

# Old Dominion Sierran



Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

Spring 2011

www.virginia.sierraclub.org

## Working with Labor for Good Green Jobs

by Tyla Matteson

### Sierra Club-CWA Workshop

Thirty Virginians, half from the Sierra Club and half from the Communication Workers of America (CWA), met over two January days at the CWA headquarters in Richmond, getting to know each other, sharing our priority issues, and discussing how we can work together.

We worked sometimes as one group and other times in small groups at five breakout tables, selected regionally, with Sierra Club and CWA people at each table.

We ultimately determined we face the same opponents in the Virginia General

Assembly, that we are fed up with losing on our issues, and that working as a team makes good sense.

After spending time explaining our issues to one another, we selected two core issues we should work on together --climate change and telecommunication services.

### General Assembly Legislation

In the following weeks, during the General Assembly Session, we lobbied and testified against two telecommunication bills that would allow for a deteriorating landline, further exacerbating a digital divide to rural residents.

them with amendments.

Likewise, our CWA friends spoke at hearings and helped us defeat a particularly egregious climate denier bill.

We look forward to continuing this work in the legislative and political realm on issues of mutual concern, and identifying and electing legislators who support our shared goals of creating quality jobs and sustainable communities.

### Good Jobs Green Jobs

The fourth Good Jobs Green Jobs Conference, coordinated by the BlueGreen Alliance, was held in Washington in early February, attended by over 200 organizations and companies, including labor, environment, government, trade associations, business and industry. Close to 200 Sierra Club members attended, with over 20 from Virginia.

A long list of workshops included topics on new clean energy manufacturing and markets, state and local initiatives, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The conference ended with a well-organized advocacy day, when participants met with federal legislators.

Of particular note was a meeting with 200 Sierra Club and CWA members, from 20 states, grouped around large round tables. Speakers included two from Virginia, Richard Hatch, president of the CWA Virginia State Council, and Glen Besa, Virginia Chapter Sierra Club director, who reported on our model Virginia workshop. Richard thanked the Sierra Club for lobbying to oppose the Verizon bill.

### Offshore Wind Workshop

The Virginia Chapter put together a hugely successful panel, "Offshore Wind Power and its Green Jobs Potential," on the second day of the conference.

Ivy Main, renewable energy chair, moderated a stellar panel of some of the nation's leading experts on offshore wind. There was standing room only as attendees heard how offshore wind is now progressing and how this industry will play a vital role in creating clean energy jobs, along with lowering our use of fossil fuels. You will find an excellent three-minute video, narrated by Ivy Main, on our website: va4wind.com.

Tyla Matteson is Political/Legislative chair Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

## Rebuilding Green

**R**ebuilding Green: *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Green Economy*, a report released in February by the Blue Green Alliance and Economic Policy Institute, finds that the \$93-billion green investment injected into the economy through the end of 2010 creates or saves nearly one million American jobs, increases U.S. GDP by \$146 billion, and provides jobs for some of the country's most vulnerable workers, including middle-wage earners and those with less than a four-year college degree.

This report also examines the overall effectiveness of ARRA in stemming the economic crisis, and presents evidence that, by the middle of 2010, ARRA created or saved up to 3.4 million jobs, boosted GDP by up to \$520 billion, and reduced the unemployment rate up to 1.8 percentage points.

"This report shows us a breakthrough opportunity

to create and support jobs in new and existing green business sectors," said David Foster, Executive Director of the BlueGreen Alliance.

"Green investments are among the best and fastest way to solve our nation's unemployment crisis. If we radically reduce the budget deficit without making green investments proven to create jobs, we will be squandering one of our best strategies for getting Americans back to work and keeping America competitive in the global economy."

"The United States must solve its economic challenges in a way that not only creates good jobs, but also confronts climate disruption and our energy challenges," said Carl Pope, Chairman of the Sierra Club. "This report lays out a roadmap for how to move our country forward to create good jobs, healthy families and a clean energy future."

Thanks to the BlueGreen Alliance

Sierra Club sees high speed internet as an energy efficient tool, allowing for telecommuting and fewer cars on the road. Although we did not defeat the bills, we were successful in partially improving



A breakout group at the Sierra Club-CWA Workshop works on a task to solve a given problem. Those brainstorming are (l. to.r.) Matt Yeargin (CWA), Dan Rusnak (labor and Sierra Club), Kathy Hillman (CWA), Jay Ford (Sierra Club) and Eileen Levandoski (Sierra Club).

Photo by Glen Besa

From the Chair

Protect our natural areas and get our youth into the woods by John Cruickshank



It is an honor for me to assume the role as chair of the Virginia Chapter. During my eight years as an active volunteer with the club, I have been so impressed by the talent and determination of our members and staff.

Special thanks must be given to Charles Price who served in this position for the past four years. His able leadership has helped the chapter develop as an efficient organization with a clear vision.

A few years ago my wife, Barbara, gave me a book that strengthened my resolve to work for the preservation of natural areas in Virginia. In *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv describes how so many children have become disconnected from nature. Television, video games, the internet, busy schedules, and safety concerns have interfered with the natural tendency of young people to explore outdoors and develop a relationship with plants and animals in their ecosystems.

He asserts that "time in nature is not leisure time; it's an essential investment in our children's health." Numerous studies show that childhood stress, depression, obesity and ADHD are the result of what Louv calls "nature-deficit disorder."

For me the message is clear. We need to protect our natural areas and get young people out of the house and into the woods. As Virginia's population grows, it is essential to expand our system of public parks and forests and encourage families to use them. Action must be taken to clean our air and water and ensure that every child can live in a toxic free environment.

I don't believe it's a choice between a strong economy and a healthy environment. We can have both. We can choose sustainable ways to live, travel, and produce energy that will preserve natural habitats and allow us to live comfortable and healthy lives. And as John Muir once said, we need "to entice others to look at Nature's loveliness."

I don't believe it's a choice between a strong economy and a healthy environment. We can have both.

John Cruickshank to lead Virginia Chapter Sierra Club Executive Committee

On January 8, the executive committee of the Virginia Chapter elected John Cruickshank to serve as chapter chair. A Sierra Club member since 1985, he recently served as Piedmont Group chair and Virginia Chapter vice-chair.

