

Old Dominion Sierran



Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

Winter 2011

www.virginia.sierraclub.org

Offshore wind picks up speed along the Atlantic by Ivy Main

The nation's first offshore wind lease was signed on October 6 by Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. It gives the go-ahead to the Cape Wind project in Nantucket Sound, off Massachusetts, nine years after it was first proposed. Cape Wind's 130 turbines will have a generating capacity of 420 MW, enough to provide three-quarters of the electricity demand of the Cape and nearby islands.

The historic lease-signing was just one of many developments this fall that have advanced prospects for offshore wind energy along the Atlantic coast.

In September, the Departments of Interior and Energy announced a joint plan to support the industry through improved agency coordination and grants for research and technology. Their goal is to enable construction of as much as 54,000 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind by 2030, as suggested in the Department of Energy's 2008 report, *20 percent Wind Energy by 2030*, a blueprint for supplying 20 percent of the nation's electricity needs with wind energy by 2030.



The Sierra Club has been cheering on these developments. We see offshore wind as one part of a strategy to slow climate change through widespread and aggressive use of conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.

Then, on November 23, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced a "Smart from the Start" initiative to identify priority offshore wind leasing sites in advance, accelerating a leasing process that has been widely criticized as too cumbersome.

The Sierra Club has been cheering on these developments. We see offshore wind as one part of a strategy to slow climate change through widespread and aggressive use of conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.

Offshore Wind Guidelines

In October a Sierra Club task force, led by me, published guidelines for the siting of offshore renewable energy and transmission projects. The guidelines are intended to help our members evaluate project proposals and support those that we believe pose low risks to the environment. They are available on the Virginia Chapter's offshore wind web site, www.va4wind.com, together with an offshore wind PowerPoint presentation, video, news and other resources.

In October, members of the Virginia Chapter's renewable energy team attended the American Wind Energy Association conference on offshore wind in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where we witnessed the signing of the Cape Wind lease.

Conference attendance topped 1,500, almost four times that of the inaugural offshore wind conference two years ago at the University of Delaware. Ambitions have grown, too, and this year almost every Atlantic state, a handful of Great Lakes states, and Texas have projects in various stages of development, from still-under-study in the Southeast to full-speed-ahead in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Delaware, all

of which have enacted rigorous renewable portfolio standards.

Maryland Ready to Begin

In early November, Maryland joined the ranks of the most-committed states. At the state's urging, the Department of Interior issued a "Request for Interest" and a map of a proposed leasing area off Ocean City. Bluewater Wind, the developer of the Delaware wind farm, plans to respond. Maryland has a mandatory renewable portfolio standard of 20 percent by 2022.

Another sign of the excitement over offshore wind potential was the announcement in October by Google and transmission developer Trans-Elect of plans to build an offshore transmission "backbone" connecting wind farms in New Jersey and Delaware, and eventually Virginia. And here in the commonwealth, Northrup Grumman's Newport News shipyard announced a partnership with wind giant Gamesa to produce offshore wind turbines domestically.

Virginia Holding Back

These developments will help open the way for offshore wind farms here in Virginia, but cost concerns and the commonwealth's lack of a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) remain major stumbling blocks. Prices for electricity from Cape Wind, at 18.7 cents/kWh, and Delaware's Bluewater wind project, at 13.9 cents, are higher than prices utilities say they expect to pay for new fossil-fuel generation in Virginia.

Research by the Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium now suggests that offshore wind could be priced competitively with fossil fuels for Virginia if turbines are manufactured here, but utilities remain skeptical. And unlike the other

coastal states in the mid-Atlantic, Virginia has resisted passing a mandatory RPS that would require our utilities to negotiate for the purchase of power generated by an offshore wind farm. At the same time, Virginia taxpayers finance coal mining with about \$45 million annually in subsidies, making it harder for any renewable energy company to compete.

Yet industry members have shown a keen interest in Virginia's near-ideal location and conditions for offshore wind farms. They remain hopeful, as we do, that the McDonnell administration will put out a real welcome mat, or that Congress will adopt a national version of an RPS to get our turbines

How renewable energy industry could compete

The renewable industry would be competitive in a truly free market if there were a level playing field.

- If the cost of coal included the cost of asthma attacks and pre-mature deaths from air pollution as well as the costs of global warming and sea level rise caused by burning coal
- If the cost of oil and gasoline included the price of perpetual war in the Middle East to keep the oil flowing from regimes that treat women like chattel
- If the nuclear industry wasn't getting tens of billions of dollars in direct and indirect grants from the US government.

In Virginia alone over \$40 million of state taxpayers money subsidizes the coal industry each year. U.S. taxpayers have now assumed all responsibility for the handling, processing or more likely perpetual care of nuclear waste.
Excerpted from a recent letter Glen Besa wrote to the editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

From the Chair

Another good year for Virginia chapter



by Charles Price

I start this, the last “Notes” column of my four years as chair, with the customary review of the last year’s accomplishments. During 2010, the Virginia Chapter:

1. Won a two-year delay of Old Dominion Electrical Cooperative’s (ODEC) coal plant.
 2. With local citizens and the Shenandoah Group, defeated a hydra-fracking project in Rockingham County
 3. Generated 2,500 comments critical of the McDonnell Administration’s initial Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP) for the Chesapeake Bay.
 4. Bird-dogged Governor McDonnell at town hall meetings in August and September, raising environmental and energy issues.
 5. Bird-dogged Attorney General Cuccinelli at his town hall meetings and press conferences announcing his suit against the EPA regarding climate change.
 6. Successfully lobbied Obama Administration to ban oil drilling off the Virginia coast
 7. Launched three new major campaigns -- support of renewable energy, promotion of a smart transportation vision, restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.
 8. Issued the landmark “Power Failure” report outlining Virginia’s deficiencies in energy policy that received wide press coverage.
 9. Our “Hands Across the Sand” 2000-strong, statewide rally critical of off-shore drilling got national recognition.
 10. Joined forces with other factions to hold off widening of I-81 and replace with hauling trucks by rail.
 11. Helped win two special elections in Northern Virginia and five of seven others across the state this fall.
 12. Engaged in increased support of off-shore wind as Virginia’s best renewable energy resource.
 13. With the Piedmont Group’s leadership, opposed adding a third reactor at Lake Anna
 14. Lobbied our U.S. Senators to support legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 15. Submitted comments on the plan revisions for George Washington National Forest to promote protection for old growth forests, roadless areas, and wildlife habitat.
- With special thanks to our outstanding and highly committed issue and campaign chairs and our excellent staff, I look forward to seeing continued accomplishments and success of the Virginia Chapter.

Join other environmentalists at the Capitol on January 17 — VCN Lobby Day

In a few weeks Virginia’s General Assembly members, not to mention quite a few lobbyists, will head back to Richmond for what could be one of the most important legislative sessions in recent memory.

We face an immense opportunity and corresponding challenge this year to make our legislators take a lead, ensuring that Virginia has a vibrant and thriving future.

