

Old Dominion Sierran



Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

July/August 2009

www.virginia.sierraclub.org

Citizen Lobbying Makes a Difference

by Ivy Main

When Big Oil and Big Coal want handouts from the government, they send in their lobbyists. Utilities, trade associations, and even local governments all have full-time lobbyists on staff or on retainer, ready to serve the interests of those who pay them.

But who lobbies for the public interest? Many times, it's us -- citizen activists who meet with our elected representatives to make sure they hear what we, the people, want done in our name. We are vastly outnumbered and outspent by the professional lobbyists representing corporate interests, but because we represent the voters who elect them, we can be a powerful force.

The climate bills now in Congress, and their huge potential for progress on energy policy in Virginia, have made it especially important that citizen lobbyists make their voices heard in the offices of their congressmen and senators.

This spring, Jeff Vincent, Susan Stillman and I met with four Congressional staff members and are planning meetings with Senators Webb and Warner or their staffs soon. Jeff is a retired federal lobbyist who brings professional pol-

ish to our conversations; Susan has a sales background that gives her excellent people skills; and I have some background in the policy details.

All this gives us a little more confidence going in, but it isn't required for effective advocacy. Sometimes our team has

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included other Sierra Club members, often people with no special skills but a passionate interest in the subject that makes them just as powerful advocates.

The meetings usually run half an hour. Since we live near D.C., we have

gone to representatives' offices near the Capitol, but meetings can also take place at district offices when members are at home, as many will be from early August until Labor Day, when Congress is in recess.

We tell them that we, their constituents, want strong federal action addressing climate change, including incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

We provide them with information we developed with the Sierra Club that shows how a renewable electricity requirement of 25 percent would actually stimulate the Virginia economy, providing jobs, attracting new business, and benefiting consumers by securing new, competitively-priced energy supplies in the form of offshore wind power.

This is information they aren't getting from the paid lobbyists representing the coal and oil interests, so we find our message is well received. Still, it will be drowned out by the chorus of corporate lobbyists who are trying to weaken the bills--unless we join together to make our voices heard. We need more citizen lobbyists. Will you join us?

Ivy Main is a member of the executive committee Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

Congressional Meetings 101

by Jeff Vincent

Focus

Know what you want to accomplish in the meeting and don't complicate things by trying to cover too many issues.

Game plan

You don't need a script, but you should decide in advance who will open the discussion and who will be responsible for making key points.

Schedule

You'll probably have only 20-30 minutes; consider it a plus if the meeting runs longer. Be flexible. Meetings often start late or are interrupted by votes or committee action.

Your Players

If possible, have at least one constituent of that Member of Congress in the meeting, and make sure this connection is made during introductions. You are not expected to be experts on the legislative process, but you should have done thorough homework on the issue you are discussing.

Their Players

It's not negative if you meet with a staffer (often a very young staffer) instead of the member of Congress. Aides often have great responsibility and are relied upon for their expertise on specific subject areas.

Real-time Reaction

Start at the top level of your issue and offer increasingly detailed or complex information as appropriate. You will need to gauge your audience's level of interest and understanding as the meeting progresses.

Leave-behinds

Don't hand out bulging folders, notebooks or PowerPoint presentations. You can always suggest that additional materials are available if needed; staffers are not shy about asking for something that interests them. However, it is always useful to offer a one or two-page "white paper" that summarizes your issue.

Courtesies

Always begin by thanking the member or staffer for their support for environmental issues in the past. During the meeting, take the high road; state your case in positive terms and don't attack other groups, individuals or government programs. Be sure to follow-up with a thank-you note, call or email.

Jeff Vincent, a retired Washington lobbyist, is a member of the Mount Vernon Group

From the Chair

VA Chapter leaders take leadership training



by Charles Price

Four members of the Virginia Chapter executive committee are participating in the National Sierra Club's inaugural Web-based Chapter Leader Training Program. Virginia's team includes Charles Price, chair; John Cruickshank, vice-chair; Steve Bruckner, conservation chair, and Ivy Main, ex com member.

Other chapters participating are Cumberland, Illinois, and Maryland.

The first of the five training sessions began in May, the last one ends in July. The sessions consist of 90-minute conference calls, supplemented with on-line materials. They include interim team homework assignments and conference calls.

One of the goals of the leadership training is to improve and increase the capacity of chapter participants to function as a team, leading to quality teamwork in the functions and operations of their respective executive committees.

One recent training session was devoted to an examination of the "Culture of High-Performing Teams." The "Culture" consists of:

- Developing Trust
- Mastering Discussion
- Achieving Commitment
- Embracing Accountability
- Focus on Results

The Virginia Chapter team rated its ex com functions high (between 4 and 5 on a scale of 1-low to 5-high) on the first three high performance indicators.