John became an activist because of his concern for young people and his love for the outdoors. For 35 years he worked as an educator in New Mexico, Japan, Germany and Virginia. As a teacher and school principal, he promoted awareness of environmental issues with his students. He continues to serve as a volunteer in local schools and is currently enrolled in the Master Naturalist program so he can lead children on nature walks.

John and his wife Barbara live in Charlottesville and have three grown children. Their family spent many vacations camping in the Blue Ridge Mountains and visiting national parks around the United States and Canada.

John's goal this year is to help facilitate the smooth operation of the Virginia Chapter, to support the work being done by our dedicated volunteers and staff, and to help educate fellow citizens about the serious threats facing our environment.

"If we make good choices now, our children and grandchildren will inherit a healthy and beautiful planet," he states.

David Dickson to manage Green Transportation Campaign

David Dickson has been named program manager for Sierra Club's Green Transportation Campaign.

David is a conservation professional with extensive experience advocating before Congress and federal agencies, including grassroots organizing and stakeholder engagement. Beginning as a volunteer activist working to protect free-flowing rivers in California, he came to Washington to work for the American Rivers Conservation Council and the Izaak Walton League of America on river protection, water quality, and public lands issues.

He was senior analyst at the Environmental Working Group boosting the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency. Most recently David worked at the Alaska Wilderness League to protect

the Arctic Ocean and Western Arctic public lands from oil and gas development. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California at Berkeley.



As manager of our Green Transportation campaign, he will be working with volunteer Roger Diedrich and transportation activists across the state to issue a report later this year on the Sierra Club's vision for transportation in the Commonwealth.

They'll also be working hard to insure that Governor McDonnell's \$4 billion dollar transportation budget is spent on repairing infrastructure, relieving bottlenecks and on new rail projects.

Vasily Kisunko to serve as Sustainable Metro D.C. Coordinator

For Sierrans in Northern Virginia concerned with transportation and sprawl issues, Vasily Kisunko needs no introduction since he began his work with the Sierra Club last November. He replaces Phillip Ellis who has taken a new position with the Sierra Club working on our Beyond Coal campaign.

Vasily's top priorities will be organizing public support for implementation of the Washington Council of Govern-

ments' Region Forward plan by local jurisdictions as well as securing adequate funding to support Metro Rail.

He is a graduate of the GreenCorps, the boot camp for environmental organizers. He worked with the Fund for Public Interest, Work for Progress and most recently for the Fairfax County Democratic party.



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Our mission is to explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth and to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources.

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Old Dominion Sierran is published quarterly. The editor welcomes editorial contributions, photographs, news releases and art work. Submissions should be related to Virginia's environment. E-mail the editor with questions prior to submitting material.

Editor

Barbara Null bnull@comcast.net

## Plan to attend Offshore Wind Conference in Virginia Beach June 22

**M**ore than 60 panelists will discuss the barriers and issues involved with developing the Commonwealth's offshore wind resources at the Virginia Offshore Wind Conference to be held in Virginia Beach June 22.

This "working" conference will provide opportunities for industry leaders, stakeholders and policy-makers to meet face-to-face and together craft action plans for getting steel in the ground as soon as possible.

Developers, contractors, supply chain manufacturers, policy makers, regulators, consultants, investors, legal professionals and all those interested in the development of Virginia's offshore wind industry are invited to attend

Virginia Beach is the ideal place for this conference. It's green. The conference and Wind Supply Chain Workshops will be held in Virginia Beach Convention Center, America's first LEED Gold Certified Convention Center in the Existing Building Category and the Commonwealth's first Virginia Green Convention Center.



For more information on the program, contact Ivy Main, [ivymain@cox.net](mailto:ivymain@cox.net), or Angie Bezik, Principle Advantage, [abezik@principle-advantage.com](mailto:abezik@principle-advantage.com).

For more information about sponsorship opportunities, contact Eileen Levandoski, Sierra Club, [eileen@va4wind.com](mailto:eileen@va4wind.com)

For further information go to [vawind2011.com](http://vawind2011.com).

## Eager for clean energy and brighter future? Invest Today

by J.R. Tolbert

**C**lean air, clean water and protection of open spaces. That's the vision the Virginia Sierra Club has for the Commonwealth. We know that protecting our natural resources is a value that is not unique to Sierrans, most Virginians want this quality of life.

That's why we're committed to working every day to stand up for Virginia's environment, and give a voice to those who value all that Virginia has to offer. Over the past year we have been focused on advancing clean energy, cleaning the Chesapeake Bay and protecting our coastline from offshore drilling.

We've had success in each of these areas because of the direct support our members gave to the Virginia Chapter. Your contributions have allowed us to successfully:

- Win a two-year delay of the proposed coal-fired power plant in Surry County
- Organize more than 3,000 citizens to call on Governor McDonnell to improve his administration's plan to restore the Bay
- Lead a coalition of organizations calling on President Obama to remove Virginia

from future offshore drilling plans.

With your continued support we will build upon these successes in 2011. Our goals are to push Governor McDonnell and Dominion Virginia Power to invest in clean, renewable energy from offshore wind.

Sierra Club is a people powered organization. By making a donation to the Virginia Sierra Club today you will give us the resources to:

- Educate the public at more than 30 presentations detailing the potential for renewable energy in Virginia
- Host a conference on offshore wind that will bring decision-makers, public utilities and wind developers together to figure out how to make Virginia windpower a reality
- Hold our second annual renewable energy lobby day in Richmond in 2012.

To make our vision of healthy communities in the Commonwealth a reality, we must educate, mobilize and give a voice to those who share our commitment to a healthier future. We hope you will join us in this effort by sending back the donation form today.

## 2011 Annual Gathering again at Prince William Forest Park

**T**he Virginia Chapter Sierra Club will hold its 2011 Annual Gathering at Prince William Forest Park the weekend of September 23. The following weekend of September 30 has been selected as the alternate.

Complete details will be included in the summer issue of *Old Dominion Sierran* and on the Virginia Chapter webpage.

## National Sierra Club election this Spring

**T**he annual election for the Sierra Club board of directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national election have received their ballots in the mail or by Internet. This includes information on the candidates and where to find additional information.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. Your board of directors sets policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the executive director and staff to operate the club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

For additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the club and the environment, go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2011election/default.aspx>.

## Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park



July 16-19  
July 30- August 2  
September 9-11  
October 17-19

**E**xplore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. Enjoy the frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds. Hike the trails to find blankets of wildflowers and plants found in no other place on earth. Kayak or snorkel the pristine waters--- or just relax at sea. These live-aboard, eco tours depart from Santa Barbara, CA aboard the 68-foot twin diesel *Truth*.

Fee (\$785 for July trips; \$590 for September and October) includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes, call attention to items of interest and present evening programs.

To make a reservation mail a \$100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader, Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information (626-443-0706; [jholtzhln@aol.com](mailto:jholtzhln@aol.com))

### Yes, I support Sierra Club's commitment to Clean Energy and a Brighter Future

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email/Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Here is my contribution supporting Sierra Club's important work in Virginia. Make check payable to Sierra Club-Virginia Chapter and mail to: Sierra Club-VA Chapter, 422 E. Franklin Street, Suite 302, Richmond, VA 23219

\$50 \_\_\_ \$75 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions and gifts to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

## State legislators show little courage or interest in bills to clean our air and water or create green jobs

by Ivy Main

**F**or the citizen-lobbyist, going into the Virginia General Assembly session year after year is a profound act of faith. No matter how often we encounter good sense trumped by politics, reason steamrolled by emotion, and the public good undermined by private greed, we keep showing up with sensible proposals to save residents money, clean our air and water, create jobs, and set ourselves on a path to sustainable energy (sometimes all in the same bill.)

The bad news is that our most ambitious bills failed, as they often do. The good news is that we made some incremental progress on a number of fronts, and we defeated or softened many of the worst bills supported by corporate interests and anti-government populists.

### Politics 1, Energy Efficiency 0

Our signature bill would have lowered the base residential rate for electricity most of the year, with higher rates applying to higher levels of energy use. This would have rewarded ratepayers who use the least electricity by lowering their bills, and created an incentive for higher-consuming ratepayers to invest in efficiency measures.

Low-income earners and people with small homes would generally benefit, and the overall effect over time would be a net savings to consumers; but in an election year, the idea that owners of large homes could see higher bills so alarmed our brave senators that they declined even to vote on it.

### Fairer prospects for solar and wind

The Sierra Club sponsored the first-ever renewable energy business lobby day in January, with more than 40 businesses participating. This effort contributed to the passage of some small bills.

**The bad news is that our most ambitious bills failed, as they often do. The good news is that we made some incremental progress on a number of fronts, and we defeated or softened many of the worst bills supported by corporate interests and anti-government populists.**

Our bill to allow the Virginia Resources Authority to loan money to localities for renewable energy projects passed with only two outliers voting in opposition, as did a bill we supported that establishes a revolving loan fund for solar projects, to be funded by voluntary donations from utility ratepayers.

Our coalition partners at Piedmont Environmental Council won passage of a bill that will allow Dominion Power to create several small solar demonstration projects.

And, in a gesture at once breathtaking and toothless, a joint resolution passed unanimously announcing a goal of 3,000 megawatts of offshore wind energy off the Virginia coast by 2025. Sadly, no one offered a bill to make it actually happen.

This uneven success record reflects the fact that the vast majority of our legislators support renewable energy in theory; they just don't want to have to pay for it, and they sure don't want to see coal lose its place as our favored fuel source.

Thus, a bill to create a mandatory renewable energy standard was killed in the House, and we could not even get a vote on our bill to require utilities and regulators to consider the true cost of fuels (including health care and environmental costs) when planning for generation.

### Phosphorus ban a bright spot

One gratifying victory was the passage of a bill that drastically limits phosphorus in fertilizers. Phosphorus is needed only for starting new lawns, not maintaining established ones, and it is a significant pollutant in streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Unfortunately, another bill to help our waterways did not pass. Bills introduced by Delegates Adam Ebbin and Joe Morrissey would have imposed a five cent tax on plastic bags. The revenue generated would have been earmarked for water quality improvements across the Commonwealth, but the House Finance Committee killed the bill as a tax increase.

### Mixed success on defense

As always, much of our time at the General Assembly is spent trying to block or soften the effect of really bad bills, of which there was a bumper crop this year.

Anti-government tea partiers and climate deniers came up with a host of bills that would attempt to nullify federal bills and regulations, and reverse requirements that localities actually plan their development. Meanwhile, coal companies worked to undo environmental progress on mountaintop removal coal mining and stream protection.

We and our allies fought hard against these bills, and in many cases succeeded in killing or amending them to be less bad. Unfortunately, a number of bad bills made it through.

### Transportation: Well, it could have been worse

The Governor's transportation vision is different from ours. He likes highways, we like transit. He likes borrowing money, we like pay-as-you-go. He likes making developers happy and enabling sprawl, we like smart-growth planning. His bill reflected his priorities, and with no Demo-

cratic alternative offered, we were limited to working with our friends to offer what improvements we could. We were glad that the final bill ended up better than it started, even if we could not support its final passage.

### Great work from our interns and volunteers

Our successes would not have come at all without the intensive, daily presence of JR Tolbert, the Sierra Club's assistant director and lobbyist, and the huge effort put out by volunteer citizen-lobbyists, including Tyla Matteson, David Bernard, Steven Bruckner, Susan Stillman, Roger Diedrich and myself, as well as hundreds of activists across the state who called, emailed, and visited their legislators.

This year we were also fortunate to have seven college students volunteering in the office and assisting the lobbying effort. They helped us respond rapidly to the constant changes in bills and contributed greatly to the success of our lobby day. Our thanks go out to Foster Hardiman, Laine Myers, Emily Vohl, Parrish Padgett, Nathaniel Matthews, Joshua Killinger and Daniel Carawan.

*Ivy Main is Legislative chair, Virginia Chapter Sierra Club*



Among several Sierra Club members demonstrating outside the Marriott Hotel in Richmond during a Virginia Coal Appreciation Breakfast for Legislators are (l. to r.) George Bowles, Foster Hardiman, Mary Rafferty, and Michael Furey. Photo by Glen Besa

## Governor's transportation plan unacceptable to environmentalists

by Roger Diedrich

**I**t seems to be an annual occurrence in the Virginia General Assembly that the budget and funding for transportation are the two focal points for debate. 2011 was no exception.