Make Conservation Count

Martin Luther King Day is your day to tell legislators what you expect from them this General Assembly session. Join Virginia Conservation Network and countless volunteers as we take our conservation priorities to the Capitol on January 17 at 9 a.m.

Whether you discuss energy efficiency, green building, natural resource protection, or other important conservation issues your legislators need to hear from you. Every year General Assembly members learn important information about how to do the right thing for the environment from citi-

zens like you. By taking the time to discuss your position on specific legislation you hold them accountable for their vote.

Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m.—be sure to pre-register so you can get to the coffee and snacks as quickly as possible and grab a good seat. Once we get underway at 9:30, you can expect details on priority legislation, tips on how to lobby, and access to a wealth of knowledgeable individuals. You’ll also have the opportunity to practice your talking points before taking them to your legislator. The most important moment of the day is when hundreds take the message to the Capitol - I hope you’ll join us for this vital day of action.

Visiting Your Lawmakers

Participants are strongly encouraged to make appointments prior to January 17 to visit their legislator, and to leave the workshop as necessary to keep appointments.

Contact Dana Roberts, dana@vcnva.org, or 804-644-0283.

Cancun conference diplomats put their heads in the sand to avoid confronting climate change



Sierra Club held a “heads in the sand” event on Cancun beach during the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in early December. Sierra Club delegates and Sierra Student Coalition members, representing delegates from the largest, wealthiest nations, posed on the beach with the delegates’ countries’ national flags pinned to their backs and their heads buried in the sand.

As Bill McKibben, renowned environmentalist, watched and a polar bear expired on the beach nearby, the ostriches from the developed world avoided the climate crisis with their heads in the sand.

Television cameras, a reporter from Reuters and a dozen press photographers clicked away at the spectacle.

Glen Besa and Tyla Matteson of the Virginia Chapter are among those representing the delegates in the photo.

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Editor

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The 2011 session of the Virginia General Assembly promises to be full of challenges and opportunities. With a renewed focus on Chesapeake Bay restoration, the ever present question of transportation funding and Governor McDonnell's goal of making Virginia the energy capital of the East Coast the environment will be at the center of debate. Virginia Sierra Club is focused on advancing sustainable solutions to all of these issues.

Promoting Clean Energy and Efficiency

There are two theories for meeting Virginia's energy needs. One mindset says the Commonwealth should build new power plants and burn whatever energy source is cheapest to the utility.

The Sierra Club believes this does not have to be Virginia's energy future. We are working for sustainable energy policies that promote energy efficiency and capitalize on Virginia's capacity for renewable energy.

First, the Commonwealth should look for ways to encourage energy efficiency by both our utilities and consumers. To advance energy efficiency among consumers we are supporting legislation that creates an inclining block rate structure for utility bills, which would reward consumers for using less energy. The price of energy would rise the more you consume.



Virginia State Legislative Session 2011

Sierra Club offers legislative solutions to state's environmental challenges

by J.R. Tolbert

Second, Virginia should level the playing field for renewable energy. To achieve this goal we are introducing a bill that will require the State Corporation Commission to consider external costs to public health and the environment when utilities submit their plans to meet Virginia's energy needs.

Finally, the Commonwealth needs to advance renewable energy solutions to meet our energy demands. We will advocate for legislation that grants the Virginia Resources Authority the ability to fund municipal renewable energy projects. Our vision is a Virginia where every school in the Commonwealth has a solar array on its roof and our schools are able to sell energy back to the utilities.

Restoring the Chesapeake Bay

For more than 25 years, Virginia has worked with the other states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to restore the Bay to a healthy state. Unfortunately, time and again our cleanup efforts have fallen short, and Virginia's waterways remain polluted. The 2011 legislative session represents an opportunity for Virginia to finally get it right and take the steps needed to heal the Bay.

The Virginia Chapter's number one priority in cleaning our waterways is to ensure that a sufficient dedicated funding source is created to fund best management practices. The current system is far short of the funding needed to institute cleanup practices, and the McDonnell Administration has not put forward any plan

to increase the state's commitment to the Chesapeake Bay.

One of the biggest factors in Virginia's failure to meet our pollution reduction goals is the state relies almost entirely on a voluntary approach which asks polluters to clean up their act. This system is not sufficient to achieving the needed pollution reductions to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

We will advocate for mandatory livestock exclusion from streams, removal of phosphorus from lawn fertilizers and immediate enactment of Virginia's updated stormwater management regulations.

Changing our Transportation Priorities

The dominant issue of the past decade in Virginia has been transportation funding. The past two administrations failed to find a solution to the Commonwealth's transportation crisis, and the McDonnell Administration appears set to continue this trend. This opens a door for a conversation on transportation priorities in the Commonwealth.

The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club is committed to advancing transportation choices and will be supporting legislative efforts to increase funding for mass transit, bike and pedestrian investments and freight rail. At the same time, we are focused on defeating initiatives that lead Virginia further down the path of simply laying more pavement in an attempt to solve our transportation problems.

Sierra Club must continue fighting Cuccinelli's extreme agenda

by J.R. Tolbert

The past year has seen a barrage of attacks on our environment from the McDonnell-Cuccinelli Administration. The Administration has been relentless in its push for offshore drilling, they've denied that climate change exists and attempted to persecute a scientist who researched it. They have fought tooth and nail against restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

Virginia Chapter-Sierra Club is committed to fighting these attacks. When Attorney General Cuccinelli filed a lawsuit questioning the science of global warming we organized a press conference where 17 legislators spoke out against his "flat earth" agenda. When Governor McDonnell failed to deliver on his campaign promise to promote clean energy jobs, we released a report that highlighted his hypocrisy.

Heading into the 2011 election year we know that the out-of-touch policies of the McDonnell Administration will be on full display. They will use special interest money to push a radical right wing agenda,

but we are ready to answer them with the power of people.

The Virginia Sierra Club PAC will be working throughout 2011 to train activists, to provide candidates with the knowledge they will need to defend our priorities, and to deploy campaign resources in the field to win our targeted elections. Our goal is clear, to build a majority in the Virginia General Assembly that will stand up for the Commonwealth's environment.

We've launched a fundraising campaign calling out Attorney General Cuccinelli for his climate denial with a bumper sticker, "Cuccinelli is a Hoax. Global Warming is Real." The stickers are available for a donation of \$10.

Together, we can stop the extreme agenda of the McDonnell-Cuccinelli Administration in its tracks. Every dollar you contribute helps us train one more activist, knock on one more door and make one more call to elect pro-environment candidates in Virginia.

J.R. Tolbert is assistant director Virginia Chapter Sierra Club.

PAC funds help elect pro-environment candidates

I support the Virginia Chapter's Political Action Committee Fund and the Chapter's efforts to assist candidates for elected office who are committed to protecting Virginia's and our nation's environment. Contribute on line at <http://votegreenva.com/donate/> or send a check, payable to Sierra Club-VA PAC to 422 E. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23219, in the amount of:

___ \$50 ___ \$75 ___ \$100* ___ \$250* ___ other*

(Your \$10 contribution gets you a Cuccinelli is a Hoax bumper sticker)

Instead of a check, please charge my ___ VISA ___ MasterCard ___ Discover for \$_____ amount.