The team concurred our principal weaknesses were "Achieving Commitment" and "Embracing Accountability." Although rated as weaknesses, they did not receive appreciably low ratings.

You can safely conclude that, as a homework assignment, the Virginia Chapter team had to develop a plan to remedy the identified weaknesses and to develop a strategy for making the plan a part of the ex com's operations.

This, of course, will not be attempted without fully reviewing the plan with the chapter ex com and gaining its concurrence in the plan's value for improving its functions and performance. The plan for improving the Virginia Chapter ex com's accountability and focus on results will be presented to the ex com by the leader training team in the near future.

You can help provide cleaner, more sustainable tomorrow for Virginia

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter advocates for clean, sustainable energy sources like offshore wind; we oppose construction of conventional coal-burning facilities, mountain-top removal coal mining, new transmission lines, and drilling for oil off our coasts.

This is the year we need to secure Virginia's clean energy future. Implementing energy efficiency standards and developing renewable electricity sources like wind and solar power will create millions of jobs while invigorating our nation's economy.

Our state is poised to lead the charge to harness coastal wind energy while embracing the use of efficiency as a resource -- all while creating new jobs.

Your contribution today will provide a cleaner, more sustainable tomorrow for Virginia. Together, we can make a difference.

Mail your gift to: Sierra Club- Virginia Chapter, 422 E. Franklin Street, Suite 302, Richmond, VA 23219.

Or visit www.virginia.sierraclub.org and click on the "donate" button.

Sept. Annual Gathering to feature good food, workshops and entertainment

The Virginia Chapter is pleased to announce Sierra Club President Allison Chin will be the keynote speaker at the banquet during the Sierra Club Annual Gathering to be held September 18-20.

The Gathering at Pocahontas State Park near Richmond, begins on Friday afternoon, with check-in at 4:30 p.m. An evening reception of light snacks will give everyone the opportunity to get acquainted with their fellow Sierra Club members from around the state.

Saturday features a full day of workshops focusing on global warming and energy issues. A demonstration of a design for off-shore wind power will be given by Eileen Levandoski and members who have been studying prospects for wind power. A presentation on solar power is also planned.

Glen Besa, Virginia Chapter director, and his staff will update us on efforts to stop coal-fired power plants, other cam-

paigns related to power issues, and other issue of concern to the chapter.

Outdoor activities organized by rangers at Pocahontas State Park will be available throughout the weekend.

Saturday's activities are capped by a festive evening of wonderful food, the speech by Allison Chin, and music by singer/song-writer Narissa Bond. The program concludes on Sunday with a wrap-up session after breakfast and checkout at 11 a.m.

Volunteers are needed to help in the kitchen, assist with registration and set up the presentations.

For further information, contact Joe Apple, joe.apple@comcast.net; John Cruickshank, jcruckshank4@gmail.com; Ann Moore, anadonaldovna@gmail.com; Charles Price, fewmit@comcast.net, or Glen Besa, glen.besa@sierraclub.org.

Time is getting short, make your plans to attend now.

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www.virginia.sierraclub.org

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 bimonthly. The editor welcomes editorial contributions, photographs, news releases and art work. Submissions should be related to Virginia's environment.

Please e-mail the editor with questions prior to submitting material

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Virginia Chapter Annual Gathering

Registration Form

Pocahontas State Park - Chesterfield County
September 18 at 6 p.m through September 20 at 11 a.m.

Registration Fee includes

- Friday night wine/cheese party
- Saturday breakfast
- Saturday meetings
- Saturday banquet/entertainment
- Sunday breakfast
- Sunday Snack

Name _____
Street Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Cabin Preference - Family Men's Cabin Women's Cabin
I wish to share a cabin with _____

Adult(s) \$80 per person _____
Children (under 12) \$50 per child _____
Total _____

Make checks payable to Virginia Chapter Sierra Club
Mail to Joe Apple, 1946 Winterport Cluster, Reston, VA 20191



Roanoke places conservation easement on public property surrounding Carvins Cove Reservoir

by Bill Modica

On April 21, 2008, the City of Roanoke formally established a permanent conservation easement on 6,185 acres of publicly owned land around the Carvins Cove water reservoir. This conservation easement had been discussed, considered and debated since 1996. It wasn't until after Dr. Rupert Cutler, who first proposed it, retired from his public post on City Council that it finally happened. Luckily, Rupert was still around to enjoy the success.

It had broad support from Council members, City Parks staff and local environmental leaders, including the Western Virginia Land Trust, Valley Beautiful Foundation and Sierra Club Roanoke Group.

