

Old Dominion Sierran



July/August 2007

Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

virginia.sierraclub.org



The battle over energy and global warming in the U.S. Congress is especially intense this session—it promises to be a long, hot summer in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, the Virginia State Energy Plan is due in July and we are waiting to respond to that.

Work on the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter's global warming campaign for the state is underway. We will release our own Citizens Energy Plan at regional town hall meetings now planned for September. The energy plan describes various aspects of energy and global warming as it pertains to Virginia. It lays out a clean energy future that we will be advocating.

The first town hall meeting will be in Falls Church (see page 4) and we plan to schedule up to three more in other areas. As a complementary activity, Virginia's Sierra Club Groups continue to push their local government bodies on Cool Communities.

A number of comprehensive greenhouse gas control bills have been submitted to Congress. However, it appears the Democratic Congressional leaders feel the time is not yet ripe for broad greenhouse gas controls. Although support has grown, there is not yet sufficient political support for greenhouse gas controls, nor is there agreement on which approach would be best.

Rather, Congressional leaders want to try to pass less comprehensive energy policy measures that might be less controversial, but still move the country forward in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Proposed legislative actions focus on saving energy and promoting renewable sources of energy without directly controlling greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide.

A Long Hot Summer in the Global Warming Battle

by Dick Ball

The Senate is moving first with Senate Bill HR6 and the House expects to take up energy legislation in July. As it came out of committee, the Senate bill had some good provisions, which Sierra Club hopes to strengthen, while also holding the line against a number of weakening amendments.

The bad things include an offshore drilling provision backed by Senator John Warner, Federal subsidies for liquid fuels

made from coal, and a measure to thwart states, such as California and others, from setting their own higher standards for air and greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles. Fortunately, the offshore drilling provision was voted down in the Senate, but by only one vote, so it might surface again.

Key Sierra Club Positions

- Support action to curb global warming.
- Support energy efficiency policies in-

cluding establishing an "Energy Efficiency Resource Standard" for utilities, and raising fuel economy (CAFÉ) standards for automobiles and light trucks.

- Support renewable energy like wind, solar, geothermal and sustainable biomass energy. In particular:

- Support a "Renewable Energy Standard" for utilities that would require minimum fractions of renewable energy (15 percent by 2020).

- Support environmental standards and appropriate incentives for biofuels rather than unlimited subsidies for unsustainable biofuels like corn ethanol.

- Oppose Federal support for liquid fuels made from coal.

We urge Virginia Chapter members to contact their Representatives in the House and our two Virginia senators, John Warner and Jim Webb, and let them know you support strong energy and global warming protection legislation. Mention some or all of the positions on issues listed above, plus others you may feel strongly about.

We hope you will be ready to react on short notice to alerts issued by the Sierra Club on key issues that emerge. A small group can conduct a "service station call in" action, described in the adjacent box.

For more information on global warming and energy action before the U.S. Congress, contact Glen Besa, glen.besa@sierraclub.org or call 804-565-4950 x104.

For more information on the Chapter's Smart Energy Solutions Campaign, contact Mike Town, michael.town@sierraclub.org or 804-225-9113

Dick Ball is energy chair of Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

Global Warming Action -- A Mini-Event

To encourage your Senators and Representatives to vote the right way on upcoming energy bills, have a visibility event in your area to put on more grassroots pressure.

Call-in Day Event

- Pick a location with lots of foot or car traffic — a busy gas station, busy intersection, public transit station, etc.
- Hold up signs that call on your senators and representatives to vote for stronger energy legislation.
- Ask the people going by (pedestrians, customers at the station, etc.) to make a quick call on your cell phone to the official's office to demand a better energy bill.

Before the event

- Pick a time and location, considering where you will stand. Avoid private property (no malls or shopping centers). A sidewalk or other public land should work.
- Recruit five or six folks to go with you.

Materials to have available

- Signs (you make 'em)
- Call scripts on flyers -- sample:
Hello, this is [your name] from [your town/city].
"I am calling to urge Sen./Rep.[name] to support efforts to enact strong energy legislation that includes a national Renewable Electricity Standard and Energy Efficiency Resource Standard, and that mandates a meaningful increase in fuel economy standards. Curbing global warming and cutting our nation's dependence on oil are important to me. Please act now to pass meaningful legislation."

Alert the Media

Notes from the Chair

by Charles Price



As new political season approaches let's become proactive

It's the political season again, and our Chapter and group political committees are scurrying about trying to figure out whom we should support in the primaries and November elections.

Sierra Club endorsements usually go to candidates with the best pro-environmental answers on the candidate questionnaire and/or to those of the party or party wing our respected Club leaders say are most likely to support pro-environmental issues and legislation.

Another compelling factor is a candidate's likelihood of winning the election—it benefits us in every conceivable way to have visibly and actively supported a winner.

