

Old Dominion Sierran

Virginia Chapter Sierra Club
March/April 2009



Good Jobs, Green Jobs

Making a Down Payment on the Green Economy

by Barbara Null

Converging on Washington from around the country, 2,500 environmentalists and union leaders heard speakers advocate a healthy environment, a green economy and good, green jobs. They attended workshops learning what and where green jobs are and how coalitions of environmentalists and unions work.

They discussed green chemistry, new energy economy, green supply chain, sustainable transportation infrastructure, environmental justice, workforce training for a green economy, energy efficiency, making green jobs cool – appealing to youth, and much, much more.

This was the February 4-6 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference, put on by the Blue Green Alliance. Emphasis was placed on common goals of labor and environmentalists, understanding one another and the strength in working together to achieve our goals.

Common Goals

When a manufacturing plant closes and workers lose their jobs, the environment and workers both benefit when another firm goes into the closed plant, retools and begins building components for solar

or wind energy. Their concern, however, is that the re-tooling is safe and non-toxic.

A local United Steel Workers union and Sierra Club joined together recently when workers suspected their plant of releasing a toxic chemical into a nearby stream. The chemical could effect the workers, the stream and adjoining neighborhoods. The employer disclaimed responsibility.

After a joint effort testing the water and contacting the media, the coalition was successful and the employer remedied the problem.

As the green economy grows, environmentalists and workers share the goal that green jobs offer good wages, benefits and are safe.

If jobs are kept local, workers will not have to use undue amounts of fuel to get to work. If the work is sent abroad the carbon costs to ship products back are exorbitant.

Understanding Each Other

As a coalition of environmentalists and labor begins its work, every party must sit down together to discuss its issues and concerns. After

Blue Green Alliance

The Blue Green Alliance was founded in 2006 by United Steel Workers and Sierra Club in an effort to expand the green economy and advance the rights of workers,

The partnership, which now includes additional unions (blue) and environmental organizations (green), has a common goal – to realize the enormous opportunities of investing in global warming solutions, which will create good jobs, increase our energy independence and make the environment safer for future generations.

The Blue Green Alliance plans to educate the public about solutions that:

- Reduce global warming in the timeframe necessary to avoid the effects of climate change.
- Restore the rights of workers to form a union and bargain collectively.
- Achieve enforceable labor, environmental and human rights standards in trade policies.
- Curb the use of toxic chemicals to enhance public health and promote safer alternatives.

examining individual agendas, common concerns will eventually emerge.

Case in point

Large areas around the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach suffer serious air pollution caused by short haul truckers picking up containers from ships and deliver-

ing them to nearby warehouses. The truckers, with a standard of living inadequate to support their families, are unable to maintain their 20-year-old, dirty trucks. A large percentage of the people with homes in the area suffer serious respiratory diseases.

The truck drivers are “independent contractors” making low wages, no benefits and no protections. Trucking companies took no responsibility for the dirty trucks, the Ports no responsibility for the trucking companies.

Into this quandary entered the Teamsters Union, the Coalition for Clean Air and a community action group, Consumers Union. An unlikely bunch to be working together, they first sat down, ironed out their differences and focused on their common goal.

After years of unswerving, hard work, they have had recent successes. Trucking companies at both ports agreed to buy a fleet of new, clean trucks. Only at the Port of Los Angeles are the trucking companies hiring the drivers, opening a means to assure good wages,

benefits and protections. Port of Long Beach trucking companies continue to lease trucks to “independent contractors,” leaving the coalition with more work ahead.

Strength in Working Together

• Unions bring people to a coalition with strong organizing and rallying skills.

• Environmentalists bring scientific study and environmental screening skills.

• Each group has a different set of “friends in high places.”

• This unlikely pairing is fodder for the news media – the coalition will get far more coverage than each entity could attract alone.

The Work Ahead

If the stimulus package can jump-start the green economy, environmentalists and unions have a great opportunity. They are, however, challenged with more relentless work to reach our common goals.

We need to assure that funds state and local governments receive are used on projects that will actually reduce carbon emissions, and the jobs created have good wages, benefits and safe working conditions.

Green Jobs Expo



photos by Barbara Null



NOTES FROM the CHAIR

by Charles Price

Relationships between enviros & unions can help resolve economic & environmental crisis

On the previous page is a review of the excellent Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference held in Washington D.C. on February 4-6. Twenty-seven Virginia chapter members and staff attended.

Heavy emphasis was on the collaboration between the environmental community and the American labor movement that could contribute to the increased strength of both.

The most important message to come from the conference was that this collaboration has potential for the quickest and best solution to the massive economic crisis we are currently experiencing. This coupling would yield the huge number of jobs needed to achieve economic recovery with the equally important need to re-power America with clean and efficient technologies to produce energy, reducing CO₂ emissions, the major cause of global warming and climate change.

How can labor and enviros work together to yield these profoundly important results? Macrocosmically, they are readily apparent:

- Collaborative promotion of each movement's deeply-held issues and campaigns.