This was the largest conservation easement ever placed on public land in Virginia. But it wasn't the only one. The same day, Gov. Tim Kaine announced the placement of an easement on 5,000 acres around Smith Mountain Lake.

Wow, 11,000 acres in one day!

"What a great day for Western Virginia," said Roger Holnback of the Western Virginia Land Trust, which co-holds the easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

In late 2007, the City of Roanoke established a management plan for Carvins Cove reservoir, which included a recommendation the easement be established. Then Mayor Nelson Harris endorsed it.

A task force, formed in 1999, had suggested changes to the City Code to allow recreational uses of the city owned land and began to design terms of an eventual easement. It was agreed the easement would apply only to land above the 1,500 foot elevation. This left a large area uncovered.

The task force is now working on regulations to allow an additional 6,000 acres to be incorporated into the protected area, after transferring the water reservoir to the Western Virginia Water Authority.

Another proposal under discussion is to place an easement on the slopes of Mill

Mountain, home of the famous Roanoke (Neon) Star.

Bill Modica is chair of the Roanoke Group

Clarification

Public properties around state get permanent protection

by Charles Price

Acaption on the back page of the May/June 2009 *Old Dominion Sierran* stated, "The (James River) park was recently given a conservation easement, the first publicly owned land in Virginia to be placed in permanent protection." This statement is incorrect.

In 1999, a citizens' initiative to secure conservation easements (CEs) on the James River Park System and three other Richmond-owned properties began. In 1999 no local governments in Virginia had conservation easements (CEs) on any lands, and it was not clear whether the Commonwealth's CE statute could be applied to publicly owned property. After a request for an opinion, the Attorney General ruled Virginia localities could place protective CEs on land they owned.

This paved the way for local governments in Virginia to place CEs on select properties they owned and believed to merit permanent protection. Since this landmark ruling, the following have granted CE's:

March 2003 - Chesterfield County -- 262 acres of wilderness property along one mile of the James River donated by the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company.

March 2007 - The City of Fredericksburg -- 4,232 acres along 32 miles of riverfront of the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers and 26 miles along the rivers' tributaries.

April 2008 - The City of Roanoke -- 6,185 acres of its publicly-owned land around the Carvins Cove water reservoir.

February 2009 - the City of Richmond -- 280 acres of riverfront property and islands of the James River Park System.

Stimulus money to be used to clean water in Virginia

by David Bernard

Atotal of \$76.9 million in federal funds will be flowing to Virginia public water works as part of the "stimulus" package.

The following localities will receive:

- Wythe County, Hillsville and Fries in the New River watershed - \$2.3 million
- Loudoun and Fairfax Counties in the Potomac watershed - \$5.6 million
- Culpeper in the Rappahannock watershed - \$260,000

The James River basin will receive:

- Lynchburg - \$25.4 million
- Alleghany County - \$10 million
- Richmond - \$6.2 million
- Hopewell, Covington and New Kent - \$7.7 million

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) report on the funding states, "The projects include \$24.9 million for Lynchburg to continue its combined sewer overflow program, which will eliminate raw sewage overflows that enter the James River - - - The improvements will help reduce nutrient pollution - excess nitrogen and phosphorus that wastewater plants discharge into Virginia waterways."

I am among those who argue that water infrastructure should be paid for by those who use it. Not only would this end the need for general fund appropriations for waterworks, but the higher water rates would provide incentive to conserve water use, repair leaks, and invest in efficient plumbing upgrades. This would lead to less need for water withdrawals and expensive waterworks. The impact on low-income consumers could be addressed by means other than providing subsidized water rates for everyone.

If we have to spend government money to get the economy going, though, spending it on clean water is a good way to "prime the pump."

DEQ sifted through \$1.3 billion in requests before choosing the recipients. Plenty of work still remains to be done.

David Bernard is Virginia Chapter Sierra Club water quality chair



Charles Price recognized for his vision for James River Park



After a ceremony for the signing of the Deed of Easement on Richmond's James River Park, Governor Tim Kaine (r.) thanks Charles Price for his vision and perseverance in his 10-year struggle to see the conservation easement placed on the park. Photo courtesy Governor's office



Prices more competitive

Solar industry predicted to grow again soon

by Ivy Main

Solar energy, long viewed as too expensive for widespread use in Virginia, may reach competitive price levels across the nation within just six years.

This was the big take-home message for several Sierra Club members who attended a one-day conference on April 24, marking the opening of George Washington University's Institute for Analysis of Solar Energy.

By 2015, according to presentations from representatives of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and Deutsche Bank Securities, the cost of installing solar technology will reach price parity with other power sources across 80 percent of the United States.

