allies to permanently protect 90,000 acres in the George Washington National Forest as a National Scenic Area with several sizable future Designated Wilderness areas embedded into the proposal for the area. This is one of our best chances to permanently safeguard Shenandoah Mountain for future generations.

What you can do:

In order to permanently protect the 12,600-acre Little River area as federally designed wilderness, about 3,000 acres of privately held mineral rights in the area must be purchased. By purchasing them, we will prevent dirty fuel extraction from this pristine area and help ensure Wilderness designation of the entire 12,600-acre Little River Wilderness. The Shenandoah Group is asking you to contribute today to move the process one more step forward in permanently protecting the Little River area!

Go to <https://www.teamsierra.org/virginia/LittleRiver> for more information and to help out!

Sherman Bamford is the forests chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Piedmont Group update

by Donna Shauneseey

On July 6, the Piedmont Group celebrated 57th District Delegate Sally Hudson's extraordinary support of environmental legislation in the General Assembly. Del. Hudson had already been recognized by the Virginia Chapter for her work toward utility regulation reform (HB1984) as well as her 100% environmental voting record in 2020 and 2021. During a ceremony covered in depth by NBC29 and CBS19 news programs, Piedmont Group Chair Donna Shauneseey presented a certificate of appreciation, and the Green Grannies, a local environmental activist singing group, sang and made the delegate an honorary Granny.

Del. Hudson thanked the Sierra Club for its expertise, advocacy and practical willingness to work with whomever in government can be an ally. She urged the Club to set the bar high for environmental progress and make sure government rises to meet it. When interviewed by the two news organizations, she spoke about housing and transit as "a core part of our climate strategy," saying that "we really need to double down on our clean energy investments, especially in our public transit sector." The news programs also noted the Piedmont Group's pursuit of

plastic bag tax ordinances and greater progress by Charlottesville and Albemarle County on their climate action plans.

On July 14, we held a virtual program, showing the film *Seeding Change: The Power of Conscious Commerce*. And we were joined by local environmental-award-winning local businesses Firefly restaurant, Black Bear Composting and High Tor Gear Exchange.

Our conservation chair, Kirk Bowers, submitted review comments to the Fluvanna County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for relocating the coal ash disposal site at the Bremo Bluff coal plant. Dominion Power is proposing to move the existing coal ash from the plant to another location on the same property. An application for property rezoning and a special use permit was submitted by Dominion to Fluvanna County.

We continue to coordinate with the Rappahannock Group and Beyond Nuclear to oppose relicensing the North Anna Nuclear Power Stations until appropriate safety evaluations have been done. The public has until October 10 to submit comments on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. The NRDC will submit an amicus brief

if we go to federal court to challenge the renewal.

We recently initiated a campaign to lobby Charlottesville City Council and Albemarle County Board of Supervisors for a plastic bag tax at retail establishments. Our committee includes UVA students as well as a member of the Solid Waste Advisory Board, which is able to provide input on actions proposed by the county.

Piedmont Group ExCom members are providing valuable input on Albemarle County's Stream Health Policy Initiative, which was created to develop recommended strategies for improving stream health in Albemarle County using a collaborative and inclusive process. The process is currently in Stage 3, reviewing selected strategies

and development of specific proposals to improve stream health in the rural areas. In this stage, the Board of Supervisors will be involved to provide input and help work through the details and feasibility of each proposal.

Coming Up: We're holding a Charlottesville City Council Candidate Forum on September 22. All four candidates have agreed to answer questions about their positions on local environmental issues. This event, like the previous ones, is free and open to the public.

We're also working toward getting a certified Sierra Club outings leader, probably in coordination with Wild Virginia.

Donna Shauneseey is the chair of the Piedmont Group.



FOJG members hiking at Pocahontas State Park in September (photo courtesy of Ralph Grove).

In-person outings have resumed!

by Gary Kosciucko

Good news! As previously announced and expected, in-person Sierra Club outings have resumed, with certain restrictions, effective July 5. Given the fact that the pandemic is still very much with us, this reopening is being done in a gradual, deliberate manner, under a full set of COVID-related protocols and guidelines issued by the national office of the Sierra Club.

Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings' primary reason for being is to offer hikes, nature walks, kayaking, and other outdoor activities to the general public in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. We suspected there was plenty of pent-up demand for our activities, and we weren't disappointed. The response has been gratifying, with most events at capacity (despite the heat!) and wait lists almost equaling the

number of actual participants for many of our events. We've also noted a significant number of participants who have not gone on Sierra Club outings before. So far, as of mid-September, our activities section has conducted 16 day outings, or roughly half the pre-pandemic level. So there is definitely room to expand our offerings. We recently gave our leaders the "green light" to plan overnight or multi-day outings, as long as they comply with the national protocols, which are understandably more complicated for such events than for day outings.

Feeling stressed or depressed? We hope you'll take the "nature cure" and join us in the great outdoors!

Gary Kosciucko is the Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings chair of the Virginia Chapter.