- Collaborative lobbying for legislation that will convert their respective aspirations into satisfactory and beneficial policy and law.
- Collaborative campaigning and support for political candidates that embrace both pro-labor and pro-environmental issues.

At the local level, in the day-to-day functioning of labor and environmental organizations, how can we bring about mutual trust and effective working relationships that will result in the macrocosmic collaborations needed to yield the desired, lasting, and high-stake results?

Let's take the example of local Sierra Club groups. Local groups could invite leaders or representatives of local labor organizations to Sierra Club meetings to hear environmental programs and to visit socially over refreshments. Likewise, local labor organizations could reciprocate.

There are many possibilities for building meaningful and trusting relationships between local enviros and labor.

Well begun is half done.

Take the first steps towards resolving America's economic and environmental crises.

Some green jobs found to be poor jobs



Not all green jobs are good jobs. When Americans were encouraged to use compact fluorescent light bulbs to save energy, General Electric, the largest manufacturer of incandescent bulbs in the U.S., closed six plants in Ohio, eliminating 425 good jobs. They would not adapt existing plants to CFLs, claiming the cost would not justify the result. Manufacture of G.E.'s CFLs was sent to China.

According to Bama Athrey, executive director of International Labor Rights Forum, workers in a G.E. CFL plant in China, mostly women, are paid \$7 a day and work up to 70 hours a week with no overtime pay.

They wear no protective clothing while working with the mercury and lead used to manufacture the bulbs. When bulbs break, they are thrown in the trash, exposing the land and people in the area to mercury and lead.

This "green" product seems to be manufactured by oppressed workers in unsafe working conditions, with no regard to the surrounding environment.

by Barbara Null

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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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Taking the message of Green Jobs to Capitol Hill

by Glen Besa

On the first day of the Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference, a few participants rode the Metrorail to Capitol Hill to talk with members of Congress about green jobs and related measures in the Obama stimulus package.

Our Virginia delegation attended meetings with staffers for Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner and Congressman Gerry Connolly. We met in person with Con-

gressmen Glenn Nye and Tom Perriello.

Our message was well received. It is possible to have a healthy economy and a healthy environment. This can be achieved by investing in efficiency and renewable energy creating millions of green jobs.

Off the coast of Virginia Beach, Congressman Glenn Nye's district, four gigawatts of wind power are waiting to be tapped. In Congressman Perriello's largely rural district, there is the promise of bio fu-

els from agricultural wastes and crops like switch grass. In both instances, green jobs can begin to repair our environment and our economy while combating global warming.

Regardless of where you live in Virginia, tell your Congressmen global warming is a severe problem, but that the solutions can rebuild our flagging economy and secure our energy security.



On Capitol Hill, (l. to r.) Terra Pascaros, Glen Besa, Congressman Glen Nye, Ben Duff, Eileen Levandoski



In the Congressman's office, (l. to r.) Glen Besa, Eileen Levandoski, Congressman Tom Perriello, Terra Pascaros, Ben Duff

February town hall meetings on Green Jobs feature Virginia Congressmen, environmentalists and academics

by Jim Gould

Now, in the midst of a severely depressed economy, we can demonstrate that environmental protection and economic development go hand-in-hand. With the support of President Obama, we have the opportunity to move the economy in the right direction, one that helps American families make ends meet, ends our dependence on oil, and helps solve global warming.

Like most states, Virginia has been unable to shield itself from the effects of the recession, but the Commonwealth is hopeful that help will come in the form of a multi-billion dollar federal stimulus package.

Adopted by lawmakers in Congress in mid-February, Virginia's share of the package could be an investment that would help create jobs for more than 200,000 workers currently unemployed and lessen the state's \$3 billion deficit.

The national package includes more than \$62 billion in direct spending on clean energy, energy efficiency, another \$20 billion in tax incentives for clean energy. Other investments will help clean up past environmental wrongs, ensure that we have clean water, and fund research into the technolo-

gies of tomorrow. The scale of the investments is simply unprecedented.

Throughout the third week in February, Sierra Club and the Virginia environmental community hosted three town hall meetings to help Virginians better understand the economic stimulus package and ensure that funds to the state are used to support clean energy jobs.

The well-attended meetings featured panelists from the legislative, environmental, academic, and labor communities. Congressmen Gerry Connolly and Bobby Scott appeared at both the Fairfax County and Richmond town hall meetings.

In Richmond, Dr. James Wetzels, environmental economics professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, and member of the Sierra Club, helped the audience understand the economics behind the stimulus package.

Senior Environmental Planner, Dale Medearis, was in Fairfax to explain the benefits of smart growth development in urban areas and the importance of off-setting sea level rise.

In Norfolk, George Hagerman from Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium outlined the outstanding potential for wind energy off Virginia's coast, and the economic and environmental benefits of wind energy investments.

Check www.virginia.sierraclub.org, for future green jobs town hall meetings being planned with Senators Mark Warner and Jim Webb and with Congressman Tom Perriello.

Jim Gould is Central Virginia Conservation Coordinator

Virginia Chapter steps up its tubing action

by Eileen Levandoski

Much to former Sen. Ted Steven's chagrin, the Virginia Chapter is stepping up its efforts to ride the Internet tubes. Our online communications toolbox has a number of new additions helping with our environmental advocacy work.