The solar industry had been growing at a rate of 40 percent per year until last fall's collapse of energy prices and the credit crunch. The industry now expects a couple of bad years, but anticipates thereafter, business will boom.

The market is heavily segmented, with different products competitive in different circumstances and no one technology clearly superior, although thin-film technology is now the industry leader. China claims to have a new low-cost technology, but it remains to be seen whether it can really compete.

One discussion centered on the German model for promoting development of renewable energy. Germany is the world leader in solar installations, in spite of having about as much sunshine as Alaska. Germany achieved this through use of a feed-in tariff (FIT), which sets rates for each different source of electricity and guarantees producers access to the grid at those rates. The rates are determined by the cost of production plus a reasonable profit. This approach costs the government nothing, and the extra cost to consumers amounts to only two Euros (about \$3) per month.

The synergy of solar and wind energy

Wind blows more strongly at night and in the winter, while solar panels produce power in daytime and are most efficient in summer.

was discussed, a point of special interest for Virginia, which has huge offshore wind energy resources. Wind blows more strongly at night and in the winter, while solar panels produce power in daytime and are most efficient in summer.

With improvements in forecasting that will allow transmission grid operators more time to respond, and the continued use of natural gas peaking plants to fill in the supply gaps, the grid will be able to handle large amounts of renewable energy without disruptions in supply.

Presentations are available on the IASE web site, <http://solar.gwu.edu/>.

Rural broadband service now available through micro wind/solar power system

by John Serrell

A micro wind/solar power system to power a mountaintop wireless broadband and weather station site was recently designed and built by Gary K. Summers, owner of Capture Energy. The site, a wind data collection facility for Solaya Renewable Energy, makes rural broadband service available to many farms and homes served previously only by dial-up internet.

This increased internet bandwidth now allows use of agricultural planning and budgeting tools to the rural areas of far western Rockingham County, Virginia and Pendleton County, West Virginia. Farmers can now access applications heretofore prohibitively time consuming, while becoming part of an online community of agribusiness.

The relatively simple hybrid power system combines inexpensive off-the-shelf hardware with an economical installation. Maintenance for the power system is anticipated to be minimal with an annual maintenance of less than one quarter that of a conventional generator.

The unique component of the system is the hybrid charge controller with internal dump load which allows both the photovoltaic panel and wind generator to charge in a combined manner when necessary to provide a high charging current, or individually as in trickle charge mode.

The equipment on the power system includes wireless broadband radios, a color camera with orientation and zoom, a browser accessible weather station and a data transfer device. Additional equipment can be added to the site by only increasing the battery capacity, since unused energy is presently being "dumped" by the controller.

Capture Energy has approximately 10 wind, solar and hydro projects in the design and budgeting phase. The majority of those project areas have good to excellent wind exposure; accordingly, micro wind (or Small Wind) will provide more than one-half the total kilowatt-hours output at about one-third the cost of other energy capture methods.

The goal of Capture Energy in the coming year is to build an in-ground model home to illustrate how comfortable and affordable a completely off-grid green home really is.

The payback for small, manageable and efficient energy systems gets better each day due to keen competition and increased hardware production volumes. The small wind/solar hybrid power system used on Cow Knob has a payback of less than two years, the best in the industry.

Most importantly however, this system enables the extension of broadband internet into areas of rural America previously terrain blocked and distance isolated. It is totally eco-friendly since it produces all of its own electricity from the wind and the sun.

Comments? Send to garyksummers@gmail.com

Just what does it mean to the consumer?

Dominion's "Green Power" option

By Bob Vanderhye

In recent months Dominion Virginia Power started offering a "Green Power" option to its customers. What is it?

Under Dominion's program you pay extra each month for electricity. It can either be a set amount, in two dollar increments, or "100 percent Green Power" at 1.5¢/kWh. In neither case are you actually buying renewable energy. You are still buying the same Dominion-generated electricity you bought previously.

The money from the "Green Power" program purchases Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) from 3 Degrees, a broker based in San Francisco. An REC is a certificate that guarantees that one MWh of electricity has been produced by a renewable source, and that particular MWh will not be sold again.

The electricity itself has already been sold by the producer (e.g., a wind farm) to a utility; the REC only relates to the positive environmental characteristics of that MWh.

RECs provide extra money to the renewable energy producer, aside from what it gets for selling the electricity, to encour-

age new renewable energy generation.

Under Dominion's "Green Power" program, for every two dollars extra you pay each month, one dollar goes to Dominion for administrative expenses and one dollar goes to 3 Degrees, of which some fraction (we don't know how much) goes to the actual provider.