Sometimes the variables are too numerous, complex and daunting to comprehend. It's good we have the recommendations of our Club leaders to help us, or we would be left with only our sometimes uninformed thoughts and instincts to pick candidates who would most likely favor and support pro-environmental policy and legislation.

However, it seems most of the issues and legislation officialdom and policy wonks of the Sierra Club have historically focused on are usually reactive and after-the-fact and damage-oriented.

What would happen if we became truly "proactive" in the far-reaching sense and focused aggressively on changing the fundamental laws and political practices that adversely affect the environment, albeit many times indirectly and surreptitiously?

Changing laws and practices that come to mind is by no means a novel idea for political reform. They include (1) the way political campaigns are financed, (2) the existing legal status and rights of corporations, and (3) the way lobbyists are allowed to operate.

It would seem the Sierra Club, joined by the many other environmental groups that agree with the necessity of changing the undesirable features of these permitted political practices and related laws, should exert far-sighted proactive leadership, and go on the offensive in seeking fundamental, structural changes in them. If allowed to continue, these flawed practices and related laws will often keep the environmental community on the losing side of protecting our precious natural heritage.

Charles Price honored for many years' leadership preserving and establishing Richmond's Bandy Field Park

by Regine Gunlicks

At the May 19 dedication of Richmond's Bandy Field Nature Park, the Friends of Bandy Field presented their president, Dr. Charles Price, with an oil painting of the park. This award is in honor of his nine years' outstanding leadership during our efforts to preserve, establish, and endow the park, and to restore its natural habitats.

Dr. Price also played a central role in the endeavor, started in 1999, to use conservation easements (CEs) to protect public parks, green spaces, and wilderness areas in Virginia's local jurisdictions. As a result, large wilderness tracts in Chesterfield County and Fredericksburg are under the perpetual protection of CEs. The City of Richmond will soon complete its CE for James River Park.



Regine Gunlicks presents landscape of Bandy Field Park painted by Erling Sjøvold to Charles Price at dedication of the nature park. Photo by Dave Harless

Help Wanted

Sierra Club seeks conservation organizer to work in Hampton Roads area

The Virginia Chapter wishes to hire a conservation organizer to work in the Hampton Roads area. As problems associated with global warming become more evident, no region of the state stands to lose more than our coastal cities.

In the last few years, the area has seen a push for offshore drilling, incineration of out-of-state garbage, wetland destruction for new housing developments, and proposals for new roads that will cost billions of dollars and not solve our transportation problems.

Sierra Club has more than 2,000 members in the Tidewater and Hampton Roads regions of Virginia, yet we have no staff to organize volunteers around these important issues.

The conservation organizer will help build membership and volunteerism in the region to work with environmental issues that impact these communities. Ideal candidate would have at least one year experience with grassroots organizing, bachelors degree in a related field or equivalent experience, experience with media, good writing skills, should be a self starter, and have tremendous people skills.

Salary for this full-time position begins at \$30,000 with full benefits. If you are interested, please email resume and cover letter to Michael Town, director, at michael.town@sierraclub.org or call (804) 225-9113 for more information.

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The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club's 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 bi-monthly. The editor welcomes editorial contributions, photographs, news releases and art work.
• Submissions should be related to Virginia's environment.
• Submissions can be investigative articles, reports, alerts, photographs. Include as much background information as possible.
Please e-mail the editor with questions prior to submitting material

Editor

Barbara Null
bnnull@comcast.net

Interns in Hopewell promote trust between Sierra Club and city residents

by Jackie Kruszewski and Katie Gerber

Hopewell is an industrial city 20 miles south of Richmond. It is ranked second under the most polluted county or city in Virginia, and fifth in Virginia for pounds of cancer causing air pollution (as indicated by Scorecard.org).

The people we have talked to — teachers, city councilors, Sierra Club members, and librarians — tell us of Hopewell's forgotten history, its diverse population,

small-town values and friendly community. They speak mostly of its potential.

This summer we are community organizers in this city of 22,000. We are working to create trust between the Sierra Club and Hopewell residents and to engage people's passion for environmental problems.

We have attended local events, such as luncheon lectures at historic Weston Manor and kids' fishing tournaments on the Appomattox River. We are seeking the opinions and guidance of residents, leaders and fellow organizers and we are beginning to understand where the Sierra Club can fit into

Hopewell.

Many of the residents in Hopewell are disturbed by other citizens' apathy toward industrial and developmental problems, but there also seems to be a growing concern for environmentally stable development and nitrogen oxides.

We have several events in the works, including an outdoor movie screening and a day of environmental education

for Hopewell families. We are working with and integrating a new group of leaders that will combat apathy and, we hope, organize their

fellow citizens around issues of pollution, green development, human health and justice.