FOJG Outing at Pocahontas State Park

by Ralph Grove

Pocahontas State Park, the largest of Virginia's state parks, is a great place for hiking, biking, kayaking and learning about the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps. On a recent Falls of the James Group outing at the park, a group of hikers enjoyed the park's great trails and a visit to the CCC museum located there.

On a beautiful September morning we hiked about five miles along the Co-op trail, named for the REI Co-op, which helped to fund development of the trail. We walked along the shore of 156-acre Swift Creek Lake, where we enjoyed great views of the lake and surrounding woods, and then followed the trail back through the woods to complete the loop. With appetites built up by the hike, we

stopped at one of the picnic shelters for lunch and a rest before heading to the museum. During our tour of the CCC museum we saw a wonderful collection of artifacts from the original CCC camp located at the park, all housed in an original CCC building that was formerly their crafts center, and we read about the CCC's work and mission. The friendly and knowledgeable museum guides gave us an interesting overview and answered questions.

This event was free and open to all. If you're interested in visiting Pocahontas State Park and the museum, be sure to check the museum opening days and times, which are limited.

Ralph Grove is the outings chair of the Virginia Chapter.

Innovative project to conserve 56 acres of open space in the City of Fredericksburg

by Paula Chow

Rappahannock Group has been working passionately to support the efforts of Downtown Greens, aka DTG) efforts to raise funds to purchase and conserve a parcel of land that contains living wetlands and mature trees as well as some of the last farmland in Fredericksburg. DTG is a non-profit founded in downtown Fredericksburg with a mission to foster community involvement and growth by protecting and nurturing urban greenspace through collaborative environmental stewardship and experiential education.

As an extension of what they have been doing for over 25 years, DTG intends to purchase and use this special property to further its mission in the following three areas: accessible greenspace, creation of an agricultural training center and new opportunities for nature based learning. They are currently in the land acquisition phase of the project, having signed a contract for the purchase of the property and having a goal of raising \$750,000 to meet by November 1. They are well on their way with nearly \$325,000 in pledges and donations toward the purchase.

As the pace of development all across the state and especially in the City of Fredericksburg is hastening, open space is becoming more critical and the need to preserve it increasingly essential to the health of communities. DTG would continue its open-access garden and green spaces for all to enjoy, with education and community mindedness at its core.

The unique parcel contains an ideal mix of mature trees, wetlands and agricultural space that is within city limits which makes it an easily accessible space for schools to participate in nature based educational opportunities. The University of Mary Washington has expressed interest in a partnership that would give students access to the land for research and educational study because of its representative biodiversity. With nearly 20 acres of wetlands, the site can become a part of the curriculum for students, helping them connect

global environmental concerns with the preservation of natural resources in their immediate community. Other community schools are also interested in access for experiential learning.

Another of DTG's goals with the agricultural portions of the site is to inspire, educate and equip the next generation to enter the farming industry. Getting young people interested and excited to enter the agricultural field is not only essential for a healthy and equitable food system, it is essential for the health of our planet. New farmers need to be our frontline environmentalists, using regenerative and sustainable practices to grow the nation's food supply. Among minorities, the urgency of the need to train young farmers is even stronger, with the current average age of a white farmer in the United States being 59 years old, and the average age of a Black farmer being 63 (USDA's 2017 Agriculture Census).

DTG wants to be part of a growing national movement to provide resources to beginning farmers, from all backgrounds, who are integral to the future of our nation's food security. With the support of partners and collaborators, DTG wants to develop a training center to teach the next generation of farmers. The establishment of this center is in collaboration with Michael Carter, Jr., an 11th generation Black farmer and owner of Carter Farms, a century farm in Orange, Virginia (see bio in Prospectus).

The Training Center will focus on teaching youth not only the mechanics of "hands in the dirt" farming but also the critical components of managing a successful farm, including everything from marketing to small engine repair, writing to food safety training, irrigation and hydroponics to digital technologies. DTG wants to bring the next generation into the agriculture field in ways that they might not have known were possible or profitable. DTG hopes the city school system will use this technical training center to provide additional options to high schoolers considering their future prospects. The Gladys H. Ober-

le School, an alternative, special education day school in the area has already expressed interest in offering agricultural instruction through this training center.

All Virginians would benefit from the preservation and eventual conservation of this property, for generations. These biodiverse 56 acres are within the Chesapeake Bay watershed fed by the Rappahannock River absorbing and filtering stormwater runoff from surrounding lands. If a development occurs on this last open space, the water quality of both the Rappahannock River and Chesapeake Bay would be negatively affected and this greenspace gone forever. These times are filled with fights against assaults on the environment; this project is something positive leaving a legacy forever.

This project is directly in line with the Biden Administration's 30 by 30 America the Beautiful project announced in May 2021, outlining a locally led and voluntary nationwide conservation goal to conserve 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. "The President's challenge is a call to action to support locally led conservation and restoration efforts of all kinds and all over America, wherever communities wish to safeguard the lands and waters they know and love," said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in a press release put out by the Department of Interior.

The goal to acquire this site perfectly exemplifies Sierra Club's mission "To Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet."