Card number _____ Exp. Date _____ Security code _____

Billing name/address if different than above _____

If your Sierra Club-VA PAC contribution is \$100 or more*, Virginia law requires the name of your employer: _____, and your employer's town or city and state location: city: _____ state: _____. (If you are retired or unemployed, please indicate in the "employer" line above.)

___ I do not need a receipt

* Please indicate your email address or area code/phone number (if we need to contact you regarding the above information): _____



Roanoke Group endorses proposed wind energy project on Poor Mountain by Daniel Crawford

In 2007 the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club released its Citizens Energy Plan, which stated “Between 2010 and 2015 wind power could supply 400 megawatts of power onshore.”

In May, Invenergy began the permit process with the Federal Aviation Administration for a 15 to 18-unit, 37.5 to 45 MW wind farm on Poor Mountain in Roanoke County. Invenergy has already constructed 20 wind farms larger than this one.

After four months’ discussion and a site visit, the Roanoke Group voted to conditionally endorse the project.

Our most important findings were:

- The project is on private property zoned agricultural. It is forested but has been logged extensively in the past
- A major transmission line runs through the middle of the project.
- An extensive array of transmission and relay towers, with a service road, exist adjacent to the project.
- The project is 13 miles from the middle of the Roanoke metropolitan area, population 250,000. Sources of cement and other construction materials are nearby and the local G.E. plant makes turbine components.
- The project should have minimal impact on the local environment.

Appalachian Electric Power reports that about 89 percent of local electricity is



from coal-fired power plants. This project could generate enough electricity to replace 30,000 tons of coal per year.

Within the Roanoke Group’s resolution are numerous statutory and regulatory conditions Invenergy must meet:

- The project must not permanently compromise the quality of the state-designated Tier III waters of Bottom Creek. Invenergy’s mitigation plan must meet this criterion to the satisfaction of the Roanoke Group’s Ex Com.
- The project must not lead to the destruction of local plant or animal species that are threatened or endangered. Invenergy’s mitigation plan must meet this cri-

terion to the satisfaction of the Roanoke Group’s Ex Com.

- Invenergy must meet the existing statutory or regulatory requirements of all applicable authorities who have jurisdiction in this matter including, but not limited to, Roanoke County, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and Federal Aviation Administration, on matters concerning environmental impact, public safety, decommissioning provisions and construction standards.

The Roanoke Group supports the project because it would lead to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced particulate and

other emissions, and a reduced dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels. The project is consistent with Sierra Club priorities:

- The Sierra Club’s national board of directors has identified global warming as the greatest challenge to natural systems and therefore gives top priority to advocating measures, including onshore wind power, to address the challenge.
- We accept the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, as called for by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The transition away from fossil fuels, in combination with conservation and efficiency measures, would make that possible.
- Invenergy’s proposal has the potential to reduce carbon emissions by approximately 98,000 tons a year, the equivalent of taking about 20,000 cars off local roads.
- The proposed turbine sites appear on National Renewable Energy Laboratory maps to have Class 4 (Good) or better wind resources.
- The proposal meets the acceptability criteria of Sierra Club’s Wind Siting Advisory.
- National Sierra Club policy supports the direct use of wind power as an alternate source of energy.

Daniel Crawford is Roanoke Group conservation chair

Possibilities of high speed rail in Virginia discussed — planning has begun by Roger Diedrich

Is High Speed Rail coming to Virginia? We think the answer is yes, but with a caveat, it may come for your children but not for you. I attended the recent High Speed Rail (HSR) in the Southeast Conference where there were both highs and lows. HSR can provide the backbone of a broader transportation future that would be less dependent on petroleum.

Presenters from Amtrak, Federal Rail Administration (FRA), private railroads, Virginia Railway Express (VRE) and Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) spoke about both notable progress

and the immense challenges ahead. In 2008 the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act defined Amtrak’s system and included the Southeast corridor. To date, \$157 million has been granted to Virginia for planning and some construction. It focused on three federal projects, as follows.:

Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR)

The Richmond area to Washington D.C. project continues to receive support. \$75 million was awarded in 2009, and last October another \$45 million was granted to

do preliminary engineering and to prepare a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS.) This will be conducted from 2012—2020, permitting application for federal funds for construction and possibly service by 2030.

Richmond/Hampton Roads Project

FRA has selected a preferred alternative and Virginia funding will permit implementing conventional speed (up to 79 mph) service via Petersburg within three years. Planning for HSR (over 110 mph) will continue, but additional federal funds will be necessary to implement it.

SEHSR

Raleigh to Richmond Project

The EIS is being finalized for submission to FRA. A Virginia-North Carolina compact was formed, but it will have to compete with other HSR corridors for funding.

Recently there was celebration of the great success of the state-supported service from Lynchburg through Charlottesville and on to the northeast corridor after only one year. Additional study is considering a bus connection from Lynchburg to Roanoke.

A speaker from the Virginia Railway Express emphasized there are many aspects of service that the railroad does not control, including public behavioral characteristics, which he believes would have to adjust. The speaker from Norfolk Southern noted that most passenger service must be accommodated on tracks shared with freight and “it’s our tracks.” Their participation in this partnership is unenthusiastic.

Other speakers spoke of the need for communities to develop the station area compatible with rail service. A primary example is the light rail line being developed in Norfolk that could connect to HSR and thereby multiply its effectiveness.

A member of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce spoke of the success in planning a light rail network throughout their region. Transit ridership had increased by 47 percent between 2006 and 2008. A key to this was their success in passing, then defending in a referendum, a half-cent sales tax, a tax for transit only, which included support for operational expenses. *Roger Diedrich is Virginia Chapter chair of Smart Growth and Transportation*





Metal shelves on brackets below the windows reflect light into the classrooms. Solar panels on the roof heat water for the school's kitchen.

Virginia Beach school with LEED Silver rating serves as teaching laboratory for green building and heating practices

by Eileen Levandoski

Lucky Sierrans with the Chesapeake Bay group were awarded a private tour of the new Renaissance Academy by Virginia Beach public schools' green building guru, J. Tim Cole.

The place that's home for 1,600 students enrolled in the school division's alternative education programs boasts the following:

- It's one of only 60 schools in the U.S. slated to achieve a U.S. Green Building Council LEED Silver rating.
- It's the first building in the school division to use rainwater reclamation for toilet flushing. A rainwater collection system stores water from the roof in a 50,000-gallon cistern to be used for flushing toilets. The school saves approximately 3.8 million gallons of treated water per year.
- The building uses a geothermal heat pump for heating and cooling.
- 16,000 square feet of the roof is "green."
- Solar collectors installed on the roof heat water in the school's kitchen.
- Solar tubes extend up through the building to the roof so that daylight is reflected into interior spaces.

These are all great things, but what really separates out the Renaissance Academy is how this great environmental design is dedicated to the school's programmatic design.

Metal shelves installed on brackets below the windows bounce natural light into specially designed classrooms. As Tim Cole, the school's project manager remarked, "There have been all kinds of studies that show kids learn much better in natural daylight situations."