National Sierra Club added "Convio" to our local arsenal. More than just the average Action Alerts, we are now offering a bi-monthly e-newsletter with the capacity to RSVP for our events.

We now can issue Call Alerts. Our first Call Alert, sent in early February, asked you to call your legislator about specific energy efficiency bills. Clicking through the email you went to a page which provided you with the phone number of your legislator, a sample

ARTICLE XI To PRESERVE AND PROTECT

script for your call, and a form to report your call back to us. We hope that adding telephone calls to the volume of emails to our legislators will help sway their decisions.

Universal Sierra Club use of Convio allows us to expand our advocacy work beyond our state borders as appropriate. In early January, more than 71,000 Action Alerts were delivered to Sierra Club members in neighboring states asking them to urge the Federal government to stop Virginia's offshore Lease Sale 220.

We've also added blogging (aka electronic pamphleteering). Several Virginia environmental groups banded together to form a community blog called "Article XI," named for Virginia Code section that mandates protection and preservation of its natural resources. Article XI can be the one stop source for Virginia's environmental news. Look for posts by our Roger Dietrich, Richard Ball, Eileen Levandoski and Glen Besa.

All are welcome. Go to <http://www.ArticleXI.com> and contribute to the discussion with posts and comments.

Eileen Levandoski is Virginia Chapter Hampton Roads organizer



You can help bring clean energy to Virginia

Each March, the Virginia Chapter contacts you with the annual fundraising letter asking for your donation to directly support our environmental work in the Commonwealth. We have our work cut out for us in 2009.

We have the opportunity to capitalize on a clean energy future by supporting President Obama's initiatives on efficiency investments, wind and energy power while creating millions of 'green jobs' to reinvigorate our economy.

We will advocate for Governor Kaine to aggressively promote Virginia's offshore wind resources and closely evaluate the detrimental impacts of two proposed conventional coal plants.

At the same time, we will evaluate environmental credentials of the four candi-

dates who want to be our next governor. This essential work *must* continue during these challenging economic times.

We know you are more careful now with your hard-earned dollars, but at this tipping point in our history, the Virginia Chapter needs your help to take delivery on the promise of a clean, 'green' energy future. Your contribution really does make a difference.

Expect the letter to arrive in your mailbox in early March. Please be as generous as you can. Your contribution is used to directly impact our way of life in the Commonwealth.

Mail your contribution to:
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
422 E. Franklin Street, Ste. 302
Richmond, VA 23219

Win a canoe trip down the Mattaponi River

The Mattaponi River is a special place — the most pristine river in Virginia and a wonderful flat water experience even the novice can enjoy.

For more than ten years, Sierra Club with the Alliance to Save the Mattaponi, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Southern Environmental Law Center and the Mattaponi Indian Tribe have battled the King William Reservoir to a standstill. To this day, the City of Newport News has not turned a shovel of dirt for this destructive project and may never

get that chance if the State Water Control Board rules against the city when it takes up the permit for this project again in 2012.

To win this half day paddle on the Mattaponi, return the March Appeal response form. No contribution is necessary to win. However, if you can make a contribution to our March Appeal, you'll be helping us protect the Mattaponi River as well as support the wide range of conservation campaigns undertaken by the Sierra Club in Virginia. All entries must be received by April 30.

MARCH FUND RAISING APPEAL

Yes! I support the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter's lobbying efforts and work to support candidates for elected office who are committed to protecting Virginia's and our nation's environment.

Enclosed is my non-tax deductible gift in the amount of:

\$500 \$100 \$50 \$25 other

Yes, I'd like a chance to win a paddle on the Mattaponi
(No donation necessary to win)

Thank you for your support.

Send this form, along with your check, to Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, 422 E. Franklin Street, Ste. 302, Richmond, VA 23219

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

Survey on climate change sent to state legislators

Virginia Chapter Sierra Club distributed a short survey on climate change to all 140 state legislators at the beginning of the General Assembly session, with a January 30 deadline. We received responses from 21 Delegates and seven Senators. As we stated to the legislators, we have posted their names and responses on our Chapter website, www.virginia.sierraclub.org.

With a 20 percent return, we have a sampling of elected officials across the board, from a range of localities in Virginia, rural and urban. The criteria included gender, race, and age. We are able to accept legislator's surveys that missed the deadline.

This analysis omits legislators' names as it provides an overview of their answers.

The survey began with a paragraph explaining the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment report of 2007 by 2,500 scientific experts, with the consensus that global climate change is probably human caused, translating to 90 percent likely. The report states climate changes include more frequent heat waves, droughts, heavy precipitation events, shrinking of arctic sea ice, and sea level rise from thermal expansion, melting ice caps and glaciers.

by Tyla Matteson

The snapshot below represents six Republicans, 21 Democrats, and one Independent. The two most staunch skeptics on climate change were Republicans, although other Republicans acknowledged the IPCC findings, through their responses.