Governor McDonnell made transportation funding the centerpiece of his administration. Last year he identified two sources for that funding -- revenue from offshore drilling and proceeds from selling the state's ABC stores. When these ideas failed, the Governor came back in January with a redefined financing and spending proposal.

This plan has two significant components -- accelerating a portion of the existing bonding authority and authorizing the Commonwealth to borrow against anticipated (but not guaranteed) federal transportation funds. The total amount of the governor's proposal is more than \$4 billion. This could be expanded by leveraging private funds into projects that give control of the infrastructure to corporate investors.

There is the good and the bad to this financing approach. As environmentalists, we should view the greater danger in the open-ended control by the executive branch to select and fund any project it chooses. Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton touted a list of 900 projects



in selling the plan, a list he has already departed from.

The legislation is largely silent on spending priorities or a decision process, so on its face, it appears to be business as usual -- the highway-centric, developer-driven building that got us into the congestion situation we face today.

Before the bill was even signed, we were given two examples of the Govern-

nor's priorities for "solving" Virginia's transportation conundrum.

One is the proposed new Rt. 460 from Petersburg to Suffolk. This privatized project would construct a four-lane toll road parallel to the existing four-lane highway, which passes through a sparsely populated area and, predictably, lightly traveled. There is no reason to build such a road except to encourage sprawling development in the corridor.

The second project, which appears to be making a comeback after a few years of relative dormancy, is the Tri-county Parkway in Northern Virginia. This project would also pass through low density development in the exurban ring outside Fairfax County. It could be an eventual part of an outer beltway, a developer's dream and another sprawl road.

Twice during the General Assembly, the McDonnell administration released studies claiming notable economic benefits based on reduced congestion. They overlooked research showing that, in congested areas, new highway capacity only attracts new car trips, and congestion will continue.

The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club recently hired a transportation campaign manager, David Dickson, who will focus on implementing our Green Transportation Vision as an alternative to the administration's plan. We will work to stop these ill-advised road projects and promote 21st century solutions, such as smarter land-use planning and better connections among communities offering choices of travel modes.

*Roger Diedrich is Smart Growth and Transportation chair of Virginia Chapter Sierra Club*

## Bill allowing development of conservation areas awaits Governor's signature

by David Bernard

**A** bill patroned by Richmond area Senator John Watkins that allows some development to occur in designated conservation areas associated with "cluster development" projects passed both the House and Senate.

"Cluster development" refers to the practice of concentrating building in a limited portion of a given tract. This allows a larger portion of the tract to be kept as a conservation area. It reduces building costs as less road surface and utility construction are needed for the same number of dwellings.

Senator Watkins said existing law was a violation of property rights. He acknowledged that real estate attorney "Chip" Dicks wrote SB783.

The bill, which passed both the House (HB1931, patroned by Danny Marshall, R-Danville) and the Senate, states that localities may not "require in such (conservation) areas identification of slopes, species of woodlands or vegetation and whether any such species are diseased, the locations of species listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern, or riparian zones or require the applicant to provide a ... map showing such matters in any conservation areas ..." other than those in an existing local-option tree law, which itself contains developer exemptions.

SB783 also prevents localities from prohibiting "roads ... for ... access to the cluster development" or "stormwater management areas from being located in such (conservation) areas."

A law designed to allow localities to "ensure quality development" and "preservation of open space" will be effectively dismantled should Governor McDonnell sign this bill.

*David Bernard is Water Quality chair, Virginia Chapter Sierra Club.*

## Coyote survives in "wilds" of Roanoke



The coyote was once found only in the West. I saw my first one in 1974 in Yellowstone National Park. Now this one is in my neighborhood. In spite of humankind's most deliberate efforts to exterminate it, this critter has thrived. I admire that.

Photo by Bob Egbert

**Here's what I think the truth is: We are all addicts of fossil fuels in a state of denial, about to face cold turkey.**

**Kurt Vonnegut**

## The Uranium Debate — large profits for wealthy vs. clean drinking water for Virginians

by Mary Rafferty

For nearly 30 years, Virginia banned the mining of uranium. Unfortunately, in recent years this existing moratorium has come under attack from wealthy landowners and a Canadian-owned company that see high uranium prices as the catalyst to start mining in the Commonwealth.

The first proposed uranium site is in Pittsylvania County, but uranium sites have been identified all the way through the Piedmont to Northern Virginia. The industry's push to lift the ban won't be contained to Southside Virginia, it places the entire state at risk.

### Background

Extracting uranium out of the ground and processing it to yellowcake leaves a large quantity of radioactive uranium waste commonly referred to as "tailings."

The proposed project in Pittsylvania would create 26 million tons of this leftover toxic waste, which would have to be stored for at least 1,000 years underground

**The proposed project in Pittsylvania would create 26 million tons of this leftover toxic waste, which would have to be stored for at least 1,000 years underground in Virginia.**

in Virginia. Studies have linked exposure to uranium waste to increased rates of cancer, kidney failure, leukemia and diabetes.

### Health Hazards

Virginia's wet climate makes uranium mining and processing a risky experiment. Uranium sites are typically operated in dry sparsely populated areas. Severe weather events and flooding can overwhelm uranium operations flushing toxic uranium waste into the bordering waterways and local groundwater.

The Pittsylvania County site is upstream of the Kerr Reservoir and Lake Gaston. These two water sources provide drinking water for Halifax, as well as Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. A recent study conducted by the City of Virginia Beach concluded that if a major waste spill were to occur, radioactive contaminants would take two months to two years to flush out of Lake Gaston. Impacts to Kerr Reservoir would be much more significant and long lasting.

Many sites identified in the 1980s would have the same type of impact for other bodies of water. These sites are upstream from the drinking water sources of Fairfax County and Fredericksburg.

### Keep Existing Ban in Virginia

Sierra Club has been working closely with citizens in Southside Virginia and in Hampton Roads educating citizens and elected officials about the importance of the existing ban.



On February 7, Southside citizens drove to Richmond to tell their legislators the importance of the ban on uranium mining in Virginia. Among them were (l. to r.) Chad Martin, Naomi Hodge Muse, Reverend Amy Hodge-Zigler and friend.

Photo by Mary Rafferty

In January, the chapter hosted Robert Tohe, a member of the Navajo Nation and environmental justice organizer in Arizona. Tohe attended meetings with local officials and community members in Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Pittsylvania County to tell stories of the impact uranium mining has had on communities out West.

