



## Letter from the Chair:

### Warriors Wanted

Some environmentalists have taken hope from the increased publicity global warming and other environmental issues have been getting in the mainstream press. Sure that's good. But fossil fuel industries and their many dependent corporate and institutional entities are not about to let a bunch of green do-gooders upset their comfortable point-of-view and their steady source of revenue.

I came late to realizing the cataclysmic challenge of global warming. Air and water pollution, enormous landfills and careless sprawling development were tragic enough. Of course, cheap and easy fossil fuels made all this waste possible, and it amazed me that we could carry on like this stuff would be around forever. But the idea that putting this coal and oil's stored carbon into the atmosphere could melt the polar icecaps and alter who knows what else did not enter my mind until Al Gore explained it for me.

### Monitoring Your Electrical Consumption

By Roger Woolford

Most car manufacturers now install economy gauges on the dashboard which inform the driver how economical his/her driving is, Nissan for one now equip all their models with these cunning little dials since their research shows they can save up to 10% in gas consumption. The trick of course is to drive smoothly with a light foot on the accelerator pedal but what about a similar device to measure the electrical consumption in the home and make similar savings in energy, well now you can. A number of companies make a variety of electrical consumption monitors which measure the amount of electrical power

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Dave Roper told me, "We will have to change," as if human behavior was rational. Congressman Rick Boucher and Appalachian Power CEO Michael Morris are smart; they acknowledge global warming. But they refuse to abandon the one sure thing in their careers--coal.

Sierra Club is pledged to fight to protect the environment by all legal means, and we welcome your help. It's showtime folks.

-David Bernard

being consumed minute by minute. They allow you to see power consumption in real-time and will accurately tell you long before the bill arrives how much it will be. Some monitors have a 2 second reaction time and thus provide immediate feedback on power usage.

When linked with dynamic software, usually supplied by the monitor manufacturer as an add-on option, it will allow you to log your power usage on your PC with the facility to produce all the graphs, charts, tables, load profiling you could ever wish for - a geek's delight. The more

Please see *Monitoring* on page 4

## Rail Transfer Yard Poses Dilemma

By Tom Hoffman, Transportation Chair

Norfolk Southern's plan to build a transfer yard in the Roanoke Valley puts the Sierra Club in a very difficult position. On one hand, the Elliston site in particular would damage or even destroy a pristine rural area. The verdant pastures alongside US 460/11 would become an industrial site. The now-quiet rural roads would become choked with truck traffic. The roar of engines would replace the twittering of birds that you hear there now.

On the other hand, the Club is always pushing for alternatives to highway use with the goal of saving fuel, reducing pollutants into the air and easing congestion. NS's Heartland Corridor would allow for double-stack container trains to operate between Columbus, Ohio and Norfolk. You may have seen these double-stack trains on the line to Bristol. NS is increasing tunnel and bridge clearances on the main line through Bluefield to

accommodate these higher rail cars. If fully implemented, the Heartland Corridor project would take thousands of tractor trailers off the highways every year. This would make the roads safer for people driving automobiles, save fuel and reduce air pollution.

The best solution might be to build the yard in Salem rather than Elliston. Unlike Elliston, Salem has indicated that they want the facility. I assume it would be built on some industrial site that's not pristine rural land. Since the Salem city fathers want the yard, I don't understand why Elliston is still under consideration at all.

Unfortunately, we can't have it both ways, and the yard needs to be built somewhere. Salem would be the best choice.

## Giles Fly Ash Site in the Hands of Lawyers

By David Bernard

On March 26, Appalachian Power started dumping coal combustion waste (CCW) in the New River floodplain site owned by the Giles School Board's Partnership for Excellence (GCPFE) after a judge said he would hear the case to declare the project a public nuisance only after the dumping began.

That same morning I presented a Sierra Club check for \$1,000 to Long and Neyhart, PC, the Blacksburg attorneys who have taken on

the case.