Sierra Club members who want to get involved can call Katie or Jackie at (804) 225-9113 ext. 109 or 110.

Jackie Kruszewski



I recently graduated from the University of Virginia with a BA in Political and Social Thought, an interdisciplinary major that allowed me to study Latin America, environmental ethics and international agricultural development. At the end of the summer I will leave for China to teach English for a year. But meanwhile, Katie and I enthusiastically reach for Hopewell's potential.

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Katie Gerber

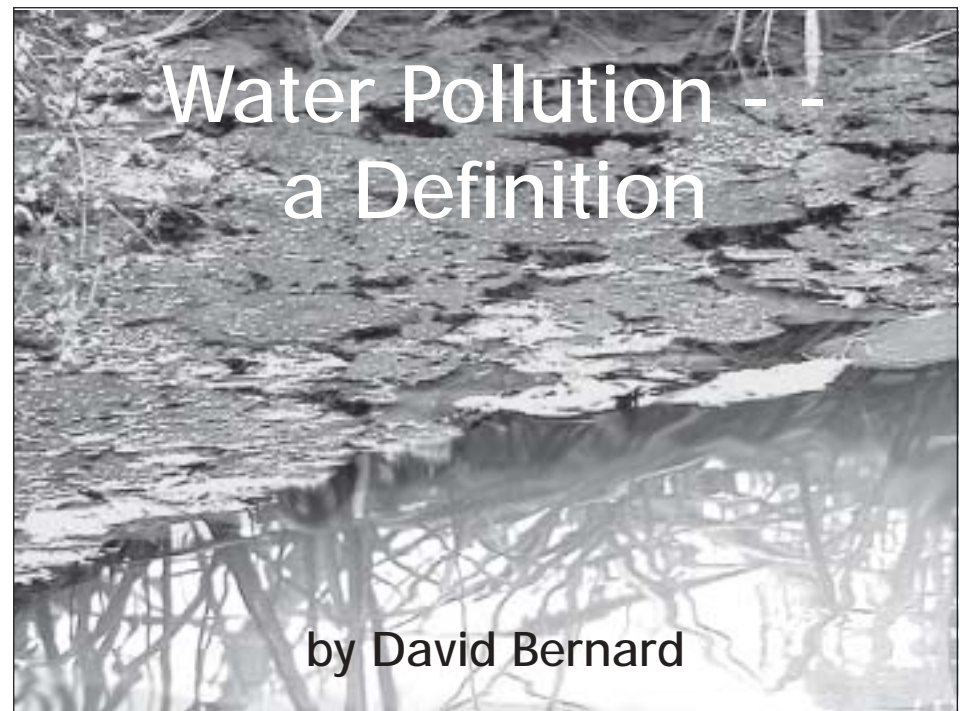


Working for the Sierra Club under the Conservation Organizer Fellowship has been a dream come true. As a third-year student at the State University of New York, College at

Geneseo, I study sociology and environmental issues. I became interested in how communities deal with environmental problems while taking a course called "Community Organizing." I became involved with the Alliance for Quality Education for NY State. Watching its lead organizer enthusiastically motivate everyone she met made me even more eager to become a community organizer.

After I finish my degree at Geneseo, I plan on continuing to work with communities in finding healthy and environmentally sustainable solutions to local and global problems

The people we have talked to . . . tell us of Hopewell's forgotten history, its diverse population, small-town values and friendly community.



Virginia law says all state waters shall be clean enough for swimming and boating. The fact is, fewer than half of Virginia waters - lakes and sections of streams and rivers - are that clean.

What pollutes our water?

Toxic Pollution

Any poisonous material that enters water and degrades the quality of the water harming plants and animals living in the water is toxic pollution. Sources include litter, leaking fuel tanks, motor oil washed off parking lots, pesticides and herbicides, industrial waste, and household chemicals that go down the drain.

Sediment Pollution

Soil enters water through erosion, a natural phenomenon. Over millions of years, Appalachian rain and snow runoff eroded the high mountains to create the Tidewater coastal plain and the Mississippi delta.

After the end of the Ice Age, and before European settlement, this erosion was a gradual process because vegetative cover broke the fall of rain and roots held the soil in place.

Agriculture, mining, and development removed large amounts of this plant cover and erosion accelerated. This excessive sediment blankets the stream bottom and chokes aquatic life. Sediment is also a hindrance to navigation and increases floods.

Nutrient Pollution

Nitrogen and phosphorus, necessary for life, are normally in small quantities in Virginia water. Excessive amounts of these nutrients introduced from sewage treatment plants, faulty septic systems, livestock grazing near creeks, and fertilizers from lawns and fields lead to excessive growth of algae and water weeds.

When these water plants die, decomposition uses up another life element, oxy-

gen, which is normally dissolved in water. Without oxygen, fish and shellfish die.