"You know what's nice?" he said in an interview with the *Virginian-Pilot* while

unpacking basketball hoops in the school's gym. "There aren't any lights on. We're in the middle of the school and we don't need any lights."

Actually, the entire school is a walking classroom. Rather than being tucked away in a dark corner, the mechanical room is visible to students via a window so they can observe various environmental mechanical processes.

In the cafeteria, a see-through rain leader is used to drain rain water to the cistern to be recycled. A cut out window on a large pipe filling with rainwater is visible to the kids.

All of the system functions, including how energy is being used, can be monitored from a kiosk in the school and they can be accessed by students anywhere around the country or around the world via the Internet.

What's most amazing about this school

is, as little as five years ago, a school like this would have been too cost prohibitive. But as Cole points out, as more and more local governments build schools and other buildings, LEED certification will be the norm, and contractors interested in bidding these jobs will be more and more forced to rise to the occasion.

A level of retraining for both contractors and subcontractors will be almost mandatory in order to stay in the competition for these construction jobs.

And it's not just retraining for today's contractors but also training for tomorrow's contractors. Green building also finds its way into Renaissance Academy's tech ed programs. Students are not trying their hand at building just an average ordinary home, but rather a green home.

Eileen Levandoski is Hampton Roads organizer



Daylight coming into the two-story windows in the front hallway provides light back into the building on two floors.

Early focus of Beyond Coal campaign on Potomac River Coal Plant in Alexandria

by Phillip Ellis

Continuing our success to move this country Beyond Coal, the Sierra Club is phasing out existing coal plants by targeting the oldest and dirtiest plants in the nation for retirement. Built in 1949, with a record of environmental violations, the Potomac River Coal Plant in the heart of Old Town Alexandria sits at the top of our list.

For nearly a decade, the Mount Vernon Group has worked tirelessly with the City of Alexandria to transition the plant from a heavy polluting eyesore to a site the community can value and cherish. While our efforts produced strong results, such as a decrease in operating capacity and an agreement to lower pollution from the plant, our work remains unfinished.

The plant is owned and operated by GenOn Energy Inc., a recent merger of the Mirant Corporation and RRI Energy. Although GenOn's new website endorses a "commitment to safety, the environment, operational excellence and the communities in which we operate," recent history suggests otherwise. The company vehemently fought the city over repeated air quality violations from the plant, and agreed to the current settlement that reduces pollution only after a lengthy, legal battle.

GenOn is a major buyer of coal extracted by the devastating mountaintop removal. GenOn's repeated dumping of toxins from its Brandywine Coal Combustion Waste Landfill into the Mattaponi Creek in Brandywine, Maryland has resulted in a civil lawsuit and a notice of intent to sue by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

It is this "commitment to excellence" from companies such as GenOn that makes moving Beyond Coal more important than ever. Imagine a future without coal, and what it could mean for the waters of the Potomac River, as a new gateway to Alexandria or as a symbol of a new era in Washington D.C.

Alexandria's website warns "the City Council and the community have continued concerns about (the plant's) ongoing operations." The Sierra Club believes you should, too. Over the next few months you will be given many opportunities to become engaged in our campaign to retire the Potomac River Coal Plant.

As a first step, we invite you to send a letter to the current CEO of GenOn, Edward R. Muller, to demand a Clean Energy Future for the holidays at <http://action.sierraclub.org/RetireMirant>.

To heat house addition with solar or not – a difficult and complex decision

by Brian Jablonski

For a number of reasons, including a growing family and a deteriorating screened porch, my wife and I put an addition onto the house. We wanted to do this in an environmentally responsible way. This is the fourth in a series of articles containing some of the lessons we learned along the way.

Like many readers of *Old Dominion Sierran*, we are actively trying to find ways to reduce our carbon footprint. Our hope was not to increase our carbon footprint while increasing the square footage of our home.

An energy audit we had prior to construction suggested a couple efficiencies we could add to our home. We also decided to add solar panels.

As the true costs of carbon based fuels (financial, environmental, and social) become more apparent, many people are searching for alternatives. Solar is an attractive (we might even say sexy) alternative. Solar energy, deriving energy from sunlight, can be passive or active.

Passive solar, for the most part, involves design issues such as positioning of windows and selection of materials for retaining heat derived from light energy. Passive design can also allow for natural lighting instead of electrical lights. For our addition we used south facing windows placed for optimal lighting.

Active solar is used to generate electricity (photovoltaic) and to heat water (solar hot water.) Installing a photovoltaic system for a standard home costs over \$20,000 and provides only a fraction of the electricity most families use. A common estimate for pay off of a photovoltaic system is 20 to 30 years.

Solar hot water can provide nearly all the hot water needed by a family at a cost of \$3,000 to \$5,000. Depending on how you generate hot water, savings from this system can pay off in 10 to 20 years.

We installed a solar hot water system with three panels, hoping to use some of the hot water generated to heat the addition through radiant floor heat. This was an experiment, as few people in our area were trying to use solar hot water for household use and for heating.

To be honest, our savings are less than we had hoped. From April to September all our hot water is solar. From October to March we heat some water with solar, most going to household use and a little to heat the new space. However, with a gas-heated tank to back-up the solar, we do not go without hot water during the colder months.

I would still encourage people to consider active solar, just don't expect big savings -- you never recover your cost. (Consult a professional when considering solar panels and ask what percent of your family's electricity or hot water the system will provide).

Before installing solar panels, do the easy stuff that will pay for itself in a reasonably short period. Make sure your attic, walls and crawl spaces are well insulated. Switch to compact florescent (CF) or LED lighting. Turn off lights. Turn the thermostat down for heating in the winter and up for cooling in the summer. Try to walk, bike, or take public transit to work.

Finally, if you are building a new house, learn how much it would cost to add the solar panels. It is easier to add them to a house under construction than to a finished home.



Solar panels on roof of Jablonski home heat the household water most of the year.



Ruth Amundsen lives the talk. Her home has many green features, including the green roof where she stands here. Photo by Vicki Cronos of the *Virginian-Pilot*

Taking the Bull by the Horns

By Eileen Levandoski

For Ruth McElroy Amundsen, just wishing Dominion Power would develop more renewable energy is not enough. She's battling the utility giant from the inside out. She bought stock in Dominion Resources, and for the last few years has introduced resolutions at annual shareholder meetings requiring Dominion to more aggressively produce electricity from renewable sources like wind and solar.

"They are too reliant on coal," Amundsen told the *Virginian-Pilot* in a recent article highlighting her work. "The way they make decisions is not in the long-term interest of Virginia, this country or planet Earth, for that matter."

Her resolutions requiring 20 percent renewable energy goals have ultimately been defeated, but Ruth stands undeterred.

"I think they need more input from people like me," she said. "I don't really think they have a spirited discussion about these issues. We need to start building a better future – not later, not when the 'eco-

nomics are right.'"