Both Long and Neyhart and Concerned Citizens of Giles County, the lead organization fighting this toxic dump, have steadily uncovered more information about both the health and environmental dangers of this project and the corrupt and secretive politics behind it.

Please see *Fly Ash* on page 5

*"Freedom of information requests have been necessary to gain information about the Giles School Board's Partnership for excellence."*



*Fly Ash Site along the New River in Giles.*

*-Bruce Grimes*

## Outings and Events

By Maria Bowling

Greetings from your new Outings Chair! I am excited to be taking over this position, and I'm even more excited about attending a Sierra Club Outings Leadership Training session at the end of June. I hope that I'll get some great trips on improving our outings and outreach.

The Executive Committee, many loyal members, and I have been doing our best to provide interesting outings in spite of the competing demands on our time. One challenge we face right now is that it is very difficult to plan for outings months in advance as we have done in the past. More often, someone volunteers to lead an outing within the coming month or two. This, in turn, makes publicizing the outings more difficult.

One solution that I have been working on to solve this problem is to update the outings page on our web site more often. So, any time you are looking for something to do, please go to our web site at



*Laurel Creek Shelter awaiting spring hikers in January.*

<http://Virginia.sierraclub.org/newriver/> and click on the outings link.

A second option that you have is to sign up to receive our monthly listserv posting, which contains information on meetings, outings, and issues we are working on. To subscribe send an email to:  
**LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG**  
 Leave the subject line blank and type the following message:

Please see *Outings* on page 4

## What's in the New River?

By Maria Bowling

Like to fish, boat, swim or tube in the New River? Then you might have missed some recent news that could make you a little more wary of going into the water.

According a recent article in the Roanoke Times, the Radford Army Ammunition underreported the amount of chemicals they discharged into the river in 2006. Apparently, the plant was using the wrong formula to measure and report its discharges of nitrates. The new, corrected calculations acknowledge releases four times the amounts originally reported.

The company says that these corrections make it look like discharges are increasing, although they are not. However, when added to the total

discharge reports for the state, the new figures contribute to an increase of almost 20% in statewide, on-site discharges.

The Radford plant is by far the biggest water polluter in the state, with the Chesterfield Power plant running a distant second, although the plant is within state limits.

Because the mistake was found and voluntarily reported by the plant, they will not be fined for underreporting.

Plant spokespersons have stressed that discharges are not increasing. However, I'm sure those of us who recreate on the river are somewhat dismayed to find out that the water we've been playing in is dirtier than we were told.

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sophisticated monitors are designed to be clipped onto the main cable feeding the house so unless you have reasonable electrical skills they should be installed by a qualified electrical engineer, it only takes a moment. The unit then sends signals to the monitor which is plugged into a convenient power outlet. By switching off an appliance the power being consumed will reduce and the power used by that appliance can be noted. You will be able to clearly see how much power is wasted by leaving appliances such as TVs, computers etc on standby overnight, or leaving lights on in an

unoccupied room or running dishwashers half-empty and so on.

With an electrical power monitor you will be able to properly manage your own electrical usage and save dollars but you will also be helping the environment by using less electricity and reducing the demand for yet more coal or nuclear power plants. A typical monitor costs around \$140 plus \$45 for the software if required, and depending on your current electrical bills the payback time could be less than 24 months. For further information see *the energydetective.com*.

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SUB VIRGINIA-NEWRIVER-NEWS YourFirstName  
YourLastName  
You will be known by the name you supply on the list.

Another listserv we've been using to post and find outings is the NRVOuddoorsETC listserv started by Nancy Adamson. This listserv is open to any groups or individuals in the NRV area, so the events posted include Sierra Club events,

events from other organizations, and postings from individuals looking for others to share an outing. You can sign up for this listserv by emailing Nancy Adamson at nladamson@gmail.com The web address for NRVOuddoorsEtc is <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NRVOuddoorsEtc/>

In addition to the following scheduled events, we are planning a cookout some time in June at Wind Rock. Wind Rock is located on the Appalachian Trail beyond Mountain Lake on Rt. 613. This will be a pot luck type event, and we will invite passing thru-hikers to join us. Watch for details in the June newsletter and on NRVOuddoorsEtc.!