We strongly encourage you to contribute to this exciting and ambitious project! To learn more about Downtown Greens' once-in-a-lifetime project, go to downtowngreens.org/buffer and contact Sarah Perry, executive director, at (540)429-6771 or sarah.perry@downtowngreens.org with any questions or if you have someone we should speak with about this project.

Make your pledge today to save open greenspace for generations to come!

Paula Chow is the programs chair of the Rappahannock Group.

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.

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Another year, another critical Virginia election requires your vote!

by Connor Kish

Virginia is known for many things: access to mountains and beaches, incredible state and national parks, being for lovers, containing places of historical significance and also yearly elections. Something unique to Virginia found in very few other states is that every calendar year, Virginia holds an election of some kind, whether it be presidential, congressional midterms, statewide and General Assembly elections or local elections. The slogan is truly Virginia is for Voting! This year is no different. On November 2, 2021, Virginia will elect a new governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general. Additionally, all 100 seats in the House of Delegates are on the ballot.

The stakes couldn't be higher. Over the past two years, thanks to our collective grassroots power, we have advanced landmark

legislation that moved Virginia's future to one powered by clean energy. We have passed legislation to adopt clean car standards, conducted the largest transportation needs study and assessment ever, constructed the largest offshore wind farm in U.S. history, expanded the use and construction of solar energy and broken down access barriers, brought accountability to the unwieldy pipeline industry, joined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to cap greenhouse gas emissions, redefined the state government's view and promotion of clean energy and stood for environmental justice and the elevation of the voices of communities most overburdened by pollution for far too long.

Virginia also made gains elsewhere, particularly in strengthening democracy and ensuring that access to the ballot is truly for all.

The recent adoption of Virginia's Voting Rights Act is one of the strongest state-based voter protection laws in the country. As other states restrict the right to vote, Virginia has expanded it.

There is too much good that has been done, too much good occurring and too much good on the horizon to turn back now. All Sierra Club members must turn out and vote. Everything is counting on it.

Since the stakes are so high, the Sierra Club is doing what it does best: mobilizing thousands of grassroots volunteers from all across the country to engage in our Chapter effort to ensure our collective values are represented in state government. The Sierra Club volunteer letter writing team will send thousands and thousands and thousands of letters encouraging people to do one thing: get out and VOTE.

We don't want to see the tremendous, hard fought, deliberate and transformative gains of the past two years be watered down—or worse, repealed entirely from the law. With your help, they won't be.

Early voting opens on September 17 and stays open for 45 days. Election Day is Tuesday, November 2, 2021, and the polls close at 7pm. Visit <https://SC.org/plan> for more information on how and when to vote in Virginia elections, including by mail, in-person absentee or by dropbox.

The late congressman John Lewis said, "The right to vote is precious, almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool or instrument in a democratic society. We must use it." Vote, vote, vote! Like never before.

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

Volunteer spotlight: Natalie Pien

by Paige Wesselink



Natalie Pien is an incredible volunteer that I have had the pleasure of working with within my first six months at the Chapter. She is a member of the Great Falls Group of the Virginia Chapter and the lead volunteer for our data center advocacy work. Her dedication to the environment and our communities is the type of dedication that's contagious; it inspires me and all of those around her. If you ask someone on staff about Natalie, the reaction is always filled with admiration and respect for the work and time she dedicates to everything she does.

I first met Natalie when I en-

tered the realm of coordination calls for the data center advocacy work. Natalie gave me a warm welcome and since that moment has consistently expressed her gratitude for any and all support.

Recently, Natalie agreed to do a short informational video on data centers with Tim Cywinski and me. Natalie got on the call and showed us what it looks like to effectively convey your knowledge and passion on an issue that is new to many. The opening scene of the short video is Natalie showing us her shirt that says, "#actonclimate" with a huge, contagious grin on her face.

When I first attempted to do

a recording as Natalie did, my video footage was not useable. It isn't easy to be engaging, make concise points, inspire listeners and close with a call to action that inspires. Natalie took all of those things on with ease and went above and beyond.

Throughout the short video we created with Natalie, she effortlessly talks us through what data centers are, how crucial Virginia is in the data center work and what we can do to support this effort, all while bringing intermittent laughter to the group. One of the most important messages that she conveys is how crucial it is that we pressure data centers to divest from fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy given that 70% of the world's internet traffic passes through Virginia.

Natalie spoke at a data center webinar alongside two other wonderful volunteers; Bob Shippee and Ivy Main. Natalie was the force behind ensuring the webinar captured the audience and touched on the crucial elements of the data center issue. She made sure everything was in place beforehand, and when it came time for her to speak, the audience was hooked. Did I

mention that she was under the weather during the event? At the end of the event, she took the time to give a heartfelt thank you to all involved. From the incredible presentation that Natalie, Bob and Ivy put on, we received new volunteers and planted the seed for support on future data centers advocacy work in Virginia.

It is truly my pleasure and privilege to be able to work with volunteers like Natalie. The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter is lucky to have all the joy, knowledge and empathy she brings with her in whatever space she is in.