Bacterial Pollution

A common measure of water pollution is fecal coliform concentration, the bacteria from animal waste. Some is natural from bears and raccoons. Currently, the waste of our seven million people, their pets and livestock is the pollution most immediately dangerous to human health. Sewage treatment plants and septic systems control most of the human source. Controlling waste from animals is not so comprehensive.

Although Virginia has water safety problems, many bodies of water are cleaner than in 1972 when the Federal Clean Water Act was passed. Industries have been obliged to remove toxins before releasing water into public waterways.

Federal grants to states and local governments help finance modern sewage treatment plants and collection piping. However, these same projects subsidize spreading development, posing its own set of problems. Runoff from lawns, farm fields, roads and parking lots is only beginning to be dealt with on other than a voluntary basis.

David Bernard is water quality chair of Virginia Chapter Sierra Club.



Have you responded to the March Mailer?

In March, the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter sent an appeal to all members asking for contributions. These funds go directly to the Chapter to be used for our important work protecting the environment.

If you have not yet responded, please send us your contribution for the Chapter's ongoing environmental initiatives, making check payable to "Sierra Club-VA." For our efforts to assist candidates committed to our work, make check payable to "Sierra Club - VAPAC." If you wish to contribute to both funds, please send a separate check to each.

Mail to: Virginia Chapter Sierra Club
P.O. Box 2303

Merrifields, VA 22116-2303

Please note, contributions to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.

Sincerest thanks

Love the Earth Live the Simple Life

A little adjustment in our driving and we can all conserve fuel

Worried about the high cost of gas? You've got good reason. The Bush Administration has warned that gasoline and other energy prices (which were already on the rise) shot up after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and are likely to remain high for several years. The President has even gone so far as to recommend that Americans attempt to conserve energy. The best way to avoid spending more on gas is to keep these tips in mind:



Drive Smart

Driving aggressively wastes gas and puts others at risk. Observe the speed limit, avoid rapid acceleration and braking and maintain a constant speed on the road.

Keep Your Car in Shape

A well-tuned car burns less gasoline. Change oil and air filters regularly and keep tires properly inflated.

Use Public Transportation

Use public transportation as much as possible.

Combine Errands

According to the Department of Energy,

several short trips taken from a cold start uses twice the fuel as a longer, multipurpose trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.

Go for a Bike Ride or Walk

Walk to the corner store or a friend's house, or ride your bike. This has the added advantage of reducing your risk of heart disease.

Carpool

Carpool or use ride-share programs.

Pack Light

A loaded roof rack on your car decreases fuel economy by approximately five percent. Every 100 pounds carried reduces a typical car's fuel economy by one to two percent. Put everything you can *inside* your vehicle, and pack light

Local Food is Miles Better



Amanda Atkins (r.), a farmer from Varina, has been selling the produce and flowers she grows in her "victory garden" for many years at the 17th Street Market in

Richmond. Here she helps a customer select from her early harvest of root vegetables and greens. Photo by Barbara Null

Think Hybrid

Over its lifetime, a 50-mile per gallon hybrid Toyota Prius will use half the gas, and release half the global-warming pollution, as a 23-mpg Pontiac Grand Prix.

Hot Tip

If you purchase a hybrid in 2007, you may be eligible for a new federal tax credit that

could be worth as much as \$3,000.

Bonus: Write Your Leaders

Urge your Congressional leaders to raise fuel economy standards to 40 miles per gallon. Modern technology exists to make our cars and trucks go farther on a gallon of gas. Taking this step would save nearly 4 million barrels of oil a day — more oil than we currently import from the Persian Gulf or could ever extract from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge combined. By saving on gas, you would save nearly \$2,000 at the pump over the life of your car

Thanks to Sierra Club Insider.com

To Our Readers

What changes have you made to reduce your carbon footprint?

We're all aware of the imprint human activity has had on the earth and its effect on global warming. Sierra Club has been working for years encouraging lawmakers to regulate government and corporate activity to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. This is taking time.

In the meantime, individuals around the world have been changing habits and lifestyles to reduce their personal "carbon footprint."

Large changes have included installing photovoltaic panels for solar power, generating wind power, tapping into geothermal power. Smaller changes have been as simple as turning the thermostat down,

turning off the air conditioner and allowing cooling breezes into the house. Or installing double or triple-paned windows, using a clothesline for drying the laundry, buying locally produced food and goods.

What have you done? How difficult was it to make the change? If you are willing to share your experiences with other readers of *Old Dominion Sierran*, contact the editor before August 1. We'll put together a roundup of ideas and stories of large and small accomplishments made to personally reduce greenhouse emissions.

Contact Barbara Null, bnull@comcast.net, or phone (804) 330-9339.

Save the Date

Citizen Energy Forum
September 5, 2007
7 to 9 p.m.