Last year, before Dominion started the Green Power program, its customers could buy actual renewable energy from PEPCO. At that time all the money spent for electricity (i.e., the "Supply Service" on your bill) went directly to a renewable energy supplier.

Virginia individuals and organizations – so far without success – have been trying to get another vendor to replace PEPCO as a supplier of true 100 percent renewable energy to Virginia's ratepayers. The Sierra Club is considering joining in this effort. This could also lead to a green energy option for Allegheny Power customers, who have none at present.

If you are interested in purchasing actual renewable energy if a supplier is found please email that preference to ravar46@gmail.com.

By Rees Shearer

South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford attracted media attention and public condemnation by rejecting federal stimulus funds targeted for his state. Now RAIL Solution has encountered the same intransigence here in Virginia.

We are promoting the National Steel Interstate System (NSIS), a railroad that could do for rail transportation what the Eisenhower Interstate System did 50 years ago for highways. It would create a core national network of high-capacity rail lines, grade separated, and electrified.

There's no better place to pioneer the concept than along the freight-dense I-81 Corridor between Knoxville, TN and Harrisburg, PA. A 21st century rail line could divert excessive trucks from the highway.

Adding freight capacity on rail is less costly economically and far less damaging environmentally than doubling the size of I-81 as the Virginia Department of Transportation currently proposes.

Congressman Rick Boucher offered to help, proposing a feasibility study project in the new federal transportation reauthorization act. I-81 Corridor representatives Bob Goodlatte and Frank Wolfe were ready to sign on.



However, Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer would not agree to accept the grant. So what could have been a major benefit to western and southwest Virginia, and ultimately the nation, may be lost. The NSIS has compelling advantages and is far more than a rail project. It can help the U.S. achieve energy independence, bolster national security, stimulate the economy through infrastructure investment, address climate change through reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improve health and safety, promote energy conservation, reduce pollution, and lessen national dependence on oil.

... what could have been a major benefit to western and southwest Virginia, and ultimately the nation, may be lost.

U.S. freight transportation relies upon oil and contributes the fastest growing greenhouse gas emissions of any energy sector. We need to plan how to preserve national mobility of goods and people when oil is no longer abundant or affordable. People, containers, and long-haul trucks can all ride on trains. A one percent increase in national electrical generation to power NSIS can save seven percent of the nation's oil consumption. This one percent could come readily from conservation or increased wind generation.

The feasibility study could put Virginia at the head of the line when NSIS construction begins. RAIL Solution has moved on to try to get the project inserted through the Senate, later in the summer. Our federal representatives, however, will be blocked if state government remains uncooperative.

RAIL Solution, through its grassroots volunteers, has secured resolutions of support from 44 cities, towns, and governmental organizations in the I-81 Corridor of Virginia and Tennessee. The people have spoken. Now it's time for Governor Tim Kaine to get on board.

Climate and Energy Security Act passes House committee -- so far so good -- but changes could be made

by Jim Gould

The latest version of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES) was passed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee on May 21. To date, ACES is the most comprehensive climate and energy legislation that defines global warming pollution limits.

If passed, ACES will help ensure America's long-term prosperity by jump-starting our economy, creating millions of new, well-paying green jobs, and setting the stage for us to compete and win in a world economy while reducing global warming pollution.

However, numerous committees, including Ways and Means, Agriculture, and Natural Resources, have partial jurisdiction over ACES and could suggest changes to the legislation.

Weakening the bill is not an option. The Sierra Club and partners are mobilizing to ensure changes to legislation strengthen, rather than weaken the bill. We are suggesting Congress add strengthening amendments in the following areas:

- Increase renewable electricity provisions, so that 20 percent of sales are generated from clean renewable energy by 2020,

to ensure we invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency and help reduce energy consumption.

- Preserve EPA's ability under the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions to protect communities from the public health dangers created by carbon pollution.

- Increase the percentage of pollution allowance values dedicated to delivering energy efficiency and renewable energy, creating green jobs, and protecting natural resources, and public health.

Contact your Congressional representative and help ensure this is a strong bill that will give us a clean energy economy and epitomize the change this country demanded last November.

Jim Gould is central Virginia conservation coordinator

Adopting the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)

by Jayme Hill

Every three years the International Code Council (ICC) drafts comprehensive national model construction codes to guide new building construction and renovation projects.

The ICC coordinates with the Department of Energy's Building Energy Code Programs (BECP); the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE); and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to develop the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) as part of the national model construction code. States

are then tasked with adopting and implementing the IECC through administrative procedures.

The adoption process for the 2009 IECC standard is currently taking place in Virginia by the Department of Housing and Community Development Board with a series of workgroup meetings and two public input sessions with 60-day comment periods.

Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign applauds the stricter energy efficiency standards of

the 2009 residential IECC. Improvements in the new model code include

- Increased insulation standards in basement floors, walls and ceilings
- Increased heating and cooling duct-sealing standards
- Increased requirements in sealing the building envelope
- Higher efficiency lighting standards

It is estimated by the U.S. Energy Information Administration that if the new code is adopted and effectively implemented in all 50 states, the result could be a reduction of approximately 100 million metric tons of annual U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The 2009 IECC is good policy that puts proven smart energy solutions to work.

Get involved with the Sierra-Club-Virginia Chapter to advocate for the adoption and implementation of strong energy efficiency building codes. Contact Jayme Hill at 804-225-9113 x103 or jayme.hill@sierraclub.org

Comment Opportunities

July 27, 2009 - Public hearing related to the 2009 IECC - 11am-12:15pm at VA Housing Development Authority office, 4224 Cox Road, Glen Allen VA 23060.

A sixty day comment period will be open from August until October.

January 2010 - Second public hearing. More details will be included in a future *Old Dominion Sierran*.

Why a Building Code?

- Two of Virginia's founding fathers, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, encouraged the development of building code regulations in Early America to ensure citizen health and safety. -ICC

- Energy use in buildings represents the largest source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions (40 percent) and uses as much as 75 percent of U.S. electricity generated from power plants. -Architecture 2030 and AIA

- U.S. households consumed more than 1,100 billion kilowatt hours of electricity in 2001. -US Energy Information Administration

Alex Fredua-Agyemang Summer Intern



Hi everyone,

My name is Alex Fredua-Agyemang. I am an international student from Ghana, Africa, currently enrolled in the Center for Environmental Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am pursuing a master of environment degree in environmental studies.

I discovered the Sierra Club as a result of participating in a class discussion

(stake holder negotiations) in which I was assigned to represent the club as a non-governmental body to champion the course of the watchdog groups in environmental protection. Thanks to my wonderful experience in the class, my interest in the Sierra Club grew and resulted in my pursuing a summer internship with the Virginia Chapter.

Now my duties are to develop industry, chemical, and health effect fact sheets for community members in Hopewell, Virginia. Once completed, the Hopewell Clean Air Network will distribute these sheets throughout the community with the goal of informing citizens about the industrial contributions to their town, for better or for worse. This is really an exciting program, which I expect will yield great results.



Diana Christopulos, long time Sierra Club member and board chair of Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition was named "Woman Taking the Lead in the Roanoke Valley to Save the Planet" during Roanoke's Earth Day festivities. The award, sponsored by Roanoke Public Libraries, was presented by Mayor David Bowers. Diana is pictured (l. to r.) with Mayor Bowers, Bill Modica, chair Roanoke Group and award runner-up Barbara Newman.
Photo by Mark McClain

Cool Cities Coalition launches green initiative with local business

by Eileen Levandoski

Big news out of Roanoke. The Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce is partnering with Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition (RVCCC) to launch a green initiative for its business members. The program will be based on a green checklist developed by Cool Cities Coalition that includes water use, waste disposal, indoor air quality, pollution control, and energy use.

"This is a voluntary program that will

give interested businesses an opportunity to reduce waste and save money while being green business stewards of the Roanoke region. It's a way for even small firms that want to brand themselves as being green, to do so," said Joyce Waugh, president of the Chamber.

"We are very pleased to join the Chamber in this unique partnership," said Diana Christopulos, who chairs Cool Cities.

Cool Cities will develop program content and verify that applicants complete checklist requirements. The Chamber believes this third party verification strengthens the integrity of the program.

The Chamber provides networking, recognition and educational opportunities for its 1,300 businesses, which employ more than 90,000 people. For its part, Cool Cities includes many regional leaders in energy conservation, renewable energy and green business practices. Its 165 affiliates represent more than 15,000 citizens. Nearly two dozen organizations are already members of both the Chamber and Cool Cities.

Hampton Roads to soon be cooler also

The newly formed Hampton Roads Cool Communities Coalition was host to a Climate Leadership Workshop at the end of June. Presenters included Joe Lerch, environmental manager with Virginia Municipal League, and Glen Besa, Sierra Club's Virginia chapter director.

Roanoke's Diana Christopulos agreed to discuss why and how the RVCCC helped their local governments embrace the five emission reduction milestones promoted by ICLEI -- the International Council for

Local Environmental Initiatives -- how they tackled measuring GHG emissions for municipal and community operations, and how they achieved an outstanding level of community participation resulting in real progress on reducing their carbon footprint.