Thank you, Natalie, for all that you do even if one of those many things is scheduling 9 am meetings :).

If you would like to get involved with the incredible work being done on data centers at the Chapter you can fill out this form <https://vasierra.club/datainterest>

Paige Wesselink is the digital outreach coordinator and Ready for 100 organizer of the Virginia Chapter.

Net-zero schools: A pathway to overcoming our school infrastructure challenge

by Ann Creasy

School infrastructure needs significant attention across the country. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave schools a D+ in their 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure and estimated that an additional \$38 billion a year is needed to maintain the nation's schools.

It is becoming clear that designing highly efficient schools means more savings, better buildings and better education. Net-zero schools are defined as schools that generate as much energy as they consume, which means lower operating costs. This also means more money for other things like better teacher pay and more resources for better education. This also means healthier, safer learning environments for students and staff.

Community members, students, teachers, experts and elected officials can continue to work together to remedy our schools' crumbling infrastructure, improve learning conditions and reap millions of dollars in savings along the way. Advocacy is needed at the congressional level to local school boards to see improvements in school infrastructure. Two examples are the establishment of consistent and sufficient federal funding streams towards these innovations and

local commitments to net-zero schools.

As Ivy Main notes in her June 23 commentary in the Virginia Mercury, Fairfax County Public Schools contracted for a study that concluded that the additional upfront cost of building a net-zero-ready school is "only about 5 percent more than standard construction, and the additional cost is recovered through energy savings." Additionally, "renovating older schools to net-zero costs 11 percent more, but still pays off in 15 years."

As the DOE shares on its Better Buildings website, Discovery Elementary is Arlington's first zero-energy school. Not only did the project come in under budget, but the building is more efficient than originally predicted. Now Discovery saves \$100,000 per year in utility costs. Alice West Fleet Elementary and Cardinal Elementary in Arlington are other net-zero school projects that have yielded great savings for the district.

Energy consumption represents the second highest operational expense to schools. There are huge, long-term cost savings when schools are constructed or renovated to net-zero, but the schools need funds to be able to make that initial investment. Currently, there is no consistent or

substantial school facilities funding stream at the national level. Solutions, such as the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act, are critical for providing ways for schools to improve infrastructure. The Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act, introduced by Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), pledges to invest around \$130 billion in public elementary and secondary schools.

Low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students and families should be prioritized in our pathway to improved school infrastructure. Low-property values in some school districts and lack of federal funding make it challenging to fund infrastructure solutions. With Virginia's history of redlining, a high number of Title 1 schools (those with the highest percentage of children from low-income families) are in Black communities, and others are in parts of rural Virginia that have been left behind economically.

A 2020 report in the Clarion Ledger on the nearly all-Black schools in the Mississippi Delta describes buildings with inadequate plumbing, flooded hallways and crumbling walls, floors and ceilings. This story is recursive across the country Congress can allocate money to help address

school infrastructure, and they should prioritize those funds for those most impacted people.

Teachers, students, parents, experts and other community members can reach out to their congressional representatives asking for support of federal funding streams like the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act with emphasis on prioritization of funds for schools in low-income and BIPOC communities. We can also work with our local school boards directly to encourage them to make commitments to cleaner, more efficient schools. The school board in Salt Lake City, Utah, passed a resolution that committed them to using 100% clean energy by 2030 and to going totally carbon neutral by 2040. Federal funding paired with local commitments to net-zero schools would put us on our way to better education and healthier communities.

If you are interested in working towards or learning more about cleaner school buildings, please contact me at (757)513-2844 or ann.creasy@sierraclub.org

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

Virginia Chapter email lists

Join these email lists to get more informed about and involved with Virginia Chapter activities:

Virginia Climate Movement

This is a statewide list of people active in the Virginia climate movement. You can receive and send emails on climate-related news, events, webinars and actions going on across the state. *Monthly call on the fourth Tuesday at 12 p.m. and 7 p.m.* **Contact Mary-Stuart Torbeck at mary-stuart.torbeck@sierraclub.org**

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 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>

Centering justice in Ready for 100

by Paige Wesselink

Ready for 100 continued on despite significant barriers due to the pandemic, and now, with things opening back up, we are planning a future for the campaign that goes beyond localities committing to 100% clean energy.

The national Ready for 100 campaign recently released a three-year plan focused on building a new clean energy infrastructure that directly benefits people of color and frontline communities. We have been experiencing a Ready for 100 campaign in Virginia that is skilled at getting commitments from localities but is now preparing to expand its reach beyond that to take part in healing Virginia's racist past across all systems including the energy system. It is no surprise that BIPOC communities in Virginia face the biggest burdens from energy costs, pollution from fossil fuels and threats from the impacts of climate change.

Committing to clean energy must mean a commitment to

centering those voices that have been most impacted by social and environmental injustices. When cities and towns demonstrate successful, equitable steps in their transition to 100% clean energy, Black and indigenous people and people of color in these cities will begin to own energy projects and companies and get jobs in clean energy, shifting the systemic racism we see in the clean energy industry today.