Environmental constituent contacts seem to make a difference

Of interest is the correlation of skeptics or those who are somewhat skeptical with a lesser number of constituents contacting them on climate change. Likewise, a higher number of constituents contacting a legislator correlates with a legislator with

more concern about climate change, more likely to take immediate action.

Our survey spurred an interesting response from a group called the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, who apparently sent letters to the legislators, disparaging our survey. The letter stated greenhouse gases contribute to global warming as much as variations in solar radiation. It concluded temperatures will not likely rise in the next five years. Therefore, it stated, we should wait five years and see what kind of cycle the sun is going through.

One answer this group proposes to solve the problem is using geo-engineering to replicate a volcanic eruption, shooting reflective aerosols into the atmosphere to reflect sun-

light and reduce temperatures. In response to this idea, Ross Gelbspan, author of two books on climate change, wrote that other researchers predict seeding the atmosphere would trigger a global drought, after studying the effects of the eruption of Pinatubo in 1991.

Another note of interest is an excerpt from a recent newsletter from State Senator Stosch to his con-

stituents in the Richmond area on climate change:

"There are a host of bills to encourage increased investments in clean or "green" businesses plus regulations on those businesses which are not. Many initiatives come from the Governor's Climate Change Commission. The Commission based its recommendations on the view that global warming is a settled matter of fact and decided that Virginia should pursue strategies ahead of whatever initiatives the Obama administration might consider. You may want to question those assumptions. I do."

Members who do not have access to a computer can receive the survey results by mail. Call Tyla Matteson at 804-275-6476.

Tyla Matteson is Virginia Chapter political/legislative chair.

Five questions and answers of 28 respondents

Is it clear or not clear that significant climate changes have occurred in the last decade?

• Clear or very clear - 25 • Not clear - 2 • Some changes clear - 1

Are global climate changes occurring primarily as a result of human activity?

• Yes - 25 • No - 2 • Some changes are human causes - 1

What is the probability (in percentage) that climate change is human caused?

(Twelve respondents did not provide a number, or used "high" or "do not know")

• Zero percent - 1 • 50-69 percent - 3 • 70-89 percent - 5 • 90-100 percent - 7

Of the 25 who replied Yes to this question, the average was about 82 percent.

Is immediate action needed this session to deal with climate change?

• Yes - 20 • No - 2 • other responses, such as "within budget constraints" - 6

Would you oppose legislation in the Virginia 2009 General Assembly session, if certain terms are used in the wording of legislation, such as "global warming," "climate change," or "greenhouse gases," as occurred in the 2008 session?

• No - 24 • Yes - 1 • other responses - 3

How many of your constituents have you heard from on the topic of climate change?

• Zero to four - 4 • Five to ten - 5 • Ten or more - 19

Urban runoff polluting, eroding our streams

by David Bernard

Stormwater is the term used to describe the water that runs off human-built solid surfaces from rain or snowmelt. Some environmentalists are not comfortable with that term, since "stormwater" is literally a life-giving natural process when the water falls onto a natural surface.

"Urban runoff" more aptly describes the problem that Virginia's fast-paced development has caused for water quality, even as other pollution prevention and conservation practices bring improvement.

In each of the last three decades Virginia's population increased by 15 percent. The land covered by human-built impervious (water-proof) surfaces increased even faster than that. This resulted in quick rises in stream levels and erosion of stream banks which have often already been stripped of their forests.

Leaks from vehicles, pet waste, air-deposited pollution, and litter wash downstream. Low-lying developments are

flooded, and aquifers under the impervious surfaces are not recharged with water.

For some time now, new developments have been required to build retention ponds to slow the runoff, but older development and exempt projects continue to add to the problem.

The good news is that Virginia is writing new regulations aimed at "getting the Commonwealth's stormwater codes advanced to a level that will truly start to protect our streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay." Improved regulations developed by a stormwater technical advisory committee will be open to public comment this spring.

These regulations will require expensive changes to both new and existing buildings and roads, which, of course, will be resisted. It is important for all citizens who understand the big picture to voice support for strong controls on urban runoff.

Thanks to John Tippett, Executive Director of Friends of the Rappahannock for contributing to this article

LOVE the EARTH --
LIVE the SIMPLE
LIFE



Save money/reduce carbon

Is your refrigerator an energy hog?

The average refrigerator consumes more energy than any other household appliance. We spend over \$10 billion in the U.S., alone, to supply energy to our household refrigerators. The following tips will save you money and reduce your carbon (energy) footprint:

- Clean the filter and coils annually. Most Americans rarely, if ever, get around to vacuuming out the filter and coils on the back of the fridge. A dusty coil can increase energy consumption by 20 percent or more.
- Keep it full but not stuffed: A fridge and freezer will be able to retain their coolness better if they're full. If you're not at full capacity, place a few containers of water in the freezer.

- Think about what you want before you open the fridge. Every time you open the fridge to browse for a snack, you consume around 9 to 13 watt/hours, which is enough power to light a 60-watt bulb for 10 minutes.