Tohe lives and works in areas that have been devastated by uranium operations in Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. While thousands in these effected communities suffer from cancer and diabetes, the government is still trying to contain toxic waste that has settled in their rivers, lakes and streams.

We have also been working to engage the public in this process. In February, we partnered with a local Pittsylvania County group, League of Individuals for the Environment, Inc (LIFE, Inc), and brought over

50 citizens from five Southside counties to Richmond.

Representatives included the chair of the Martinsville NAACP, the mayor of Halifax, a pastor from Roanoke, a farmer from Chatham, and many citizens from Pittsylvania, Henry, Halifax, Roanoke and Floyd Counties. These concerned Southside residents spoke with their representatives about the importance of the existing ban and spoke at a town hall held by the National Academy of Science.

### How You Can Help

If you would like to get more involved in this campaign, contact [Mary.Rafferty@sierraclub.org](mailto:Mary.Rafferty@sierraclub.org) or (804) 225-9113 ext 105. Materials, including factsheets, stickers and petitions, are available upon request. *Mary Rafferty is Grassroots Organizing Manager, Virginia Chapter Sierra Club*

## PATH transmission line suspended

**Projections of demand for power indicate transmission line not currently needed**  
by Kate Pollard

PATH is a \$2 billion dollar proposal to build a 275-mile long 765-kV transmission line starting at the Amos substation in West Virginia, through West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland, aiming to bring coal-by-wire to New Jersey consumers. In Virginia, it would have come through Frederick, Clarke, and Loudoun counties.

PATH is one of those projects that seems like it just won't quit – having been abandoned in 2007 then re-submitted last year, but on February 28, PJM, the regional grid operator, requested that it be halted.

American Electric Power (AEP) and Allegheny Energy withdrew their pending applications for the PATH line, following PJM's statement ordering development of PATH to stop. PJM cited the results of new tests that had been ordered by the hearing examiner, Alexander F. Skirpan, assigned

to the case by the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC). For a change, we have reason to thank the Virginia SCC -- for checking the facts and choosing responsible action over utility interests.

Sierra Club members joined local activists at both the recent hearings in Virginia. We have been working with Piedmont Environmental Council, Earthjustice and other allies to defeat this project for five years now.

From our joint news release with Earthjustice:

"PJM's decision to hold the PATH project 'in abeyance' comes in response to an order issued by a Virginia State Corporation Commission hearing examiner, who required new analyses of the PATH line to account for reduced load forecasts, demand response, energy efficiency, and new generation projects.

As predicted by the Sierra Club's experts, the new analyses revealed that the PATH line will not be needed in 2015 as AEP and Allegheny Energy had previously claimed. In papers filed with the Virginia state commission on Tuesday, representatives for the companies were forced to concede that 'under the present circumstances, withdrawing the application is in the public interest'."

Opposition to PATH has been a combined effort in West Virginia, Maryland, and Virginia. Our legal team, as well as West Virginia activists Keryn Newman and Alison Haverty, filed a formal complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission over the PATH subsidiaries, Allegheny and AEP, having wrongly charged more than \$3 million in improper expenditures to ratepayers. That case is ongoing. *Kate Pollard is with Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign*



## Offshore Wind: Blowing our way?

by Ivy Main

Several recent events have inched Virginia closer to taking the plunge on offshore wind energy. The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, continuing the Obama administration's commitment to seeing 54 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030, recently identified four "wind lease areas" off New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, with leasing possible as early as this fall.

The Virginia lease area would be 20 miles out from Virginia Beach—somewhat further out than the area studied by the Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium, but roughly equivalent in its energy potential. Developing this lease area could result in more than 3,000 megawatts of capacity, enough to supply over 10 percent of Virginia's electric demand.

**With Virginia taxpayers subsidizing coal, and no account taken of the health care costs to residents from burning fossil fuels, it is difficult for offshore wind energy to compete head-to-head on price alone.**

As one state after another commits to offshore wind farms, manufacturers are growing more confident about the American market. In February the Spanish wind energy giant Gamesa, which opened a turbine manufacturing plant in Pennsylvania in 2006, announced a partnership with Northrup Grumman to create the Offshore Wind Technology Center in Chesapeake, Virginia.

The partnership is working to develop a 5-megawatt turbine specifically for marine applications. These larger turbines should be able to make more efficient use of the wind resource, part of the effort to bring costs down.

But cost remains a significant sticking point in Virginia, which lacks a mandatory renewable portfolio standard or other incentives to encourage utilities to buy offshore wind energy. With Virginia taxpayers subsidizing coal, and no account taken of the health care costs to residents from burning fossil fuels, it is difficult for offshore wind energy to compete head-to-head on price alone.

The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club has made the push for offshore wind energy the centerpiece of our "Clean Energy, Bright Future" campaign. We hope to persuade Dominion Power, the McDonnell administration, and state regulators to move for-



ward on an offshore wind farm by demonstrating its business and job benefits as well as its support among the public. (See the article below on how you can get involved in our Clean Energy Roadshow, and the notice of our June 4 citizen's energy conference.)

In addition, we are planning a business-oriented offshore wind conference on June 22 in Virginia Beach (see page 3) to bring together manufacturers, developers, regulators, local government leaders, scientists and environmentalists to discuss the nuts and bolts of getting turbines in the water.

We also hope to receive funding for a study that would show the costs and benefits to ratepayers of an offshore wind farm, with the results informing our legislative agenda and lobbying efforts for the 2012 session.

*Ivy Main is Renewable Energy Chair, Virginia Chapter Sierra Club.*

## Citizens' Conference for Offshore Wind

First citizens' conference on offshore wind power to be held in Virginia. Sponsored by Chesapeake Climate Action network Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

When — Saturday, June 4, 2011 — 9 a.m to 3:30 p.m.

Where — Richmond Center Stage  
600 East Grace Street  
Richmond, Virginia

**It's time to bring offshore wind power to Virginia waters and bring with it the good jobs and clean energy we need.**

**Don't miss this opportunity to learn, ask questions, and arm yourself with the facts -- how wind power off Virginia's coast can meet 10 percent of the Commonwealth's energy needs by 2025 and create 10,000 career-length jobs.**

Registration fee includes lunch.