Recently, Ruth set her sights on Governor McDonnell's Energy Conference, where hundreds of Virginia's energy movers and shakers would be assembled. In hopes of inspiring them, she donated more than 100 books of *Coming Clean* by Michael Brune, *Plan B 4.0* by Lester Brown, *Eaarth* by Bill McKibben, *Our Choice* by Al Gore, *Hot, Flat and Crowded* by Thomas Friedman, *Big Coal* by Jeff Goodell, and *Coal River* by Michael Shnayerson.

Needless to say, our Sierra Club table where these free books were distributed was indeed very popular and allowed us to engage many of the energy business owners attending the conference.

Ruth is an aerospace engineer and mother of two whose home in Norfolk is outfitted with many green building design elements, including a "green roof," solar panels, and the latest and greatest in energy efficient appliances

Too Much Time On My Hands

by Bob Egbert

I've been commuting to work on foot for a little over 12 years now. I often think of something someone said to me not long after I started. When I told him I walked to work, and it took me over an hour and a half each way he said in a joking manner, "You have way too much free time on your hands."

Though the remark was meant as a joke it raises an important question, doesn't it?

If I drove to work it would take me about

25 minutes, round trip. I would "save" more than two hours time. What would I do with those "savings?"

If someone "spends" three hours driving to and from work each day, does that person have too much free time?

We all save a lot of time with our fossil fuel-powered technology, and

hope that someday we'll be able to trade it in for renewable energy technology.

Couldn't we just spend more time now and stop saving so much of it?



Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) a failure and mishmash from the get-go

by David Bernard

Governor McDonnell's answer to the problem of water pollution in Virginia is avoidance.

After two big Chesapeake Bay clean-up plan shortfalls over 25 years, the McDonnell administration prefaces its third effort with "This rush to completion has caused concerns..."

They put \$36.4 million in the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) for an effort they say will cost \$7 billion, but "cannot guarantee what additional funding will be provided by our General Assembly."

Without asking for any more state funding, the WIP "may be subject to... federal funding to assist in covering these massive new unfunded mandates."

The message from Gov. McDonnell seems to be that Virginians don't want clean water, the Feds are making us clean it.

To further explain its inaction, the administration attacks the computer model of the Chesapeake Bay waters, despite the clear explanation given by Dr. Carl Hershner of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS.) The Chesapeake Bay is the most studied water body in the world, but that is not enough for an administration seeking delay.

Instead of using known technology now to reduce pollution, the administration wants to take "advantage of new technology and low-cost methods that may become available."

The WIP outlines farm Best Management Practices (BMP) but neither requires nor funds them. The Farm Bureau esti-

mates fencing costs to keep livestock out of streams at \$800 million. For all farm BMP the administration is willing to give \$24.3 million in 2012, increasing gradually to provide a total of \$181 million.

The WIP erroneously claims "significant progress has been achieved" on the problem of polluted runoff from Virginia's ever-increasing built-up areas. Actually, while agriculture and sewage treatment plants (STP) have made progress, runoff from development has been increasing.

The WIP says "new statewide Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) stormwater management regulations, when implemented, should address the sediment and nutrient and ... (water runoff) quantity issues." It asserts that these regulations become effective in December 2011, yet DCR Director David Johnson says they will not be enforced until 2014.

Meanwhile the Virginia Homebuilders Association, referring to "hundreds of thousands" in planning costs for projects without financing or a start date, wants to continue to build to old inadequate standards until 2019. To the extent that projects do not comply with strict standards, the burden on other polluters is that much greater, if the Chesapeake Bay waters are to be clean.

The WIP does close loopholes for small STP, but makes no provision for requiring or funding the next needed levels of nutrient removing technology. Government can either pay for pollution removal technology, or require it at polluters' expense. Virginia's plan does neither.

If good for brookies, is it good for boaters?

by David Bernard

Brook trout, the Chesapeake region's only native trout species, once lived in 5,500 mountain watersheds from Maine to Georgia. Now only five percent of these streams support healthy brook trout populations.

Habitat loss depends on location. Forest loss leads to warmer water and polluted runoff, along with loss of tree litter that supports trout prey. Cattle drop manure and damage streambanks. Acid mine drainage from past coal mining and gas drilling hurt the streams.

The Chesapeake restoration strategy calls for upgrading 58 local watersheds from "reduced" to "healthy."

Plans include replanting forest and fencing

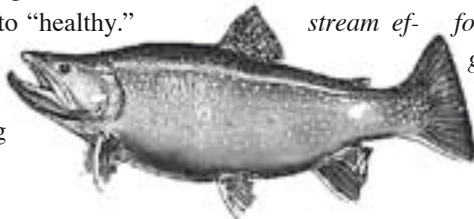
out cattle. Some sites require an in-stream makeover. Land use practices have left the streams wide, shallow, and possibly dammed – lacking the rhythm of pools, riffles, and runs that brookies like.

But whitewater boaters may not like all the changes designed to help the trout. What will the "23 instream features ... being constructed to recreate more natural flow" in Bedford County, PA be like? We hope more friendly than the small dams being removed.

And what if a streamside road were taken out? Good for the fish, hard on the back.

David Bernard is Virginia Chapter Water Quality Chair.

This article excerpted from "New angle for stream efforts: If it's good for trout, it's good for Bay" by Lara Lutz in September 2010 Bay Journal



Foster Hardiman (l. to r.), JR Tolbert, Kristen Hughes Evans, Ann Jurczyk and Ann Jennings pack up public comments to the Governor. Environmentalists-submitted over 7,500 public comments asking the Governor to strengthen his clean up plan for the bay and our local waterways

Stop the Delay - Clean up the Bay

by Mary Rafferty

Over the fall, the Sierra Club worked hard on our Fight for the Bay campaign to clean up the rivers, lakes and streams that flow into the Chesapeake Bay.

Governor McDonnell submitted a plan for Virginia to clean up the pollution of our local waterways leading into the Chesapeake Bay. The plan read more like a road map with a point A, a point B and nothing in between. It lacked specifics and basic assurance that the Bay would finally be cleaned of its damaging pollutants.

Recognizing that the McDonnell administration had a misguided commitment to the status quo rather than a dedication to a healthy Bay, the Sierra Club put together a campaign to increase pressure on Governor McDonnell asking him to "Stop the Delay - Clean up the Bay."

Chesapeake Bay Action Team

We couldn't take on this fight alone. Volunteers from across the Commonwealth pitched in to ensure the voices of concerned Virginians were heard.

The first week of October, more than 100 Sierra Club volunteers attended public hearings held by the Environmental Pro-

tection Agency (EPA) to express the need for clean water.

Following the meetings, the Governor's plan was open for a 45-day public comment period. Our Chesapeake Action team hit the streets attending seafood festivals, neighborhood block parties and church groups asking friends, family members and neighbors to submit a public comment on the bay. The team's hard work pushed the Sierra Club past our goal, ultimately collecting 2,695 public comments urging Governor McDonnell to strengthen his cleanup plan for the bay.

Join the Fight

The McDonnell Administration submitted a revised plan November 30. While an improvement on the initial plan, it still falls short of holding polluters accountable for cleaning up our local rivers, lakes and streams.