- Let hot items cool before placing them in the refrigerator.
- Defrost the freezer regularly.
- Check the door gasket for a tight seal.
- Cover liquids and foods stored in the refrigerator. Uncovered foods release moisture and make the compressor work harder.
- If your fridge is older than 1993, get a new one. You're spending so much on your electric bill, you'll actually save money. New models use less energy than a 75-watt light bulb. Be sure to look for the Energy Star label.

Thanks to Organic Consumers.org



Court opens floodgate for more mountaintop removal coal mines

by Virginia Cramer

On February 13, a panel of federal judges from the U.S. Fourth Circuit in Richmond ruled in favor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in a controversial mountaintop removal mining case. The ruling will permit mining companies to conduct devastating mountaintop removal coal mining operations without acting to minimize stream destruction or conducting adequate environmental reviews.

As a result, Appalachia could now be facing up to 90 new mountaintop removal coal mining operations, which would destroy huge swaths of the Appalachian Mountains, including parts of southwest Virginia.

Mountaintop removal mining, a destruc-

tive form of coal mining, has already buried more than 1,200 miles of streams and threatens to destroy 1.4 million acres of land by 2020. The mining poisons drinking water, lays waste to wildlife habitat, increases the risk of flooding and wipes out entire communities.

The court decision emphasizes the need for the new administration to take immediate steps to curb mountaintop removal coal mining and undo the mistakes of the past. During his campaign President Obama implored, "We're tearing up the Appalachian Mountains because of our dependence on fossil fuels."

Now the administration has an opportunity to make good on campaign promises and chart a new path away from mountaintop removal coal mining.

Mountaintop mining decision just one step backwards in march toward Climate Justice

by Mary Anne Hitt

While the federal court's decision authorizing mountaintop removal coal mining is a disappointment, through mid-February, Sierra Club and our allies have strung together an impressive list of victories around the country.

• **Feb 11** The Governor of South Carolina announced his opposition to the Pee Dee coal plant.

• **Feb 11** Sierra Club Coal Campaign director Bruce Nilles is named 2008 Eco-Hero of the year by Grist.

• **Feb 10** The West Virginia Surface Mine Board held a hearing to decide whether Massey Energy may begin the process of destroying Coal River Mountain and its wind farm potential. Coal River Mountain is a symbol of the choices facing our country right now. Local residents want to put a wind farm on the mountain, generating long-term jobs and beginning a new economic model for the area. Massey Energy wants to blow up portions of the mountain to get to the coal below.

• **Feb 9** Nevada Energy announced they are halting plans to build the Ely Energy Center in eastern Nevada.

• **Feb 7** American Electric Power announced it is putting its coal gasification plant in Meigs County, Ohio on hold.

• **Feb 6** Wisconsin's Gov. Doyle announced the Charter Street plant would burn biomass instead of coal, saying "We must move away from our dependence on coal."

• **Feb 3** Pennsylvania rejected a waste coal plant planned for Somerset County.

• **Feb 3** Michigan's Gov. Granholm puts clean energy before coal. In her *State of the State* address the Governor announced plans to send all new coal plant developers back to the drawing board to consider clean energy alternatives to the coal plants. The Governor's plan also calls for reducing the state's dependence on fossil fuels 45 percent by 2020.

• **Feb 3** Georgia legislators propose a bill that would prevent coal plants in Georgia from burning coal mined using devastating mountaintop removal techniques and putting a hold on new coal plants.

• **Feb 11** The Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission cooperative announced it was abandoning plans for its Highwood coal-fired power plant and instead pursuing a clean mix of wind and natural gas.

• **Jan 29** The Air Force scraps plans for a liquid coal plant at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana, saying it was "not viable."

Mary Anne Hitt is deputy campaign director of Sierra Club National Coal Campaign

Virginia offshore drilling still a threat at start of new Administration

by Eileen Levandoski

Hopes dashed as Interior Secretary Ken Salazar delivered remarks about the prospect for offshore oil and gas development in the Outer Continental Shelf. However suspiciously Virginia was enrolled in the 2007-2012 program, it still lives on.

However, one last parting "gift" from the Bush Administration, which vastly expanded the 2010-2015 program to more areas of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and the Gulf of Mexico, and to ranges just three miles out, was granted a 180-day delay. Salazar called the Bush move a "headlong rush of the worst kind."

Sec. Salazar promises to return "science" to the Federal government's vocabulary. He promises that offshore oil and gas development will be responsible and part of a broader comprehensive energy policy focused on producing more renewable energy from wind, solar, geothermal as well as tidal and wave power.

Look at the sacrifice Virginia is posed to offer should Lease Sale 220 go through and ask yourself if this is what Salazar would term "responsible." We risk losing sensitive shoreline habitats that support such treasures as the blue crab, sea scallops, bluefin tuna, and endangered right whale.

We jeopardize our coastal economies which employ thousands and generate millions of dollars of revenue as visitors flock to our clean beaches.

We risk our national security. The Pentagon expressed "considerable concern" for drilling activities that would restrict or possibly shut down its critical activities. And we contribute to global warming that causes ruinous sea level rise affecting our coastal communities.