Eileen Levandoski is Hampton Roads conservation coordinator

ROANOKE GROUP

The Roanoke Group executive committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Members are always welcome to participate. On the second Friday of each month, we sponsor Earth Friendly Friday, a program series of environmental-themed presentations usually featuring guest speakers. Details of these events and all our activities are listed on our web page <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/roanoke/>, or contact group chair Bill Modica for information (540)387-2782.

Roanoke Cool Citizen awards

Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition, a local global warming and energy policy alliance founded by the Roanoke Sierra Club, gave their first "Cool Citizen" awards in May. Awards were given in five categories -- Government, Business, Non-Profit, Media, and Special Achievement. Winners of the awards were

- Government -- Gwen Mason, Roanoke City Council and Ken Cronin, Director General Services, City of Roanoke

- Media -- Lauren Cook and Bob Grebe, WDBJ7 Mornin' Show
- Business -- Roanoke Cement and Breakell Inc. General Contractors
- Non-Profit -- Hollins University and U.S. Green Building Council Southwest Virginia Chapter
- Special Achievement -- Rupert Cutler, former director of Cool Cities and now Roanoke City Councilman, and Jeff Barrie, creator of *Kilowatt Ours*.



Diana Christopulos recognizes the nominees for the government category (l. to r.) Jim Vodnik, Roanoke County; Ms. Christopulos, Gwen Mason, Roanoke City Council; Ken Cronin, City of Roanoke; Charlotte Moore, Cave Spring District Supervisor, Roanoke County.
Photo by Mark McClain.

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

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- York River:** Tyla Matteson, 804/275-6476
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Johns Creek Mountain from White Rock area in Mountain Lake Wilderness.

Photo by Sherman Bamford

Third Tour de Cut hike to highlight Mountain Lake Wilderness area

by Sherman Bamford

The Tour de Cut is a series of hikes designed to let people learn about the unique places in our national forests and to take a personal interest in protecting them. Please join us.

The next Tour de Cut hike will be Saturday, August 29, in the Mountain Lake Wilderness located in Giles County and Monroe County in southwest Virginia.

The wilderness area, north of Blacksburg, has recently been expanded, thanks to the passage of the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act earlier this year. The legislation protects 53,000 acres of southwestern Virginia as national scenic areas, wilderness study areas, and designated wilderness.

We will walk along Potts Mountain Trail and hike the secluded ridgetop trail to explore the rich forests, a small meadow, and two scenic outcrops at Wind Rock and White Rocks. We will approach a newly added section of the wilderness area, which is hard to reach, and hike part of the area, if time permits. Our hike includes a section of the Appalachian Trail and a series of trails around War Spur.

The hike is approximately five miles long, and is rated easy. We will meet and depart at 9:30 a.m. at the Forest Service Eastern Divide Ranger District office, Blacksburg, located at 110 Southpark Drive just north of the intersection of Business 460 (South Main) and four-lane 460.

Please contact Sherman Bamford if interested in the hike, if you want ideas about lodging or camping in the area, or if you have any questions.

Due to Forest Service wilderness area regulations, the size of the group will be strictly limited to 10 people. If more than 10 people sign up, the co-leader of the hike and I may arrange for an alternate group hike on the same day and time at a different location in Mountain Lake Wilderness.

Sherman Bamford, PO Box 3102, Roanoke, Va. 24015-1102, (540) 343-6359. bamford2@verizon.net

Sherman Bamford is Virginia Chapter forests chair

Series of beginning backpacking classes followed by trip to False Cape State Park

by Liz Guertin

Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO) recently began offering Beginner Backpacking Classes in an effort to grow a larger backpacking community with ties to the area Sierra Club. The classes are designed for the person who has always wanted to backpack, but never tried it.

Focusing on topics such as gear selection, trip planning, and what to eat in the backcountry, the first series was offered in March/April. This was followed by a beginner backpacking trip to False Cape State Park, near Virginia Beach, in May.

The “what to eat” class was complete with menu tastings of freeze-dried foods, non-traditional trail mix, and a sampling of homemade, dehydrated turkey chili (delicious).

Folks attending the next series can look forward to attempting backpacking pizza, as well as a topographic mapping demonstration, full gear description, and two friendly, enthusiastic leaders -- Liz Guertin and Mike Darzi.

The backpacking trip to False Cape State Park was full of learning opportunities. The park, bordered by Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, is 10 miles of pristine Atlantic beach and the waters of fresh water Back Bay.



Beginning backpacker struggles to start her gas stove. Photo by Michael Darzi

It is a good spot for beginning backpackers because it requires a nine-mile hike in, offering gentle terrain, established campsites, pit-toilets, and a reliable water source.