**Wednesday, April 16, 5 p.m.**

Our monthly 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday get together at More Than Coffee, the Lebanese restaurant near the corner of North Main and College Avenue in Blacksburg. Join us to take care of business, catch up on current environmental news, and just share good company.

**Wednesday, April 16, 7 p.m.**

Executive and general membership meeting at the Blacksburg Public Library, Draper Rd. between Miller and Clay Streets. Call David Bernard at 540-392-5096 for more information.

**Thursday, April 24**

Earth Day booth on the drillfield at Virginia Tech. Call David Bernard at 540-392-5096 to volunteer or get more information.

*Check out our web site for updates on outings and issues!*

*<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/newriver/>*

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Freedom of Information Act requests have been necessary to gain information about the GCPFE's operations, which should be an open public matter.

*Election results...*

They are:  
 Transportation Chair-Tom Hoffman  
 Computer Committee Chair-David Sowers  
 Conservation-Roger Woolford  
 Membership and Air Quality-David Jenkins  
 Political Chair-David Bernard  
 Publicity and Outings-Maria Bowling  
 Endangered Species and Wildlife-Bruce Grimes  
 Energy and Global Warming-David Roper  
 Wilderness and Forests-Bob Stimson

## Annual Election Results

At our annual elections meeting in November, the following members were elected to positions on the Executive Committee: Chairman-David Bernard, Assistant Chair-Maria Bowling, Members—Tom Hoffman, David Jenkins, Anton Baudoin, and Roger Woolford.

Many dedicated folks also stepped forward to fill the chair positions for key areas of interest.

Thanks to these folks for volunteering to keep us informed on developments in these areas! If you have an interest in helping in one of these areas, please contact David Bernard, david at [aquariusplumbing.org](http://aquariusplumbing.org), or Maria Bowling, maria.bowling at gmail.com.

## Wise Power Plant Awaits Ruling

By Maria Bowling and David Bernard

Although Dominion Power's plans to build a coal-fired power plant in Wise County have been approved by the State Corporation Commission, the project has one more hurdle to jump before the project is a done deal.

On March 18, the Virginia Air Pollution Control Board (VAPCB) voted to intervene in the permitting process because of concerns about the air pollution potential of the project. The project meets current DEQ guidelines, but the Board is questioning whether those guidelines

are strict enough.

The plant proposal will likely be on the agenda at the VAPCB's May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting in Richmond. The meeting is open to the public, but public comment will not be entertained.

Written comments on the project can be sent to :

Tamera Thompson, DEQ, P.O. Box 1105, Richmond, VA 23218 OR  
 emailed to: [tmthompson@DEQ.virginia.gov](mailto:tmthompson@DEQ.virginia.gov)

Please see *Wise Plant* on page 6

*"The way the plan has been proposed, DEQ believes it'll meet state regulations,"*  
*Bill Hayden*  
*of the DEQ told*  
*the Roanoke*  
*Times.*

**Sierra New River Group**

P.O. Box 125  
Blacksburg, VA 24063

**Chair**

David Bernard  
540-951-8390

**E-Mail:**

david@aquarius  
plumbing.com

*Explore, preserve,*

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.virginia.sierraclub.org](http://www.virginia.sierraclub.org)

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The state Sierra web site [Virginia.sierraclub.org](http://Virginia.sierraclub.org) also contains a link to a petition against the plant.

The Sierra Club, the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), the Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards (SAMS), Appalachian Voices, and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) are campaigning against the plant; however, Governor Kaine has cited the support of Giles residents as reason for his approval.

David Bernard attended the SCC hearings on the plant and reports that the opponents outnumbered the boosters by four to one and many speakers for the plant were paid attendees. Local opponents chimed, "If coal is going to make us rich, why hasn't it happened in the last 100 years?"

The Blacksburg Town Council has passed a resolution opposing the plant.

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