Chesapeake Bay Action Team will continue to work to ensure that those who pollute Virginia's rivers, lakes and streams pay to clean up Virginia's rivers, lakes and streams.

If interested in joining the team contact mary.rafferty@sierraclub.org.

Mary Rafferty is Virginia Chapter Sierra Club grassroots organizing manager.

Chesapeake Bay Action Team

Fran Adams	Barbara and Ted Depuy	Ellis James	Chandana Sapparapu
Gayatri Ankem	Christy Fisher	Katie Kaiser	Charlie Shelton
David Bernard	Jay Ford	Dotty Laverdiere	Keith & Ellen Shelton
Manish Bhatt	Joanne Fridley	Christine Llewellyn	Karla Smith
Jimmy and Betty Bradshaw	Amanda Gaddy	Brandon Lucado	Cathy Strickler
Chris Bryan	Nick Geer	Tyla Matteson	Randie Trestrail
Daniel Carawan	Mary Gorka	Debra McElroy	Patricial VanOhlen
Regan Cistola	Ralph Grove	Ann Moore	Eric Vrable
Joe Cook	Gloria Haislip	Ed Nichols	Catherine Welsh
John Cruickshank	Judy Hinch	Terra Pascaros	Hannah Wiegard
Tom Ellis	Dottie Holtz	Kelly Place	Joyce Wilkinson
		Hannah Rumsey	Barbara Williamson



Toms Knob, a newly inventoried roadless area in George Washington National Forest, as seen during a hike to adjacent Barbour's Creek Wilderness in the Jefferson National Forest. Photo by Sherman Bamford

New draft plan to show Forest Service vision for GW National Forest in Virginia

by Sherman Bamford

A draft of the new George Washington National Forest plan will be released in January. The stakes are high. The draft plan will tell us much about the Forest Service's vision for the largest expanse of green space in Virginia.

Will the Forest Service give us a proactive strategy for saving plants, animals, and biological communities in the face of 21st century climate change? Will it adequately protect roadless areas, trails, and drinking water? Will hydrofracking, a dangerous new gas drilling technology, be permitted? Or will the Forest Service place a greater emphasis on logging, roadbuilding, and habitat destruction?

Following the release, the public will have 90 days to comment before the Forest Service releases its final 15-year plan.

The plan revision is entering its final stages. Take time to send a personal comment during the upcoming 90-day comment period. This is one of your last opportunities to speak for the Forest.

Once more details are known, the Sierra Club will post information at <http://vasierraclub.org/our-issues-2/gwnf/>

Comments can be sent to: Maureen T. Hyzer, Attn: George Washington Plan Revision, George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, 5162 Valleypointe Parkway, Roanoke, VA 24019-3050, or comments-southern-george-washingtonjefferson@fs.fed.us.

Sierra Club has spoken loudly and clearly for a sound climate change strategy, Virginia Mountain Treasure Area protection and keeping our watersheds healthy. In November, the Virginia Chapter submitted comments during the lead-up to the draft plan, including:

"In the coming years, rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could contribute to rising temperatures, increased insect damage, erratic rain patterns, and other extreme weather events in Virginia and the George Washington National Forest. Climate change is an emergency -- we must carefully plan a response to this threat.

"All alternatives considered by the Forest Service should:

- Include a comprehensive climate change adaptation strategy informed by the most up-to-date science, including identification and designation of core areas, corridors, and analysis of the connectivity of the Forest with other lands
- Conduct an audit of activities permitted in the plan to ensure that, when compared to actual activities over the last decade (2001-2010), plan-permitted activities do not increase carbon emissions and do not decrease carbon sequestration
- Incorporate monitoring and adaptive management into the Plan to ensure that if climate-related conditions or indicators are worse than expected, appropriate stronger measures will be applied
- Conduct vulnerability assessments across the Forest, to inform forest planning and long-range activities. This must be the baseline for all alternatives."

How close the Forest Service comes to a strong conservation alternative in these final stages remains to be seen. Those who would like to see increased logging and increased roadbuilding have already been active in the plan revision process.

It is important for every one of us and our friends, neighbors, and allies, to get involved. Let's protect the George Washington National Forest.

Omnibus Public Lands Bill could be sunk due to harmful pro-mineral provisions

by Sherman Bamford

The Omnibus Public Lands Bill of 2010 is a package of wilderness and land protection bills from Tennessee, West Virginia, Washington, Oregon, New Mexico, California, Colorado, and other states. Potentially, the bill also includes legislation to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay.

It is expected to be extremely difficult to get any legislation through at this time. Potential harmful pro-mineral development provisions in Alaska and Arizona threaten to sink the whole bill.

There have been last-minute efforts to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides federal money for conservation land acquisition from federal oil leases. The program has never been

fully funded since the 1960s when the program was established.

I was in Washington D.C. during Sierra Club's Resilient Habitats Lobby Week in June 2010, speaking for a strong Omnibus Public Lands Bill and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Other Virginia Chapter members are encouraged to get involved during the 2011 Lobby Week.



Chesapeake Bay Group hikers backpack in the Shenandoah during crisp fall weekend

By Chris Bryan

Eight hikers from Hampton Roads set off on the night of October 22. Under the light of a full moon they wandered through the forest and up the mountain to find a glorious, large, grassy campsite where they spent a very windy evening on the side of Cold Mountain.

Saturday morning, hikers arose early to fix their backpacking breakfast -- varieties of food included oatmeal, grits and pancakes.

Saturday was a gorgeous fall day. Leaves were changing and the air crisp. The hikers climbed to the top of Mount Pleasant to enjoy huge views of the mountains to both the east and west. Because of the gorgeous views and perfect weather

they had lots of company up there, including many four-legged creatures.

After a picnic lunch atop Mt. Pleasant the hikers followed the rocky trail back to camp. A large campfire was made and hikers got to spend time enjoying each other, s'mores and wine -- always a nice bonus.

After an uphill battle Sunday on the Appalachian Trail against Cold Mountain, the awesome Sierra Club group celebrated their victory with Twix and Snickers. Because of the cold wind, however, the celebration was short-lived. They continued the celebration by stopping at a great all-you-can eat Chinese buffet on the way home.

Most of these hikers were brand new to backpacking. Our hats off to them.



Ana Lizzette Moret-Colon, (l.to r.) Leslye, Chris Bryan, Edward Wilson and Rosanne Scott pause at the top of a ridge in the Shenandoah Mountains. Photo by Chris Bryan

Wilderness First Aid certification courses planned for three areas of state

Wilderness First Aid certification courses will be taught in three areas of the state this year.



The 16-hour course is designed for the adventurous who may find themselves away from immediate help and may have to rely on their own skills to help others and to survive and thrive if an emergency should arise.

The course, recognized by the American Camping Association as the minimal standard for camp counselors – both day hiking and overnight hiking leaders, is taught by Matthew Rosefsky, Wilderness EMT (NREMT-B) and open to all.