Mary Ellen Henderson
Middle School
7124 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA

Release of the Virginia Chapter's
Energy Plan for Virginia
Speakers TBD

For further details, watch our website
<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/http://www.virginiasierraclub.org/> or contact Roger Diedrich, 703-352-2410



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Del. Brian Moran, (l) and former DEQ Director Peter Schmidt (first photo) and Del. Moran, Meyera Obendorf, Virginia Beach mayor, and Michael Town, executive director



Virginia Chapter Sierra Club, join at a press conference in Virginia Beach to oppose offshore drilling and support clean energy solutions.

Threat of drilling for oil off Virginia's coast continues to raise its ugly head

by Michael Town

The Sierra Club joined Delegate Brian Moran of Alexandria, Meyera Obendorf, Virginia Beach mayor, and Peter Schmidt, former Virginia Beach councilman and Director of Department of Environmental Quality, at a press conference May 25 to express concern about the Bush Administration's plan to drill for oil and gas off Virginia's coast and to show support for smart energy solutions like energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Last month, areas off Virginia's coast were included in the U.S. Interior Department Five Year Leasing Plan, which determines where off the United States coast oil companies can drill for oil and natural gas. Virginia's coast is currently protected by a drilling moratorium, despite efforts of some politicians in Virginia and Congress to open up parts of the Atlantic coast to drilling.

In 2005, State Senator Frank Wagner, Virginia Beach, introduced legislation promoting drilling off Virginia's coast. It required Virginia to support Congressional action lifting the offshore drilling moratorium and allowing companies to explore and drill for natural gas off our coast.

Off shore drilling plan receives huge public opposition

Environmental organizations around the country and our supporters in Congress understood this would destroy 25 years of coastal protections. After tremendous public opposition, led by the Sierra Club, then Governor Mark Warner vetoed the legislation. Our beaches were saved, but Senator Wagner was not finished.

In 2006, Senator Wagner introduced comprehensive energy legislation that required the state to have a ten year energy plan. That energy plan is currently being developed by Governor Tim Kaine's administration.

Stuck in the middle of that legislation was language from Wagner's old bill — support for natural gas drilling off Virginia's coast. Again, environmental organizations and others eager to protect our beaches and tourism economies expressed broad opposition to Senator Wagner's plan. Governor Kaine made changes to the offshore drilling language.

After tremendous public opposition, led by the Sierra Club, then Governor Mark Warner vetoed the legislation. Our beaches were saved, but Senator Wagner was not finished.

The governor's changes support finding out how much natural gas exists 50 miles and further off Virginia's coast. They also made it explicit that the state did not have a position for or against the moratorium that protects our beaches from oil spills.

Governor's language encourages big oil and gas supporters

Although Governor Kaine did not support Wagner's attempts to drill off our coast, his language fed the supporters of big oil and gas in Congress and in Richmond. The Interior Department is using Virginia's supposed support for offshore drilling as an argument in favor of including the state in the five-year management plan.

To make matters worse, Virginia's two U.S. Senators, John Warner and Jim Webb, recently introduced an amendment to energy legislation that would have made it possible for Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia to allow drilling off their coast. The amendment did not stand a chance of passing, but Webb's support of offshore drilling is troubling to environmentalists in Virginia.

News is not all bad

However, the news is not all bad. Drilling off our coast does not appear to have enough support in Congress. Not only is this good news for our beaches and the Eastern Shore, but for those of us working for smart energy solutions. Big oil and gas companies would rather find more places to drill than to invest in energy efficiency, conservation, and clean renewable sources of energy.

Other states are supporting investments in renewable energy development and requir-

Mayor Obendorf's courage to stand up to those in Virginia Beach who are willing to ignore the natural beauty of the beaches and sacrifice the benefit to our coastal tourism is admirable.

ing efficient building standards, promoting energy efficient appliances, and making hard dollar investments in making our homes, businesses, and cars more efficient.

Delaware's public service commission, for example, recently approved construction of a 600 mega-watt offshore wind farm — negating the need for a new coal fired power plant. Virginia doesn't need to be a leader in efficiency and renewable energy, we only have to follow what other states are doing successfully.

We must depend on our leaders to help us

We do have leaders to help us. Delegate Moran's vocal opposition to offshore drilling and support for clean sources of energy is refreshing. Mayor Obendorf's courage to stand up to those in Virginia Beach who are willing to ignore the natural beauty of the beaches and sacrifice the benefit to our coastal tourism is admirable. But, we and they can not create a new energy future alone. We need other leaders.

Governor Kaine has the potential to be one of those leaders. Recently, he signed Virginia on to a multi-state greenhouse gas registry. Virginia is the only southern state to sign. By the time you read this, we'll know more about the Governor's position on global warming, energy efficiency and renewable energy when his 10-year energy plan is released at the end of June.