Check our website for more details: <http://vasierraclub.org/>



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- John Muir

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Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80522-2968 or visit our website [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

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## Join the VA4WIND team Take the clean energy story on the road

Help us spread the word about Virginia Offshore wind. With the huge opportunities for clean renewable energy and the thousands of jobs for Virginians, it's an easy sell. And we're going to make the task super-easy and super-fun for you.

Send an email today to [eileen.levandoski@sierraclub.org](mailto:eileen.levandoski@sierraclub.org) and tell me you want to join the VA4WIND team. You'll be joining a lively group of Sierra Club members and friends who will be getting out into the community talking all things offshore wind.

We have a great 20-minute offshore wind roadshow ready to present to civic organizations, home-owner associations, church groups, you name it. We just need presenters and folks helping to schedule those presentations.

**It will be popular.  
You will be popular.**

Tabling Earth Day events? Let us know. Our VA4WIND tabling package is full of goodies to include instructions for making "mini wind turbines" (aka paper pinwheels). It's a proven hit with the kids, lures them to your table, and captures the attention of parents. Win-Wind.

So be on the lookout. Coming this Spring to a neighborhood near you, we'll be hosting coaching workshops where you can learn more about how you can help promote wind power in Virginia. Be sure to drop me a line, [eileen.levandoski@sierraclub.org](mailto:eileen.levandoski@sierraclub.org), if you can help organize one of those workshops in your area.

## EPA Updating Clean Air Act Standards

### Virginians hold social events to toast EPA, thanking them for their safeguards against toxic pollution

by Kate Pollard

Citizens across Virginia are joining a nationwide effort to recognize the important role the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plays in protecting public health, demonstrating support for the agency as it works to improve safeguards under the Clean Air Act.

Virginians are countering attacks on EPA's authority in letters to the editor, petitions to President Obama, and by contacting representatives in Congress and the Senate. Social events have been held to toast the EPA 'to our health,' to thank them for their safeguards that prevent us from getting sick from toxic pollution from coal and dirty energy.

**This safeguard will save thousands of lives, and prevent thousands of cases of asthma attacks, heart attacks and hospital visits.**

On February 23, the EPA issued an airquality standard that, although modest in comparison to their proposal last June, limits emissions of mercury, lead, arsenic, acid gases and other toxic pollutants from industrial boilers. This safeguard will save thousands of lives, and prevent thousands of cases of asthma attacks, heart attacks and hospital visits.

University of Virginia and Virginia Tech students, affected by toxic air pollution from their on-campus boilers, were among those celebrating the clean air protections. The pending rule has already contributed to coal plant transitions at Penn State and Clemson, among others.

The EPA is conducting a nationwide series of roundtable meetings to discuss new carbon pollution safeguards (known as New Source Performance Standards or NSPS) with affected stakeholders. These first-ever limits on greenhouse gas pollutants from these sectors will allow the EPA to focus on the industries that create the li-



Sierran Lena Moffitt demonstrates on March 4 in front of Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters in Washington. Photo by Heather Moyer

on's share of the nation's carbon pollution.

Friday, March 4, was the last leg of the tour, and the third to be held in Washington, D.C. It was the only session to include a designated public comment session.

At each of the D.C. sessions, dozens of Virginians attended to observe the roundtable discussions among utilities, coalition partners, and oil refinery representatives, and show their support for the EPA getting the rulemaking underway.

On Friday, activists demonstrated before the event, holding signs and photos showing the effects of air and water pollution. Activists of all ages showed up, in-

cluding mothers, kids, college students and military personnel. Then, a dozen citizens from Northern Virginia joined environmental advocates in the comment period to tell personal stories that highlight the health threats of carbon pollution.

An updated Mercury/Air Toxics standard for life-threatening hazardous air pollution from power plants is expected to be proposed by EPA March 16. To take action or for further information, go to: [www.StopPolluters.org](http://www.StopPolluters.org) or contact Kate Pollard at [kate.pollard@sierraclub.org](mailto:kate.pollard@sierraclub.org).

## Falls of the James Group sponsors RVA Environmental Film Festival



The Falls of the James Group was a co-sponsor of the RVA Environmental Film Festival held at the historic Byrd Theatre in Richmond on February 12.

The festival included such films as *The Lorax*, *The Beekeepers*, *Who Killed Crassostrea virginica?*, *No Impact Man*, *Once Upon a Time in Knoxville*, *Making the Connection*, and the award winning documentary, *The Cove*. Approximately 300 people attended the festival.

Other sponsors included EnRichmond Foundation, radio station WRIR, REI, Commonwealth Solar, Frumtheart, and Watershed Architects.

REI held a prize raffle in the lobby, while activists gathered petition signatures from attendees.

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## Group Directory

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

- Blue Ridge:** Tom Eick  
434-277-5491; [teick@ntelos.net](mailto:teick@ntelos.net)
- Chesapeake Bay:** Terra Pascarosa  
757-291-4736; [terrabs@gmail.com](mailto:terrabs@gmail.com)
- Falls of the James:** Scott Burger  
804-714-5444; [scottburger@mac.com](mailto:scottburger@mac.com)
- Adele Maclean  
804-282-8637; [amaclean94@gmail.com](mailto:amaclean94@gmail.com)
- Great Falls:** Chris Koerner  
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- Rappahannock:** Eric Lawrence Stott  
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- Shenandoah:** Ralph Grove  
540/433-1323; [ralph.grove@gmail.com](mailto:ralph.grove@gmail.com)
- Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO):**  
Michael Darzi, 301/580-9387; [Michael.Darzi@saic.com](mailto:Michael.Darzi@saic.com)
- Thunder Ridge:** In Reorganization
- York River:** Tyla Matteson, 804/275-6476  
[tmatteson1@mindspring.com](mailto:tmatteson1@mindspring.com)



Trieste Lockwood of Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, Mary Rafferty and Roger Diedrich (l. to r.) were busy at Sierra Club's first Renewable Energy Business Lobby Day. The January 20 event attracted 40 businesses from across the state who made over 60 lobby visits to Virginia General Assembly members. The event and reception were held at Center Stage in Richmond.



Sierra Club activists demonstrating prior to the Environmental Protection Agency public comment session in Washington March 4 are (front l. to r.) Olive Pentecost, her mother, Tory, Coleson Breen, Ed Ablard and Christina Yagjian. (Back) Anne Ambler and her husband.