And for what? As the *Virginian-Pilot* succinctly points out, "This effort isn't ultimately about Virginia. It's about opening up more oil-rich states to our north and south. Virginia is just the foot in the door petroleum companies need to reach into other states' more lucrative offshore territories." Is being used as "a foot in the door" responsible?

Frequently in the past, the Federal government has ignored the fact their plans vio-

late Virginia's Energy Policy of 2007, which supports exploration for natural gas only — not oil. Yet MMS and the current federal policy states, "gas only leasing is not currently an option because the OCS Lands Act does not allow for leasing of and exploration for natural gas only. Additionally, there are technical and engineering challenges to gas-only leasing including maintaining appropriate reservoir development and determining what would happen if oil was found."

We need to let the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee know that drilling off Virginia's coast is neither responsible nor desirable by any means.

Eileen Levandoski is Virginia Chapter Hampton Roads organizer



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS

Petition to reduce "Hopewell Smell" delivered to local asphalt plant

Reprinted with permission of Hopewell News

by Elliot Robinson

On Jan. 22, the Hopewell Clean Air Network made its first formal steps to reduce smells and the chemicals that cause them in the city and surrounding area. A petition with about 80 signatures was presented to Regional Enterprise Inc., which produces asphalt, to mitigate smells it releases around City Point.

The Clean Air Network was formed in May and has about 30 members, said Jim Gould, conservation project coordinator with the Sierra Club. The group has concerns about the air quality in the city.

The petition asked Regional Enterprises and its parent company, Rio Vista Energy to add more pollution controls and prevention technology to greatly reduce odors and air emissions from the business. Additionally, it asks that lines of communication are opened between the company and the surrounding citizens.

As Regional Enterprises and other surrounding industries are not breaking any laws, the petition is just a suggestion, Gould said. "We can only ask them to act on this on their own good will as neighbors," he said.

Eventually, the Clean Air Network plans to present similar petitions to other industries in the city to request they make changes to reduce what is released into the atmosphere. They see Regional Enterprises as a small but important step forward.

"They can be the leaders of this," said Rebekah Goodwin, who signed the petition. "If we don't ask now, when will it happen?"

In a matter related to the city's air quality, the Hopewell Clean Air Network released the results of independent air tests around



Jim Gould steadies the Hopewell Clean Air Network's petition that asks for reductions in potentially hazardous chemicals from the air in Hopewell as Bekah Goodwin signs.

the city Jan. 30. The release said the test results "showed levels of airborne chemicals as much as 300 times higher than considered safe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."

Over the summer, concerned citizens collected air samples, which were tested by Columbia Analytical Services, a US EPA-certified lab in California.

The release also said that, separately, the city's factories may be in compliance with state air quality regulations but will need to make a collective effort to reduce pollutants into the atmosphere.

"We are hopeful that with this information we can advance a dialogue with local industries and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality that will result in cleaner air not only for Hopewell, but all of Virginia," Gould said in the statement.

Piedmont Group members enjoy winter hike



Piedmont Group outings chair Allie Crowell (l.) leads a February 7 hike on Observatory Mountain in Charlottesville. Photo by John Cruickshank

Sierra Club influences SCC's IRP guidelines

by Steve Bruckner

Virginia Chapter energy activists submitted comments to the State Corporation Commission (SCC) on their *Proposed Guidelines for Filing Integrated Resource Plans* that led to significant improvements in the final guidelines. These changes should, over time, provide a more comprehensive and rational energy planning process for Virginia.

Supply side and demand side resources

An Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) is a comprehensive plan that forecasts a utility's electricity load obligations and its plan for meeting those obligations for a 15-year period. This is the first time the state will meet those obligations using both supply side and demand side resources.

Traditionally, Virginia's utilities met all requirements by building new power plants – i.e. supply side resources. This year, largely based on a report by American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), partly written by Sierra Club, the Virginia legislature will pass legislation requiring utilities to introduce energy efficiency programs that reduce consumption – i.e. demand side resources.

Virginia's utilities are obligated to submit their first IRP by September 1, update it every two years, and be subject to a review by the SCC, which will judge whether it is "reasonable and in the public interest."

Accepted recommended changes

- Evaluation criteria for demand side resources that includes "costs, benefits, risks, uncertainties, reliability and customer acceptance" be applied equally to supply side resources.

- The utility to report incrementally on the performance of each demand side program so each can be evaluated individually.
- Utilities' analysis of supply side resources to include consideration of "environmental compliance, carbon restrictions and technology enhancements."
- Plans to not be "preferably at least cost" but "at the lowest reasonable cost."

Steve Bruckner is Virginia Chapter conservation chair.