Virginia is in a unique position with over a dozen community clean energy commitments already achieved. Specifically, the commitments in Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg and Arlington house strong volunteer teams and offer the ability to build on their momentum. Portsmouth and Richmond are additional Ready for 100 locations that have not received a commitment but are in the process of working with organizers in the Chapter to address energy burden, flood preparedness and equitable clean energy infrastructure. With Lynn Godfrey

leading this effort in Portsmouth, the Virginia Chapter is focusing on community-led educational outreach in order to build opposition to dirty fuels and provide connections and education on energy burden and clean energy workforce development. A Ready for 100 effort in Portsmouth aims to provide additional collaborative capacity in a city that has expressed an urgent need for support.

Among the recent efforts for Ready for 100 groups includes the recent passage of the Climate Emergency Resolution. This resolution opens doors for Ready for 100 efforts in Richmond including efforts to phase out fossil fuels and pollution that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities in the city. Thank you to the incredible volunteer effort on this from the Falls of the James Group, specifically volunteers Lee Williams, Shavon Peacock and Joe Brancoli. We also have ongoing work in Northern Virginia for data centers. Recent-

ly, data center activists Natalie Pien, Ivy Main and Bob Shippee held an educational webinar and called for action for residents in Loudoun, Prince William and Fauquier counties to ensure that the huge amount of energy consumed in Virginia's data centers be produced using carbon-free renewable sources. If you are a resident of these counties you can take action at <https://vasierra.club/dataaction>

Ready for 100 at the Virginia Chapter aims to take part in the community-led distribution of clean energy ownership, jobs and access in frontline communities. What was once a campaign that heavily focused on getting localities to commit to clean energy has now become invigorated with the opportunity to take part in the movement to intersect environmentalism and social justice to create an equitable shift to 100% clean energy in Virginia.

Paige Wesselink is the Ready for 100 organizer of the Virginia Chapter.

Southgate pipeline and Lambert Compressor Station defy Environmental Justice Act

by Richard Shingles

Virginia's Environmental Justice Act requires state agencies to consider adverse effects of their decisions pertaining to fence-line communities, particularly marginalized populations overburdened by "development" that historically has diminished their health, safety and welfare.

The Lambert compressor station proposed by Mountain Valley Pipeline would be a source of toxic air pollutants that pose health risks to those living nearby. It would be located three miles from the town center and a mile from the closest residential neighborhoods.

The Jones family lives next to the Williams Transco industrial park where Lambert is sited. Elizabeth Jones is the daughter of sharecroppers. Anderson suffers from asthma. They are overburdened by particulate matter spewed daily from two gas-fired combustion turbines. Lambert would add two more. The Joneses own a remnant of what was once a much larger family farm. Their angst in part echoes the pain of generations of Black farmers who collectively have lost more than 12 million acres of agricul-

tural land over the past century, in good part because of biased government policies.

Threats posed by Lambert are not limited to its immediate neighbors. Sensors have tracked mile-long methane plumes containing toxic pollutants emanating from compressor stations.

An additional station would create a disproportionate burden for Black Americans, who comprise 15% of Chatham's population; 38% of rural areas encompassing the town to the north, west and south; and nearly 50% to the east. Pittsylvania County is 22% Black.

Black people are more likely to be seriously sickened by air pollution due to deficient access to healthcare, which stems from racial disparities in household wealth, poverty and health care discrimination. They are more likely to have vulnerabilities to air pollution. Black Covid-19 patients are nearly three times more often placed in intensive care and twice as likely to die. They are much more likely to report knowing someone personally who died from the virus.

Toxic pollution from gas from

compressor stations is not the sole threat to the community that would be exacerbated by MVP. There is the juxtaposition of two toxic and volatile industrial complexes in a high concentration area on the southern edge of the town where the Tight Squeeze shopping mall and county high school are located.

One is a William's Transco easement that contains four parallel, buried, high-pressure gas transmission pipelines—ranging from 30 to 42 inches in diameter. Williams says placing the proposed Southgate pipeline along its easement, as planned, would raise "significant safety concerns." The other complex is a large industrial park containing a chemical manufacturing plant, a plastic fabrication plant and a firm that manufactures composites and coatings. All store highly volatile and toxic chemicals.

The high school is squeezed between the industrial park and the Transco easement. To make matters worse, the school and industrial park are encompassed by a large (mostly pine) forest that would provide a secondary source of fuel for a fire starting in

either complex. Transco's easement runs through the forest.

The peril is further compounded by a potential domino effect in which an accident that starts in one unit in an industrial cluster spreads to nearby units. Both collateral gas pipeline easements and chemical factory clusters have a history of this (though such calamities are rare). A recent incident at Tight Squeeze illustrates the potential for calamity. Last spring, a chemical fire at one of the plants set ablaze a building block, releasing hazardous chemicals. The school was evacuated and the county asked everyone else within a mile to shelter indoors until the fire was contained.