Photo by Heather Moyer

## During this past winter volunteers worked hard for a better environment



Following a strategy meeting in Alexandria on January 12, activists intent on retiring the Gen-On's Potomac River Coal Plant, toured the site in the heart of the city where pollution continues to cause health problems. Phillip Ellis, Christa Waters and Jim Denison were among those observing the site.



On March 9 the Falls of the James Group heard a presentation on Tyla Matteson's and Glen Besa's experience at the climate conference in Cancun. Members came dressed in beach attire to lighten up the serious program. Catherine Welsh donned oversized Foster Grants, a Hawaiian shirt and lei for the occasion.



On Oct 9, 2010, activists from across the state converged on Wise County in the heart of coal country for a workshop on mountaintop removal coal mining and how to stop it. That evening Jane Branham, vice president of Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, organizer of the Weekend in Wise, entertains with Buddy Delp. Every successful movement has its music.



The Cowpasture River ambles through the hills in George Washington National Forest. Photo by Sherman Bamford

## Forest Service to release draft George Washington National Forest Plan in late April

by Sherman Bamford

It's almost here . . . the Forest Service expects a public release of the draft George Washington National Forest Plan in late April. Public meetings will occur about 45 days after the release and the public will have 90 days to comment after the release.

This is one of your last opportunities to speak for the forest. Without the voices of Sierra Club members, we could see increased logging and roadbuilding in sensitive sites across the forest.

Please make every effort to comment and attend one of the meetings. The For-

est Service needs to hear from people who want the threat of climate change addressed and people who want greater protection of their favorite spots in the forest --roadless areas, trails, rare biological communities and drinking water sources.

Comments on the plan can be sent to: Maureen Hyzer, Attn: George Washington National Forest Plan Revision, George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, 5162 Valleypointe Pkwy., Roanoke, Va. 24019 or comments-southern-george-washingtonjefferson@fs.fed.us. For more information, go to <http://vasierraclub.org/our-issues-2/gwnf/>.



Photographers go wild during wild flower weekend at Shenandoah National Park. This year it will be held May 7-8. The park is a haven for native woodland wildflowers. See how flowers rely on butterflies, bees, birds and other animals to pollinate them and spread their seeds. Contemplate a wildflower and you might discover your own connections to the natural world.

## Wilderness First Aid (WFA) Certification courses to be held across state in Spring

### Casual Hiker, Rural Living or Urban Disaster

Learn how to save life and limb in a wilderness or rural area or urban disaster zone. Matthew Rosefsky, a Wilderness EMT and Stonehearth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO) instructor, is offering several wilderness first aid classes this spring. SOLO is a wilderness and emergency medicine school which issues WFA certifications - [www.solowfa.com](http://www.solowfa.com).

The hands-on first aid course will include:

- How to care for an injured or ill person during the critical minutes or hours before ambulance or hospital hand-off
- Blend of classroom instruction and rescue scenario practice
- Two-year (SOLO) WFA certification
- Recertification for WFR and wilderness part of W-EMT



Spring courses will be held:

**March 26-27** - near Blacksburg at Mountain Lake

**April 2-3** - Norfolk

**April 16-17** - Richmond

**April 30 - May 1** - Warrenton

**May 21-22** - Charlottesville

The course fee is \$165 with 10 percent going to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community partner organization.

To register or for more information, contact Matt Rosefsky at [wfa@outdoorsocial.com](mailto:wfa@outdoorsocial.com) or 434-760-4453.



## Get your binoculars and join a Spring Paddle on Eastern Virginia Swamp on April 2

A Spring Paddle on an Eastern Virginia swamp (to be determined based on current water flow) is scheduled for Saturday, April 2. Join us to explore one of Virginia's swamplands with outfitter Garrie Rouse.

This excursion, not for beginners or for those under 12 years old, is dependent upon the weather. An overflow

trip may be available Sunday, April 3, if there is sufficient interest.

A cost of \$30 for Falls of the James Group members, \$35 for non-members, includes rental of canoe, paddle and flotation device. For information and space availability contact Tamara Smith, [tamsmith47@gmail.com](mailto:tamsmith47@gmail.com). Reservation upon receipt of payment.

## Winter hikers navigate 22 miles of under-construction Rivanna Trail

by Chris Bryan

Every year I extend the challenge to all hikers to join me on a “marathon” hike. This year, on Valentine’s Day, four amazing ladies joined me on a 22-mile-hike along the Rivanna Trail. We set off early, while the rest of the world was still asleep, to drive three hours to Charlottesville to begin our hike from Quarry Park.

Much of this trail is still under construction and therefore the trail was lost (we weren’t lost, the trail was) several times. Despite the navigational issues all five of us completed the trail in about 12 hours.

Construction on the Rivanna trail takes you around the city of Charlottesville. It

takes you up and over roads, under bridges, across railroad trestles that rise high above the Rivanna River, through shopping centers and neighborhoods, along creeks and through parks.



Instead of waiting for bon bons and flowers on Valentine’s Day, Naa Farrow, Leslye Miller, Ana Moret-Colon, Carol Channel and Chris Bryan take a 22-mile hike along the Rivanna Trail.  
Photo by Chris Bryan

It also takes you through sections that seem a secluded nature preserve hundreds of miles away from civilization. We saw deer, a variety of birds, helped a fellow hiker face her fear of heights and had some great lessons on reading a map.

We enjoyed every aspect of this trail and highly recommend everyone who has a chance to take a hike on it. Even if it’s just a few miles.

So next year, when you have no plans for Valentine’s Day maybe you can join us on a marathon hike. Who knows where we’ll end up, but I can guarantee it’ll be an adventure. And who knows, maybe some gentlemen will join the ladies on taking up the 20 mile day-hiking challenge.

## OUTINGS

by Joe Apple

### Some hike the Himalayas, others hike in Virginia

When some hikers think of hiking, they conform to the old saying, “the grass is greener on the other side of the fence.” I must admit I’m guilty. I’ve gone on Sierra Club outings in Nepal and Bhutan while neglecting opportunities next door.

Fortunately we have numerous opportunities in Virginia. One major source of outings information can be found on the Potomac Appalachian Trails Club’s (PATC) webpage, [www.patc.net](http://www.patc.net). Numerous maps, guides and books are available under “Shop PATC.” These contain numerous outings in Virginia mostly covering the Appalachian, Shenandoah National Park and other nearby trails.