With these amenities, beginning back-

With these amenities, beginning backpackers could focus on setting up tents (proving harder than it looks), cooking on gas stoves, and filtering water . . .

packers could focus on setting up tents (proving harder than it looks), cooking on gas stoves, and filtering water – not to mention mounting an effective assault on the many mosquitoes.

And wildlife

abounds. Trip members encountered one raccoon, five snakes, countless sand crabs, egrets, herons, blackbirds, pelicans, butterflies, and a snail. There are occasional sightings of dolphins, feral pigs, ponies, and foxes.

For information on backpacking classes or any of the outings, visit www.sierrapotomac.org/index.htm. Backpacking classes are scheduled for July 12, Aug 2, and Aug 30. Trip is planned for late September.

Updated plan for George Washington National Forest to be released soon

by Sherman Bamford

A new draft of the George Washington National Forest Plan could be released to the public as early as July 2009. Conservationists are increasingly dismayed with drafts of the plan seen so far, which indicate the agency is planning to release a plan that allows many inappropriate activities in important areas.

The Forest Service has examined significantly more roadless areas (in agency jargon, “potential wilderness areas”) than in the past. It is important for the public to insist all of these areas (plus additional Virginia Mountain Treasure areas) be fully protected. If we do not protect our roadless areas, natural areas, and backcountry areas today, they may not be here for our children or grandchildren to enjoy.

We have received word George Washington National Forest is one of only a handful of forests in the nation still proceeding under the flawed 2008 Bush Administration Planning Regulations, now being contested in court by the Sierra Club and others.

Don't let our Virginia national forests be the “guinea pig” for outdated planning regulations that put road building and timber cutting above science and above genuine public oversight and involvement.

Use the alert at www.virginiaforest-watch.org/alerts/SC_GWPlan.html to comment on the George Washington National Forest Plan. See <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision/> for updates on the Plan Revision.

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What's lurking inside our personal care products?

by Barbara Cruickshank

A young mother compares prices on shampoo and lotion for her infant son. A group of teenagers try out the newest shades and flavors of lip gloss. Other shoppers are buying personal care products for themselves and their families. Many of these shoppers do not know the products they are buying contain chemicals that accumulate in their bodies.

Most do not know that these chemicals are linked to cancers, neurologic dysfunction, hormone disruption, immune disorders, and asthma, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

There are more than 80,000 chemicals in use in this country. According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG.org), only about 11 percent of these chemicals have had safety testing for use by humans.

The EPA does not require premarket testing of most chemicals in the United States. Companies are free to use chemicals in a variety of combinations. They are not required

to list all ingredients on the product label.

Scientists have long researched chemical pollution in our water, air, and land. They have only recently begun to look inside the human body. Studies are confirming what many scientists have long suspected -- chemicals in products we use everyday are accumulating in our bodies.

These chemicals are inhaled into our lungs, absorbed through the skin, eaten in food, and passed through the umbilical cord to the unborn fetus.

A study in 2005 examined umbilical cord blood and found an astonishing array of 287 different chemicals in 10 newborn infants. This included 22 different pesticides, flame retardants, heavy metals, wood varnishes, and many other indus-



trial chemicals. Blood samples of teenagers detected chemicals from cosmetics, sunscreens, and shampoos. Scientists speculate that all humans are carrying a body burden of industrial chemicals.

Many scientists are concerned that the accumulation of chemicals in the human body is contributing to the increases being seen in cancers, autoimmune disorders, neurologic diseases, and asthma. The American Nurses Association (ANA) has joined with the Environmental Working Group (EWG), the Sierra Club and others in an effort to increase public awareness.

EWG scientists have developed a data base of personal care products that enables the consumer to learn the chemical com-

position of a product, the potential health effects of the chemicals, and the overall toxicity rating of the product. Consumers are also able to find products with lower chemical toxicity scores (ewg.org/reports/skin-deep/).

Citizens need to become educated and advocate for legislation that requires premarket safety testing of chemicals in consumer products. A good place to start is *Contaminated Without Consent*. This short video, featuring scientists and physicians at the forefront of this research, is available at www.contaminatedwithoutconsent.org/.

Sierrans should support companies that are making safe products and boycott companies that are not. We have a responsibility to inform the public about dangerous chemicals in personal care products in order to prevent further unnecessary exposures.

Barbara Cruickshank, RN, MSN, is a member of the Piedmont Group and works at University of Virginia Medical Center.

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Backpacking weekend in False Cape State Park



After hiking nine miles into False Cape State Park, students of a recent backpacking class take a break on a dock. Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings is offering beginning backpacking classes followed by a weekend hike. See article on Page 7.

Photo by Michael Darzi