The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club, and many in the environmental community will continue to urge Governor Kaine to lead Virginia into a 21st century energy economy, and we'll be calling on you to help. Please be ready to answer the call.

Michael Town is executive director of Virginia Chapter Sierra Club





Grassroots Activists News From the Groups

Albemarle County stops use of pesticides and harmful cleaners on all its properties

by Jackie Lombardo

Thomas Jefferson called beautiful Albemarle County his home. He was proud of Albemarle's rolling hills, captivated by its swimming holes and rivers, charmed by its wildlife.

But Thomas Jefferson might not be proud of lead or DDE found in 2002 in Mint Springs fishing lake. He might not be proud that in 2005, nearly 80 percent of adult male small mouth bass in the Shenandoah River were intersex fish, males producing immature female eggs in their testes.

He might be devastated to learn one in 15 students at Albemarle County Public Schools has asthma, one in six is in special ed for a learning, developmental or psychological abnormality, and almost one in three students suffers from a permanent health condition, according to Virginia Department of Education statistics.

We were devastated, too. Barbara Cruickshank, Michael Johnson and I started Friends and Advocates for Children, Teachers and Schools (FACTS) to improve environmental health, especially children's health, through

public policy promoting a cleaner environment.

The CDC and EWG found chemicals in bodies of adults, children and cordblood of newborn babies. Scientific evidence links pesticides and some common, everyday chemicals with cancer, asthma, learning disabilities and intersex fish. This doesn't prove the poisons or chemical products cause any ill health, but it adds to evidence of association.

After learning the facts, the Board of Supervisors with Pat Mullaney and staff of Recreation Parks, took immediate action to protect the children. They stopped all pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, fungicides,) and chemical cleaners in public lands and buildings. They abandoned antiquated practices in favor of modern techniques, effectively suppressing pests and germs without harmful products.

They serve as role models for environmentally responsible behavior, not just by recycling, but by efforts to protect children and the environment. While this action does not include our schools yet, we remain hopeful it will soon.

Thanks to those County officials whose impressive leadership would make TJ proud.

Jackie Lombardo is a member of the Piedmont Group and serves on the National Sierra Club Toxics Committee.

Piedmont Group campaigns to fund County position to market local agriculture

by Tom Olivier

The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors recently voted to fund a position in the County Department of Community Development for rural areas support. A key task of the staff person in this position will be to develop local agricultural marketing opportunities. The Albemarle County comprehensive plan, adopted in 2005, called for creation of such a position; however, the position had since been left unfunded in county budgets.

In April and May of this year, as development of the 2007-2008 county budget entered its final phases, the Piedmont Group mounted a campaign urging the county to include funding for the rural areas support

Web site created urging co-sponsorship of Safe Climate Act

by Bruce Parker

We have finally reached the "tipping point" on climate change attitudes in the United States. We can do a lot as individuals – by using compact fluorescent light bulbs for lighting, getting more energy efficient appliances, driving less, etc.

But Congress must take legislative action in order to get governments and companies to do their share.

A large majority of Americans (8 in 10) say they support the targets of the McCain-Lieberman legislation, "Climate Stewardship Act," that calls for large companies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to 2000 levels by 2010 and to 1990 levels by 2020. This gets us started on the way to reducing emissions 80 percent by 2050.

To help get members of Congress "on board," I have been working with the federation of state Public Interest Research Groups to launch a Web site specifically targeting Rep. Tom Davis -11th District in Northern Virginia, urging him to co-sponsor the "Safe Climate Act."

When you have a minute or two, please visit the Web site, www.GetTomOnBoard.org, and sign the petition, even if you are not in Tom's district. If you know any organizations or business leaders in his district, please encourage them to sign the open letter.

Support us in our efforts to get Tom to become a leader in this most important issue. Send the link to all of your friends – we need to show him how important this issue is.

Bruce Parker is a member of Mt. Vernon Group.



Stan Breakell shows one of the bright red Prius in his construction company's fleet, which was displayed during film series.

Film series held at Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op

by Mark McClain

The Roanoke Group, working in cooperation with Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition and the Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op, presented a film series at the popular natural food store's community room. The four-night series, spanning May and June, presented three films and a presentation on the local "Cool Cities" campaign.

Particularly pertinent to the mission of the co-op, was the June 6 film, *The Power of Community*, a fascinating and inspiring story of how Cuba transformed its industrial agriculture system into a more earth-friendly, decentralized, and organic system.

This transition became necessary because Cuba lost access to about 80 percent of its petroleum supply during the collapse of the Soviet Union. They also made drastic changes to their transportation and educational systems, all due to the shortage of oil.