Schedule of classes

January 22-23

Charlottesville - Ivy Creek Natural Area

April 2-3

Norfolk - Old Dominion University

May 21-22

Charlottesville - Ivy Creek Natural Area

Advanced registration is required. Cost is \$165.

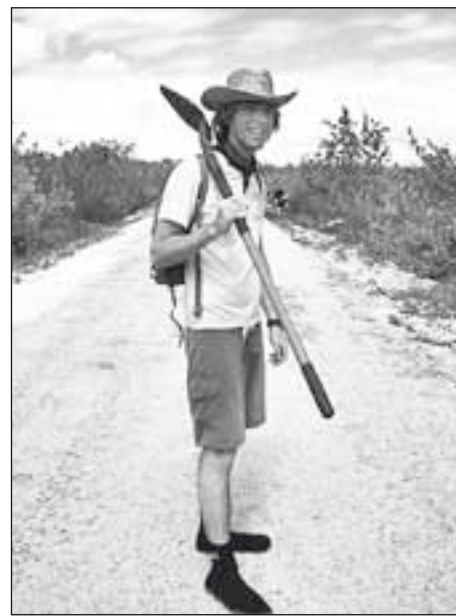
For more info go to www.outdoorsocial.com/wfa.htm

Two-part backpacking course to be held March 26, April 29 in Newport News

The Chesapeake Bay Group will host a two-part Backpacking 101 course. The first session is on March 26 at Newport News Park. The second part will be a backpacking trip on the weekend of April 29. Camping and overnight accommodations are available at Newport News Park for those traveling long distances.

We will cover all the basics of backpacking, including gear, picking the right pack, what to eat on the trail, navigation, planning a trip, leaving no trace, basic first aid and much more. Cost is \$10. The course is co-sponsored by the Obsessive Compulsive Backpackers group.

For more information visit <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/cbg/outings.html> or contact CBG outings chair Chris Bryan at theshoelesswanderer@gmail.com or 757-202-3331.



Ian Christmas

A Young Man and the Outdoors

by J.R. Tolbert

Ian Christmas was an avid outdoorsman during his short lifetime. He started camping with family when he was only four years old, and was active in Scouting from Cub Scouts through the young adult program Venturing. It was Ian's love for the outdoors that led his family to suggest to friends that they make memorial contributions to the Virginia Sierra Club after his untimely death.

I never met Ian, but a few months ago I had the pleasure of speaking to his father about Ian's love of the outdoors. His life reminded me of mine, and how I came to have such a deep appreciation for our environment. He visited two of the Boy Scout's High Adventure Bases in the Florida Keys and at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. He would go hunting with his father just to sit in the woods and enjoy the natural beauty and peace it provided.

Ian was a remarkable young man who seemed to grow closer to nature at every turn. As a student at William and Mary he was active in the outdoors club, even going so far as to take a winter camping trip to the Adirondack Mountains and serving as a leader in the Youth Conservation Corps of Virginia.

The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club would like to extend our sincerest sympathies to the Christmas family as they continue to cope with the loss of a loved one, and we want them to know that we will work tirelessly to protect the natural beauty of our landscape that Ian so much enjoyed.

OUTINGS

by Joe Apple

While some people think of skiing, others think of hiking

I have a friend who, for the last several years, has been living his dream of being a ski instructor in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. This fulfills his fantasy, not mine.

While he's demonstrating his expertise as a ski instructor, I'm collecting outings catalogs that present me with a cornucopia of outings throughout the world. I keep looking and dreaming through these catalogs during the winter months, and early in the spring, I make my decision.

Unfortunately, my age and physical condition are making it more difficult to separate hiking reality from hiking fantasy. This is OK. As Clint Eastwood said, "You got to know your limitations."

I mention this observation because many people so limit themselves they don't experience the enjoyment of being outdoors and enjoying its wonders. When they consider outings, they think of some exotic land as Nepal, or a distant part of the U.S., such as Hawaii, or the difficult terrain of the Rocky mountains.

They give up on outings because of their self perceived limitations. However, they have many opportunities to enjoy outings within Virginia. They can join a Sierra Club outing, a group outing with friends, or an independent outing.

When the Great Falls group conducted outings, I knew a lady who was a sales person for a department store and spent eight hours a day on her feet. When she told me she wasn't fit enough to go on an outing, I ridiculed her, saying I agreed she couldn't possibly go on an outing. A short time later I went on a Sierra Club outing on the Skyline Drive and there she was. Later, she told me that she thoroughly enjoyed the outing and I was responsible for her participation.

I will be looking through a number of catalogs, including *Sierra Magazine*, trying to locate an outing I will enjoy and can complete, while my friend is a ski instructor at his elite ski resort in Colorado.

After spending the winter trying to save the environment, wouldn't you like to spend the spring and summer enjoying it?

In the next issue I will provide information on outings throughout Virginia that range between leisurely outings through the woods to outings in the mountains.

Another celebration of Saving the Mattaponi



Kayakers celebrated the defeat of the King William Reservoir during a September 18 outing on the Mattaponi River. They travelled upstream with the incoming tide from Sandy Point State Forest to Garnetts Creek and Scotland Landing. They paddled in the area near Scotland Landing to see where the proposed reservoir's pumping station would have been located.

Photo by Patrick Wamsley

Community revitalization in Richmond Cannon Creek Greenway



Hundreds of community and neighborhood volunteers remove trash from ravine.

by Charles Price

Cannon Creek Greenway, an initiative of the City of Richmond and its Northside communities, consists of 1.4 miles of heavily-wooded Cannon Creek ravine, located adjacent to the north-south Richmond-Henrico Turnpike, a narrow, two-lane street.

The Greenway Project is a community revitalization initiative first envisioned by City Council Vice President Ellen Robertson in 2006. Leadership is shared by Third District Councilman, Chris Hilbert, and supported by the full council and city administration.

The Greenway planning over the past

four years consisted of community meetings and workshops with representatives of civic associations, the city administration, municipal departments, college and graduate students, environmental agencies, and non-government organizations, including the Sierra Club.

A planning charrette was conducted in October 2009 by faculty and students of the Virginia Tech Landscape Architectural Program. The study and plan of the greenway site and its bike and pedestrian trail are being completed by a private contractor.

In January 2009, 100 volunteers conducted the first cleanup of the ravine and

adjacent roadside to remove years of accumulated trash. Twenty tons of debris, including 400 tires, were collected. During another cleanup this past March, 200 volunteers completed removal of the remaining accumulated trash in preparation for the greenway's initial construction phase.

The initiative's volunteer and City leaders discovered a little-known service provided to localities by the Army National Guard. Free-of-charge construction is available for a variety of needed community facilities by Guard engineering units, as long as the requested service meets the Guard's training needs.

In December last year, the City submitted an "Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Request for Military Assistance" through the Governor's office and the Virginia Adjutant General asking the 276th Engineering Battalion of the Virginia Guard to build the Greenway's bike/pedestrian trail and park facilities.

The City received notice in March that its request had been approved and the Virginia Guard completed the first phase of the Greenway's construction in July. They removed a half-mile of matted underbrush, vines and dead trees from the floor of the ravine.