Chatham is an overburdened community. The last thing it needs is two more turbines and another pipeline as Black Americans will bear a disproportionate burden.

(Elizabeth Jones, Katie Whitehead and William Limpert contributed to this story.)

Richard Shingles is chair of the New River Valley Group.

Are mobile home parks an endangered species?

by Cheri Conca



A protest sign at Leesburg Mobile Park march on September 8 (L) and a Leesburg mobile home landscaped with flowers and mature trees (photos courtesy of Cheri Conca).

On a hot September afternoon, well over 100 people marched nearly a mile from Leesburg Mobile Park to the Loudoun County Government Center. Working class parents, senior citizens and small children carried signs, chanting, “we love our HOME! We love our HOME!” in a plea to the Board of Supervisors to help save their community from a pending sale that could result in the demolition of the park to make way for condos.

Similar scenes are taking place throughout Virginia and

the rest of the country. As localities grapple to provide affordable housing and facilitate smart growth, it is ironic that mobile home (also known as manufactured housing) parks are virtually becoming an endangered species as they are bought up for redevelopment. Home to 75 working class families, Leesburg Mobile Park is tucked into the heart of Leesburg, a short walk from shopping, jobs, services and recreation. Like many mobile home communities, it is the very definition of smart growth, offer-

ing an affordable, socially equitable place to live, where everyone can flourish.

According to the Grounded Solutions Network, even though 80% of manufactured home residents own their homes, they have a very insecure housing situation. Most residents in manufactured housing communities rent the land from people who see the property as an investment. Even if land were available to relocate the community, many of the older homes are no longer actually mobile. Displaced residents in high cost of living areas are not able to find financially comparable affordable housing and may be vulnerable to homelessness.

What can be done to preserve mobile home communities? During its 2021 Special Session, Virginia’s General Assembly passed House Bill 2175, which requires localities to incorporate into their comprehensive plans strategies to promote manufactured housing as a source of affordable housing. One way to accomplish that goal is to facilitate resident-owned communities or communities owned by a non-profit organization or community land trust. In Texas, localities

can institute zoning protections for existing parks and create local funds to support tenant acquisition of mobile home parks. Boulder, Colorado, developed a displacement plan with details on relocation assistance and suggested future policy for creation of a manufactured home community zone to discourage redevelopment.

Preservation of existing mobile home communities is an effective solution to the dilemma of providing affordable housing, which is a top priority in many Virginia localities. From a climate standpoint, mobile home parks located near jobs, shopping, services and recreation reduce or eliminate the need for car ownership, thereby lowering transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. Most importantly, saving mobile home parks from redevelopment preserves a sense of community and quality of life for some of our most disadvantaged residents. March with your neighbors and take a stand to protect them.

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

In memoriam: Debra Ann Jacobson (3/20/1952-9/15/2021)

by Brian Castelli and Bob Shippee

We are mourning Debra Jacobson’s passing after her gallant fight this past year with cancer. We also celebrate her life of service to both government and community—and in particular her excellent work as a volunteer with Sierra Club. She was truly a force of nature and a leader in the energy and environmental field.

Debra, a Great Falls Group member for the past five years, has received the national Sierra Club’s prestigious Volunteer Achievement Award. Debra received the Achievement Award for her environmental vision, energy, expertise and knowledge, along with her leadership and drive to get things done.

Debra supported many energy-related activities for Fairfax County with the organization of Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy, or C-PACE, and Solar Purchase Power agree-

ments workshops; Green Building codes; the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, or CECAP; Environmental Quality Advisory Council, or EQAC, and many other activities that benefited the community.

Debra led the Sierra Club efforts for a massive solar buy for 130 Fairfax County Schools. An energy lawyer who served on the county’s EQAC, she remarked “It’s hard to overstate how significant a move this is. It’s not just the largest solar buy by a local government in Virginia. It also opens the door for other Virginia counties and cities to buy solar because it makes the process simple and straightforward.”

Debra’s vision is far-reaching and one that has positive impact on all Virginians.

In a small ceremony on July 10 at the net-zero energy home of Brian Castelli, Norbert Pink

and Brian presented the award to her. Debra was joined by her family and a few close Sierra Club friends and allies. Debra was honored again at the national level when the Sierra Club held

its virtual recognition event this month.

Brian Castelli is the energy efficiency chair and Bob Shippee is a political co-chair of the Virginia Chapter.



GFG members Norbert Pink (L) and Brian Castelli (R) with Debra Jacobson at her July awards ceremony (photo courtesy of Ann Bennett).

A summer of climate action

by Hunter Noffsinger



Advocates hold signs in support of climate action at Mount Trashmore in Virginia Beach (photo courtesy of Ann Creasy).

This Summer has been one full of opportunities for investments in clean energy, environmental justice, jobs and more at the federal level. From the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and the Build Back Better Budget, there have been multiple opportunities for action on climate change that we can't pass up. It is a once in a generation opportunity to pass the Build Back Better Budget, and we must ensure Congress passes this bold infrastructure bill.