As a demonstration of local initiatives to reduce the use of fossil fuels, Breakell Inc., a local general contractor and member of Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition, lent one of its Toyota Prius fleet cars for the event. Before, during, and after the film presentation, the smart-looking red hybrid parked on the sidewalk in front of the co-op on busy Grandin Road, the main artery of Roanoke's Grandin Village area.

Breakell, Inc. is one of the leading voices in the Roanoke business community for sound environmental practices in construction. Its use of the super efficient hybrid vehicles is a visible and meaningful demonstration of that philosophy.

Company president Stan Breakell is thinking about converting the Prius fleet to plug-in hybrid technology, which promises even greater fuel efficiency than the 50+ mpg the cars are currently getting.

Mark McClain is chair of Roanoke Group.

Group Directory

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

Rappahannock: Scott Howson
540-373-4704 showson@infionline.net
Blue Ridge: Al Fioretti
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Dominion Power shareholders, activists demand clean energy

by Joshua Low

On April 27, the Sierra Club joined forces with other environmental groups, including Healthlink, a local toxics group in Salem, MA, and shareholders of Dominion Resources, to put pressure on the company to reduce its damage to the climate, air, water, communities, and mountains and to embrace a clean energy strategy.

While activists protested outside the meeting hotel in the pouring rain, shareholders were inside, asking management tough questions about the company's environmental and community impact.

Dominion, second largest gas and elec-

tric utility in the United States, owns the biggest polluters in both Massachusetts and Virginia. For several years, shareholders have been challenging Dominion's strategy of investing in dirty fossil fuel and nuclear power plants, a strategy that continues today.

Environmental groups joined in calling for a major shift in company strategy, supported two relevant shareholder resolutions up for a vote. One asked for a report on the company's strategy on global warming regulations. The other, for a report on community impact of large transmission projects proposed through the Northern Virginia Piedmont. Twenty one percent of shares voted for the global warming resolution, a



Do we really need more transmission lines marching across the hills of what few green spaces are left?

very good result for a shareholder resolution.

Thanks to Virginia Sierra Club members who own Dominion stock, about 10 activists from Massachusetts and Virginia attended the meeting. We asked CEO Tom Farrell tough questions about Dominion's plans to continue down a dirty energy path.

I asked about Dominion's plan to build a new coal plant in Southwest Virginia that would put 400 coal trucks a day in front of a local library and increase global warming and mercury pollution. Other activists asked him to commit Dominion to invest significantly in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Activists from Healthlink asked Farrell to commit to cleaning up the plant and to stop buying coal from mines in Colombia with alleged human rights abuses. Praxis Calta, working with People's Alliance for Clean Energy (PACE), asked hard questions about Dominion's plans to expand the North Anna nuclear power plant.

"Dominion has the resources to be a climate leader," said Joshua Low of Sierra Club. "Dominion's current plans make it a dinosaur of large companies. With companies like Duke and Kansas City Power and Light calling for a national global warming plan, Dominion should invest in smart energy solutions, like wind, solar, and energy efficiency. Otherwise, communities will continue to be harmed by its dirty practices, and shareholders will risk having billions of dollars of power plants that cannot be operated. Dominion should instead be investing in the many clean alternatives to coal, for our communities, climate, air, water and mountains."

To get involved in shareholder meetings and other energy campaigns of the Virginia Chapter, please call Joshua Low at 804-225-9113.

Joshua Low is conservation coordinator of Virginia Chapter Sierra Club.

Bluestone River cleanup part of educational effort

by Roger Angles

The first major cleanup of the Bluestone River will be held August 18 on a stretch of river that contains machinery, auto parts and other household items. The cleanup, organized by Andrew Satmary, president of the Bluestone Conservatory, and Wayne Mullins, board member, is part of the group's ongoing education of governing agencies and citizens in Tazewell County and further down stream into West Virginia.

The fragile eco-system which the upper Bluestone River contributes to has been badly abused and harmed over the decades. The education process by the Bluestone Conservatory has proved effective. Local and state agencies are now paying more attention to causes of pollution of the venerable Bluestone. Even federal agencies have come to lend a helping hand.

Although young, the Bluestone Conservatory is being recognized as a major source of environmental assistance for the New River Watershed. A former site proposed for an industrial park housing a foundry on the banks of the upper Bluestone is now under consideration for environmental purposes. Education does make a difference.

Book News

Book by Richmond author honored with science award

Richmond author Paul Fleisher's recent book, *Parasites: Latching on to a Free Lunch*, was recently named an Outstanding Science Trade Book by the National Science Teachers Association and Children's Book Council. *Parasites* was also selected as an Honor Book by the Society of School Librarians International.

Written for middle-school age readers, the book surveys the broad spectrum of parasitic life, from single-celled creatures, to parasitic plants and parasites in the various phyla of the animal world. The book also examines the central role parasites play in most ecosystems—a role scientists have only begun to understand and explore in recent years. *Parasites* opens young people's eyes to an important and underappreciated area of biology, with just enough of an "ick factor" to keep them interested.