Another source of outings is the book, *60 Hikes within 60 Miles: Washington, DC, including Suburban and Outlying Areas of Maryland and Virginia* (2nd Edition). This book, written by Paul Elliott, is available from Amazon.

Unfortunately, neither the publications provided by PATC nor Paul Elliott’s book cover the southwestern and tidewater areas of Virginia. If outings leaders or other Sierra Club members are familiar with maps, guides, and books that cover those areas, I’ll include them in a future column.

### Outings leader first aid training to be reimbursed

The Virginia Chapter Excom voted in January to reimburse the cost of Wilderness First Aid or Red Cross First Aid training up to \$150 in an attempt to increase the number of certified outings leaders within the chapter and Potomac Regional Outings area.

To qualify for reimbursements, outings leaders must complete an approved first aid course, successfully complete the Outings Leadership Training 101 course, and lead two outings under the supervision of an official Sierra Club outings leader.

The new leader will be reimbursed after the chapter receives the receipt for the first aid training and a certificate indicating the completion of the leadership training course.

## Hike planned for May 20-22 to West Virginia mountain surrounded by mountaintop removal mining sites

by Chris Bryan

As the old saying goes, you tug on any one thing in nature and you find it connected to everything else. The streams and mountains being destroyed in West Virginia effect us all.

Some of the places I grew up hiking in West Virginia are no longer there. They have been flattened by mountain top removal mining. What use to be a strenuous kick-butt hike with a gorgeous view at the end is now as flat as the Virginia Beach boardwalk.

Fortunately, there are quite a few heroes out there, including folks in the Sierra Club, fighting to end this devastating prac-

tice. One is Larry Gibson, who is fighting to protect his beloved Kayford Mountain, currently surrounded by mining sites.

On the weekend of May 20-22, I’ll be leading a group of Sierra Club members on an outing to visit Larry and see first hand what devastation is being done.

Growing up in southwestern Virginia I heard about mining my whole life, but never realized the true impact until I saw it first hand. I hope you will take an opportunity to join us on this excursion.

For more information or to sign up please contact me at 757-202-3331 or [theshoelesswanderer@gmail.com](mailto:theshoelesswanderer@gmail.com).

Currently we have carpools coming from Blacksburg and Hampton Roads. We can coordinate with others depending on where you are coming from. This event is open to anyone ages eight and above. There is no charge to attend, but you will be responsible for your own expenses for the weekend.

**What used to be a strenuous kick-butt hike with a gorgeous view at the end is now as flat as the Virginia Beach boardwalk.**

## Piedmont Group plans Spring hikes

Saturday, April 9

### 5th Annual Key West Wildflower Hike

Learn about the spring ephemeral wildflowers along the Rivanna River at Key West. Virginia bluebells and trout lily are a few of the wildflowers we might see. We will meet at 11a.m. Call Deborah by April 7 at 434/296-9637 to reserve your space and get meeting location. In case of inclement weather, call for an update.

Sunday, May 22

### Little Calf Mountain

Join us for a family-friendly moderate hike in the southern area of the Shenandoah National Park. Meet at 10:30 a.m. at Barracks Road. See a beautiful vista with Charlottesville to the east and the Shenandoah Valley to the west. Actual trail time for hike is approximately 1.5 hours. This is a good family hike - children are welcome. Pack a lunch

and bring plenty of water. Approximate return time is 3 p.m. Call Deborah by May 20 at 434/296-9637 to reserve your space.



# Half of Chesapeake Bay's nitrogen pollution caused by inefficient agricultural fertilization

Virginians need to understand that nitrogen-based land application of animal waste is merely an excuse for cheap waste disposal without serious regard for water quality.

by Dr. Lynton C. Land

It has been known for decades that agricultural fertilization practices account for half the nitrogen pollution in Chesapeake Bay. Increasing the efficiency of fertilization is the cheapest way to improve Bay water quality.

But the powerful agricultural lobby, backed by legislators whose campaigns receive significant funding from agricultural interests, has succeeded in avoiding meaningful changes, and the recent Watershed Implementation Plan accepted by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will not change that fact.

Conventional chemical fertilization causes about one half of agricultural pollution, or about 25 percent of Chesapeake Bay nitrogen pollution. Farmers striving for maximum yields use more chemical fertilizer than is nec-

essary. Of 120 pounds nitrogen applied per acre to grow corn or small grain, only about 80 pounds of the nitrogen will be removed with the harvested crop. This leaves 40 pounds of nitrogen to be released into the environment, mostly as pollution.

The best way to significantly increase fertilization efficiency is to use controlled release fertilizers. Currently, these fertilizers are expensive and there is little demand for them.

Split fertilizer application (side-dressing,) uses less fertilizer but costs the farmer in time, fuel, machinery wear-and-tear, and causes soil compaction.

Cover crops, usually subsidized with tax dollars, are an expensive and never-ending approach to sopping up excess fertilizer that should never have been applied in the first place.

Animal waste (poultry litter, municipal sewage sludge and manure) is far less efficient than chemical fertilizer. Used on less

than 10 percent of farm acreage, it is responsible for half of agricultural nitrogen pollution, the same amount of Bay pollution caused by all the wastewater treatment plants in the watershed. Eliminating the disposal of animal waste onto farmland is obviously far cheaper than upgrading wastewater treatment plants or managing stormwater.

Sewage sludge is the least efficient form of animal waste "fertilizer." To make 120 pounds of nitrogen available to a crop, application of 400 pounds is required. Subsequent crops will consume some of the 280 pounds of nitrogen released to

the environment, but pollution will be reduced only if farmers reduce the application of chemical fertilizer in subsequent years.

Sewage sludge also causes health problems for a few people and disseminates substances, such as pharmaceuticals on the land with unknown, long term, but worrisome, consequences.

Land application of animal waste must be banned and the waste used as biofuel. No science or economics can be advanced to support the continued practice of favoring cheap disposal of animal waste over water quality. The economic value of a clean Chesapeake Bay to Virginia vastly exceeds the worth of the producers and disposers of animal waste.

*Dr. Lynton S. Land, emeritus professor of geological sciences, University of Texas in Austin, now lives in Virginia.*



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422 East Franklin Street, Room 302  
Richmond, VA 23219



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