GROUP DIRECTORY

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

- Blue Ridge:** Tom Eick 434 277-5491; teick@ntelos.net
- Chesapeake Bay:** Fred Adams 757/467-2775; warbler2@cox.net
- Falls of the James:** John Zeugner 804-288-5005; jjzeugner@comcast.net
- Great Falls:** Chris Koerner 703-715-2204; cekoerner@verizon.net
- Mount Vernon:** Mary Kadera 703/684-2004; marykadera@gmail.com
- New River:** Maria Bowling 540-239-2583; maria.bowling@gmail.com
- Piedmont:** John Cruickshank 434/973-0373; jcrucickshank4@gmail.com
- Rappahannock:** Doris Whitfield 540-775-7856 dalw@crosslink.net
- Roanoke:** Bill Modica 540-387-2782; modicabill2@aol.com
- Shenandoah:** Ralph Grove 540-433-1323; ralph.grove@gmail.com
- Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings (SCPRO):** Michael Darzi, 301/580-9387; Michael.Darzi@saic.com
- Thunder Ridge:** In reorganization
- York River:** Tyla Matteson, 804/275-6476 tmatteson1@mindspring.com

Report Air Quality Concerns



VA Dept. of Environmental Quality
M-F, 8:15 - 5PM: 1-804-527-5036
24 Hr. Emergency: 1-800-468-8892

Hopewell Police Dispatch
24 Hr. Non-Emergency:
1-804-541-2275

This business card-sized magnet designed by Hopewell Clean Air Network will be distributed to 1,000 households in Hopewell. It provides people with instant access to numbers

needed to contact and report "bad air days." Magnets will be distributed to citizens of Hopewell by a large door-to-door campaign.

Annual Gathering of Virginia Chapter members planned September 18-20

by Ann Moore

Save the weekend of September 18-20 for the Annual Gathering of members of the Virginia Sierra Club at Pocahontas State Park near Richmond. Melanie Roborchick once again will provide delicious meals. Allison Chin, national Sierra Club president, will be the featured after-dinner speaker on Saturday evening.

This is your opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy the beautiful Virginia fall weather, meet and socialize with Sierra Clubbers from all over the state, participate in stimulating presentations and discussions of environmental issues.

We have just scored some major victories in the national election, but lots of hard work will be needed to help the newly elected leaders meet the environmental goals we set for them. Sierra Club Director Glen Besa and his team, together with a host of dedicated volunteers and inspiring speakers, will show us how we can restore and maintain the health of the planet.

Chairman Joe Apple and his committee are planning the program and will have more updates and registration information in the next issue of *Old Dominion Sierran*.



Canoe excursion planned in ancient Bald Cypress - Water Tupelo swamp April 25

Join botanist Garrie Rouse and champion tree hunter Byron Carmean April 25 on a canoe excursion to explore one of the oldest, remnant virgin forest stands in Virginia.

Participants will experience up close this exceptional, old-growth, Bald Cypress/Water Tupelo swamp forest along the Nottoway River. Some of the larger Bald Cypress in the swamp have diameters of 10-12 feet and are estimated to be over 1,000 years old.

This excursion will require moderately strenuous paddling, not suited for a beginning

paddler. If water or weather conditions are unfavorable another venue may be chosen.

A fee of \$30 per person (FOJG member), \$35 (non-member,) includes use of canoe, paddles and flotation devices. A signed waiver will be required.

For reservations, contact Tamara Smith, 5314 Dorchester Road, Richmond, VA 23225. Send check payable to "Sierra Club." Please include email address. Directions will be provided upon reservation. Questions, email tamsmith47@gmail.com.

OUTINGS

by Joe Apple

Hiking season soon to hit its stride

As I compose this article, my ski enthusiast friends' moods are darkening because they foresee the end of their season. However, my mood is lightening because I foresee the start of hiking season.

I have signed up for my first Sierra Club outing. I'm looking through my maps, viewing my DVDs of previous Sierra Club outings, and remembering those outings.

I think about my favorite hikes. Just as skiing enthusiasts have favorite ski resorts, I have favorite places to hike —some are within Reston where I live, some in Shenandoah National Park. Others are in more remote places. My two favorites are Spruce Knob in West Virginia and Sycamore Canyon on the Pacific Coast Highway south of Ventura, California.

I fell in love with Spruce Knob because of its remoteness. Up there I forget that I'm less than two hundred miles from home. Starting from Judy Springs access point, I walk down to the springs then begin the climb to Spruce Knob summit. I look backward and see ridges beginning to unfold behind me.

Although the view is stunning at any season, it's spectacular in the fall. I reach the summit and climb up the observation tower and see no manmade object. My heart pounds and my spirits lift. I'm a native West Virginian and I remember the words from *Country Roads*.

Visiting my cousin in Ventura, I spend the day in the Sycamore Canyon while he completes an article for a magazine. I walk along the bottom of the canyon looking up into the hills and observe the lack of "green stuff" I see in the eastern U.S. I climb a hill and walk along the ridges. Up and down. Up and down. The last up and I'm at the crest of the last peak. I look down and see the Pacific Ocean crashing onto rocks.

Again, my heart pounds and my spirits lift. I remember the home of my mother on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and its Atlantic Ocean beaches. My heart sings.

Go, explore, and enjoy.