Fleisher has written more than 30 books for young people and educators. Previous works include *Evolution* (2005), the five volume series *Secrets of the Universe* (2001), *Ice Cream Treats: The Inside Scoop* (2000), and *Brain Food* (1997), a compilation of thinking games.

Parasites, published by Lerner Publications, is available through bookstores. For further information: contact Paul Fleisher, 2781 Beowulf Ct., Richmond VA 23231 (804) 795-5326, pfleishe@earthlink.net

Novel about climate change recently published

by Bob Morris

The Owl and the Oak: *The Climate Change Novel*, is a part of my grassroots outreach to effect cultural change. In this book I attempt to bring human scale and sense to this overwhelming and complex issue, taking it out of the realm of policy wonks and political partisans and into the hands of the public.

The book is available to all booksellers, but stores normally won't stock a new first novel unless someone calls or stops in and asks for it. The more stores that stock the book, the more people will be exposed to the need for activism to address climate change and other issues.

Russell Edwards, D.C. school teacher and Cool Climate Action Team Leader, writes in his book review, (the book) "engages readers in a strong narrative, introducing characters through their words and actions, with a minimum of explanation. The prose is direct, pressing a wealth of well-paced action into a spare 260 pages.

"This is Bob Morris's first novel, and readers will come away with an appreciation for a new writing talent, a deeper understanding of the way power is wielded in our nation, and a sense of what drives those who commit to an ideal beyond what is considered reasonable or prudent."

Available through Barnes and Noble, Borders, Amazon.com and other booksellers. Bob Morris is a member of the DC Chapter Sierra Club



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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.

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The case for standing on the big rock

by Mark McClain



dels. Their criticisms run the gamut from the benign (“they just don’t get it”) to the vicious (“they’ve been bought!”).

Regrettably, these critics miss the point and thus miss an opportunity to have an impact. The fact of the matter is that elected leaders have a much broader mission than that of the Sierra Club’s inspiringly simple “Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Earth.”

They must also Defend, Fix, Administer, Pay For, Incarcerate, Clean Up, Regulate and perform sundry other functions in the discharge of their duties.

Their judgments on many issues are often tempered by conflicting considerations that lead them to a less than perfectly green solution.

Given this landscape, we must first recognize there is little to be gained by impugning those who may not agree with us on every point. Nor is there much benefit in stamping our collective feet and insisting on the most perfect solution (as defined by us) on every question. Rather we should explore the opportunities to make incremental progress toward our ideals through collaboration, negotiation, influence, and persuasion.

We need not compromise our beliefs to

do this. But we do have to be willing to assess the range of possibilities and make a rational case for an outcome that most closely resembles our vision. This involves the ability to understand the point of view of those who don’t agree with us.

It also requires a willingness to engage policy makers, not in an adversarial manner, but in the spirit of mutual respect and openness.

Sierra Club founder John Muir, set this

... we should explore the opportunities to make incremental progress toward our ideals through collaboration, negotiation, influence, and persuasion.

example for us, famously illustrated through his appearance with President Theodore Roosevelt.

While widely acknowledged to be our first and perhaps only great “environmental” president, Roosevelt largely disagreed with Muir’s philosophy of the sanctity of nature and wilderness. Despite that difference, Muir’s ability to influence the president led to many great environmental victories.

If we are to succeed in our quest to bring about change for the good of the earth, our chances are much better if we, like John Muir, are standing on the big rock with those whom we seek to influence, rather than sitting behind the camera throwing small rocks at them.

Mark McClain is Roanoke Group chair

The world view of the Sierra Club is not perfectly aligned with that of any elected governing body, nor with many individual elected leaders.

Of course, nearly everyone says (and most believe) they are environmentalists, and government officials are no exception, but their actions often don’t match their words when held up to scrutiny through the Sierra

Club magnifying glass.

So we have this dissonance, this disconnect between the self-perception of the “greenness” of our leaders and the assessment of them by those who carry the banner of the “environmental movement.”

Unfortunately, many environmental activists and leaders see this dissonance as a call to an Environmental Jihad, and they spare no effort to excoriate these eco-infi-

Informing the public of Albemarle children’s exposure to pesticides



Jackie Lombardo (r) explains to a potential petition signer how children who use Albemarle County parks, playground and schools are exposed to toxic pesticides and harmful chemical cleaners. As a result of the work of Friends and Advocates for Children, Teachers and Schools (FACTS), with the help of the Sierra Club Piedmont Group, on June 13, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and Department of Parks and Recreation stopped using all pesticides and traditional chemical cleaners in buildings and on public lands. (See article on page 6.)

Photo by Joe Lombardo

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