Throughout the Summer, advocates across Virginia and the country have done just that and organized to push for invest-

ments in clean infrastructure, environmental justice and jobs, making sure that our representatives know this is the change we want and need to happen. From meeting with representatives to organizing rallies and demonstrations, we have demonstrated support for the much needed Build Back Better Budget. The budget will make the critical investments in environmental justice, transportation and clean energy that we need to address the climate crisis.

Some of the events included an in-person demonstration at Mount Trashmore in Virginia

Beach, where community members walked around and talked to others about the need for federal action on climate change. We were able to connect with folks who care about climate change, but didn't know what was going on at the federal level. We also had a virtual rally for Congress to act on climate change with speakers from Mothers Out Front Hampton Roads and a volunteer with the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter where folks from across the commonwealth learned about the Build Back Better Budget, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the For the

People Act. We held demonstrations for community members to honk for climate action as they drove home from work, and even groups of cyclists joined in by raising their fists and making "honk" noises as they rode by.

It is clear that Virginians want to see our federal representatives taking action on climate, and it was inspiring to see folks coming together in whatever capacity they could to demonstrate that support. Community is the strongest tool we have in fighting for change. By bringing folks together from all across the commonwealth we can make real, lasting change in the fight against climate change and for clean energy. It is because we came together over the summer that we saw the passage of the Build Back Better Budget through Congress. And as Congress debates over how to spend the money passed in the shell of the Build Back Better Budget, we must continue to advocate for the health of our communities, a stable climate, jobs and our future.

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

Lifetime achievement award to Dick Ball

by Ivy Main and Richard Ball

When I first began volunteering for the Sierra Club back around 2007, Dick Ball was already one of the star volunteers at the Virginia Chapter. But Virginia was just his latest act; back in the late 60s, when I was still in grade school, Dick was serving as coastal chair for the Sierra Club in California. There he founded the California Coastal Alliance to advocate for a coastal commission to control development in the coastal zone. And they won.

At the time, Dick already had his PhD in Physics from Stanford University and was working for the RAND Corporation doing research that included studies of energy and environmental policy, energy use and resources. Dick later worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy working on issues like acid rain, air pollution and climate change.

He developed new methods for assessing energy technologies at EPA and DOE, including the method of fuel cycle analysis and methods for forecasting future environmental problems. While at DOE he worked on atmospheric science issues for the National Acid Precipitation Assessment and served as a lead author for the IPCC First and Second assessments on climate change.

When Dick retired from DOE in 1999, he brought his expertise in climate science back to the Sierra Club as a volunteer to help shape and inform our advocacy around energy and climate issues. As our Energy Issues Chair, he has helped make the Virginia Chapter one of the most successful chapters in the Club. To note just one recent contribution, Dick was the first person to calculate the greenhouse gas emissions from the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines,

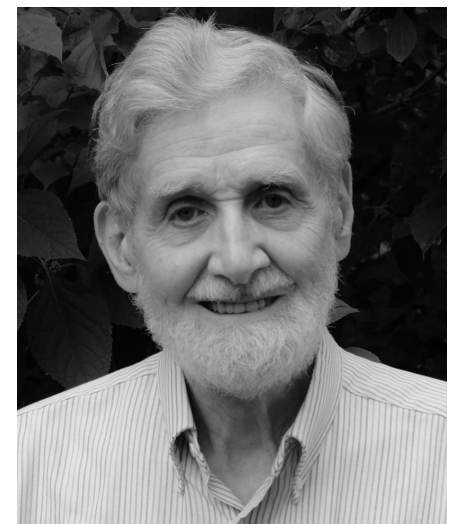
providing us with solid science we used repeatedly in our opposition to these pipelines.

On a personal note, as a non-scientist I have leaned heavily on Dick's expertise on many occasions. One time, when I was chapter chair, I was contacted by an inventor who wanted our endorsement of his design for a new way of obtaining energy. It looked sketchy to me, for reasons I couldn't quite put into words, but Dick had no trouble doing so. His response: "That's a perpetual motion machine! It violates the laws of physics!"

Dick represents the very best in a Sierra Club leader. In addition to helping his colleagues with the math and science, he gets involved in every aspect of the Chapter's work, from working on legislation and lobbying legislators, to knocking on doors for good candidates, to speaking at public hearings and showing up

for protests. And he has done so always with patience, grace and good humor.

It is for these and many other reasons that I was honored to present the Glen Besa Lifetime Achievement Award to Dick Ball.



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

Dismal Creek and Powell Mountain: Two reasons why public forests should be protected

by Sherman Bamford

Forests are essential in the fight against climate change. Without protecting forests, it would be almost impossible to hold average global temperature rise to within the goal of 1.5 degrees. Through protection and effective management practices, we could offset 21% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly, President Biden has a bold plan to conserve 30% of America's lands and waters by the year 2030. This would necessitate increasing acreage of protected lands from the current level of 12% to a level of 30%, no easy task without all of us helping!

The Virginia Chapter has been closely following projects in two areas, examples of areas that must be protected if we are ever to meet the "30 by 30 Conservation Goal."