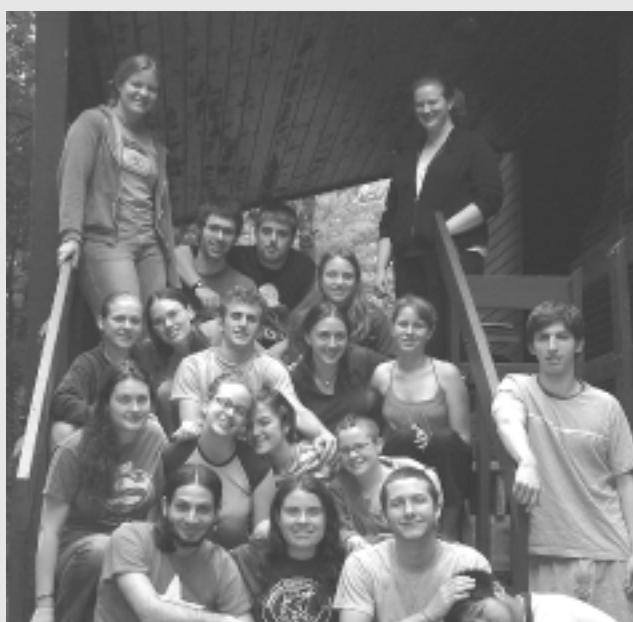
Learn to Lead -- Sierra Student Coalition offers youth leadership training at Prince William Forest Park July 5-12

by Jon Barrows

Students at high schools and on college campuses around the country have been busy. Last fall, they collected 350,000 pledges from their peers, committing to civic engagement around building a clean energy economy.

At the local level they have convinced their schools to purchase renewable energy and retrofit old buildings, to convert vehicle fleets to bio-diesel, to get their schools to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero over the next couple decades, and demanding national leaders follow their lead. It's like the '60s without the drugs.

How did they do it? Many of these students attended one of the Sierra Student Coalition's Summer Environmental Leadership Training programs. This summer Sierra Student Coalition will run nine programs across the country. In Virginia



a training program will be held at Prince William Forest Park from July 5-12.

Participants will be taught by some of the top youth organizers in the nation. They will learn how to start or sustain a group, recruit and develop new leaders, engage in

strategic campaign planning, plan effective events, work with the media, engage their leaders and more. They will enjoy playing games, hiking, and meeting other like-minded students.

Past participants have gone on to become National Director of the SSC, sit on the Sierra Club's National Board of Directors, land jobs working for the Sierra Club, SSC and other environmental groups.

According to past participants, the program "bridges the gap between wanting to make a difference, and actually being able to make one."

Training is for high school and college age youth. Limited scholarships are available. For information on fees and to register go to www.ssc.org/sprog.

Jon Barrows is SCC trainings director

Even if the Price is Right, will we buy it?

by Al Weed

Humanity's role in global warming is now generally accepted by the public. National and Virginia surveys show that large majorities are on board. Newspapers reporting on this subject no longer feel that denialists deserve a voice equal to science.

Still, one part of the denialists' argument – that curbing carbon emissions will cost more than the economy can bear – is about to be tested. Both presidential candidates supported pricing carbon, recognizing this the best way to reduce dramatically the current level of emissions. Sadly, both men seemed to be sticking with cap-and-trade as the way to price CO₂.

The Sierra Club needs to support with all its energy a simple, transparent and easy-to-run system of pricing carbon—*carbon taxes*.

The contentious debate in the U.S. Senate last year should be fair warning. When cap-and-trade finally gets passed, the resulting sausage will make Clinton's 1993 Health

Care proposals look like advice on how to pour water from a boot.

The environmental community will have a major role in explaining carbon pricing to our neighbors. It will be hard enough to convince folks that we have to pay a price without asking them also to accept a set of new and confusing rules. Carbon trading will be hard to understand, and will appear designed to reward both current polluters and Wall Street, which is set to profit from trading carbon allowances.

I can explain a carbon tax. Can anyone explain cap-and-trade?



Remember how opposition to the Clinton Plan played on peoples' confusion over the complexity of that proposal? Wait until utilities, large industries, and coal and petroleum producers take aim at cap-and-trade. If we do finally get carbon pricing, it will be so long coming that we will have lost our opportunity to bring the world back from a greenhouse gas tipping point.

Carbon taxes are easy to understand. Existing systems allow a tax to be placed on all fossil fuels far upstream

— at the refinery, the mine head or natural gas processor. All carbon emitting fossil fuels could be taxed within six months. A carbon tax that starts low, say around \$15/ton in CO₂ equivalents, would need to build eventually to about \$50/ton to have a real effect on reducing demand. We will then know what energy prices will be.

If we are going to defend a system of carbon pricing, it should be easy to understand. We need to have price predictability to encourage new investment over time. I can explain a carbon tax. Can anyone explain cap-and-trade?

Al Weed is Chairman of Public Policy Virginia and a member of the Blue Ridge Group of the Sierra Club.

Green Jobs Expo in D.C. draws thousands



Photo by Barbara Null

Steve Bruckner (center) explains Virginia Chapter Sierra Club's work on climate change to people attending the Green Jobs Expo in Washington Feb. 5. The Expo was part of the Good Jobs Green Jobs Conference held Feb. 4-6. See story on page 1.

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