In addition to serving the existing Northside Richmond neighborhoods, the Greenway's bike/pedestrian trail and park will provide family-oriented recreational activities for residents of the Richmond Rehabilitative Housing Authority's (RRHA) new mixed-income, 300-unit housing community scheduled to begin construction in 2012.



Twenty tons of trash and 400 tires were removed from the ravine.

It is envisioned that RRHA's housing initiative and the Cannon Creek Greenway will accrue to the social, economic, and physical revitalization of Northside Richmond. The bike/ped trail will be an alternative transportation route for bicycle commuting to downtown. The Greenway will also serve as an ecological laboratory for science classes of nearby schools.

The East Coast Greenway—the Maine-to-Florida bicycle and pedestrian trail—is currently considering a north entrance route into Richmond via Cannon Creek. If the Cannon Creek entrance is chosen, the tourist industry of the city's downtown and riverfront will greatly benefit.

Charles Price, Virginia Chapter chair, is one of the leaders of this project.



Army National Guardsmen take a lunch break from hours of free work their construction unit gave clearing brush from the bottom of the ravine.

All photos by Steve Skinner

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

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Chesapeake Bay: Terra Pascaros

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Piedmont: John Cruickshank

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Roanoke: Bill Modica

540-387-2782; modicabill2@aol.com

Shenandoah: Ralph Grove

540/433-1323; ralph.grove@gmail.com

Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO):

Michael Darzi, 301/580-9387; Michael.Darzi@saic.com

Thunder Ridge: In Reorganization

York River: Tyla Matteson, 804/275-6476

tmatteson1@mindspring.com

Restore Charlottesville's Historic Rock Hill Gardens



The Piedmont Group and the Coalition to Preserve McIntire Park are urging the City of Charlottesville to restore the Rock Hill Gardens and incorporate them into the adjoining McIntire Park. They received important support in November from both the Virginia Department of

Historic Resources and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Professor Daniel Bluestone (second from right) of the University of Virginia School of Architecture explains the historic significance of the gardens to a group of interested citizens.

Photos by John Cruickshank

Piedmont Group announces Winter Events

January 15 - Fernbrook Hike

Join us for an easy-to-moderate hike through attractive woods in The Nature Conservancy's Fernbrook Natural Area in northern Albemarle. We will meet at 2 p.m. in the Pantops area and return about 4:30 p.m. Wear winter gear (hiking boots, hats and gloves) and bring water.

To reserve your place and get directions, call Deborah at (434) 296-9637. In case of inclement weather or icy conditions, call for an update.

January 19 - Sierra Club Program

Ornithologist Dan Bieker will speak on native bird species and where to find them in central Virginia. 7 p.m. St. Mark Lutheran Church.

March 2 - Sierra Club Program

"Shenandoah National Park: The Beauty and the Challenge"

National Park Ranger Jim Schaberl will discuss the wonders of our nearest national park and measures being taken to protect it for future generations. 7 p.m. St. Mark Lutheran Church

For information about any of these activities, contact John at (434) 973-0373 or jercruickshank4@gmail.com.

Roanoke Group members reminded to vote in ExCom election

Members of the Roanoke Group (counties of Roanoke, Botetourt, Franklin, Rockbridge, Alleghany, Bath, Patrick, Henry and the independent cities within their boundaries) are eligible to vote in the annual election to select members of the Executive Committee of the group.

Ballots, candidate statements, and voting instructions are available on the Roanoke Group web site <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/roanoke/>.

If you do not have access to the Internet, or if you would prefer to receive a ballot by regular mail, please contact Mark

McClain (540)387-0930, mcclainmark@comcast.net, 907 Greenbrier Ct, Salem, VA 24153.

The voting deadline has been extended to January 8, 2011.



Explore and enjoy and protect the planet



You're barking up the wrong tree.
The Sierra Club and over 1.6 million Americans fought hard to protect the last 60 million acres of pristine, roadless areas in our National Forests. But still, logging trucks continue to roll in. Logging in National Parks provides less than 4% of our wood products. So why not recycle, reuse and help save our beautiful National Parks?

Bark with us. Join Sierra Club.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone (____) _____
Email _____

Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.
Please charge my: Visa Mastercard AMEX

Cardholder Name _____
Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____/____/____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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 52766, Boulder, CO 80322-2766 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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2011 – Despite Challenges, an Exciting Year Ahead

By Glen Besa

With a Governor and Attorney General busy working to gut our environmental laws, 2011 will be a challenging year. But Sierra Club does not plan to just play defense.

The Virginia Chapter has exciting plans to go on the offensive on several fronts. First, our Clean Energy, Bright Future Campaign promoting efficiency and renewable energy.

In June, Sierra Club is organizing a major offshore wind conference in Virginia Beach and our plans are to ramp up support for our Cool Cities efforts at the local level. The decision of Spanish wind turbine developer Gamesa to partner with Northrup-Grumman in Newport News to develop a new offshore wind turbine was exciting news that broke in

September. The decision of the U.S. Department of Interior to expedite the offshore wind permit process announced

in December was more good news. Sierra Club plans to press the McDonnell Administration to offer more support from the state in the coming year.

In 2011, we will continue to fight Big Coal with our Beyond Coal Campaign. With any luck, our Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition just might kill the proposed ODEC coal plant this coming year, as we also ramp up efforts to shut down ancient, dirty coal burners, like the Potomac River plant in Alexandria.

Pressing the coal industry from cradle to grave, we will

While Governor McDonnell speaks of new money for new roads with gimmicks like the sale of liquor stores and imaginary oil royalties, Sierra Club believes the first question that must be asked is what should a 21st Century transportation plan look like?

continue to partner with Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards to oppose mountaintop removal coal mining while we support tighter regulation of coal ash by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Look for progress in 2011 as we carry the fight to Big Coal in Virginia.

Any one who drives, walks, bikes or takes the train in Virginia knows the sad state of our transportation system. While Governor McDonnell speaks of new money for new roads with gimmicks like the sale of liquor stores and imaginary oil royalties, Sierra Club

believes the first question that must be asked is what should a 21st Century transportation plan look like? You really need

a plan before you start spending money.

Sierra Club's Green Transportation/Beyond Oil Campaign will begin to answer this question when we issue a report with our vision of 21st century transportation solutions later this year. President Obama's decision in December to delay any offshore drilling off the Atlantic Coast for at least seven years gets us one small step closer to breaking our dangerous addiction to oil.

In 2010, we launched our Fight for the Bay Campaign to press the EPA to take bold action

to clean up the Chesapeake and all the beautiful rivers of Virginia that feed the Bay. Sadly, the biggest obstacle to progress on the Bay will be the McDonnell Administration that proposed a do nothing Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP) in September, which earned a grade of "F" from Sierra Club and was promptly rejected by the EPA.

The Fight for the Bay moves to the local level in the summer of 2011 when we'll be calling on you to tell your local government administrations to support the clean-up and protection of local streams and rivers that feed the Bay.

2011 promises to be an exciting and busy year for the Sierra Club in Virginia. We invite you to get involved.

Glen Besa is Executive Director of Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

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