The first is the 7,000 acre Dismal Creek Virginia mountain treasure area in Giles County, one of the largest de facto unroaded areas that the Forest Service failed to identify as roadless in the Jefferson National Forest Plan. This large triangular-shaped valley is bordered by the Appalachian Trail on two sides. An Endangered species is found in the watershed, as is a Natural Heritage conservation site given an "outstanding" biodiversity significance ranking.

Unfortunately, 434 acres of logging and associated logging road/skid trail construction has been approved in the Dismal Creek and adjacent No Business watershed. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, said of the project: "The proposed project will fragment an Ecological Core(s) (C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5) as identified in the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment ...one of a suite of tools in Virginia Conservation Vision that identify and prioritize lands for conservation and protection...." The type of Ecological Core area found here is a C1 area, the highest classification in terms of ecological significance.

The Sierra Club is actively monitoring the project in the hope of halting or reducing the worst of the impacts, in order to safeguard this area for future protection. If



Dismal Creek mountain treasure area in Giles County (photo courtesy of Sherman Bamford).

you would like to find out more about monitoring efforts, contact Sherman Bamford at (540)343-6359 or bamford.2@aol.com

The second area is Powell Mountain in Scott County. The northern hardwood forests of Powell Mountain are among the wettest and richest forests in Virginia. On the south side of the mountain, Stock Creek, Cove Creek and Laurel Fork flow into

the Clinch River, home to dozens of threatened and endangered mussel species. The Nature Conservancy ranks this area as one of the biodiversity hotspots of the lower 48 states.

On the west end of the area is 3,657-acre Laurel Fork Virginia mountain treasure area, encompassing a tract of old growth forest that is described as "unusual and significant because of its

large size - 900 acres " by Virginia Natural Heritage. To the north end of the area is the even larger Cliff Mountain old growth tract and the beautiful Cove Creek Headwaters old growth tract.

The Forest Service has identified an extensive area between these old growth tracts for one of the largest timber sales proposed in the last 30 years. A total of 133 stands totaling 2,638 acres are proposed for logging. Most of this large watershed cannot be technically classified as roadless, as there are a number of roads through the area, but it is one of the most remote, out-of-the-way tracts of public land left in the heavily fragmented Cumberland Mountains. Most of the logging would take place in mature stands averaging 100 years old.

You can write the Forest Service to oppose the Devils Hens Nest project by contacting: Michelle Davalos, District Ranger, Clinch Ranger District, 1700 Park Ave., SW, Norton, VA 24273

Sherman Bamford is the forests chair of the Virginia Chapter.

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The C4GT gas plant is cancelled!

by Lynn Godfrey



Previously proposed location of now-cancelled C4GT gas plant in Charles City County (photo courtesy of SAVE Coalition).

After several wasted years deceiving the people of Charles City and the Commonwealth of Virginia, NOVI Energy, parent company of C4GT, has finally realized what the courageous people of Charles City who fought a valiant battle to keep this monstrous fossil fuel poison out of their community have known since the beginning: we don't need this gas plant. Virginia doesn't need another gas plant.

The spot outlined on the picture above is now just that, a spot on the map in Charles City Coun-

ty that can be utilized to support a healthy Charles City County community. In July, NOVI Energy announced that they have given up the fight and cancelled their desire to build the 1,060MW gas-fired power plant. If it had been built, along with the proposed Chickahominy Gas Plant, it would have been the fifth instance in the United States where two stations totaling more than 2,500MW of fossil-fired generating capacity were located within a mile of one another. The Chickahominy Gas Plant is continuing its plans

to build in Charles City County with a recent SCC request to be exempt from the Natural Gas Act's certificate requirements because it is not a public utility. So, as the common mantra says, "a luta continua" (the struggle continues).

The C4GT plant, along with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the VNG HIP project, is part of a growing number of fossil fuel gas and oil projects cancelled within the last year. Nationwide, this trend is growing too with the Keystone XL pipeline cancellation and the Byhalia pipeline cancellation in Tennessee. Within the last six months, the country has seen a string of fossil fuel infrastructure projects enter rocky ground, from the evaporating financial rationale behind the Mountain Valley Pipeline to the corporate inter-fighting that left C4GT footing the bill in a recent lawsuit loss to Virginia Natural Gas. Financial viability, or lack thereof, for these projects notwithstanding, regulatory agencies, DEQ specifically, continued to allow permits to stand. Although C4GT violated

air permit regulations for years, over five in fact, that continuous construction must commence during the 18-month permit duration, DEQ continued to renew air permit licenses.

What all these fossil fuel project cancellations represents is the will of the people to fight against this poison in their communities. In Charles City County, the hard battle the grassroots organization C5 (Concerned Citizens of Charles City County) fought against insurmountable odds to keep this monstrous plant from polluting their community is beyond admirable. I salute their courageous fight against powers in high places. Now it's time for the developers and investors in the Chickahominy Plant to realize the same. With climate change as the most existential threat facing humans today, there's no reason to be building gas plants in the 21st century.

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

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