

Old Dominion Sierran



Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

September/October 2009

www.virginia.sierraclub.org

The Path Ahead

America's bright future powered by clean energy

by Jim Gould

As we all know, the United States urgently needs to address both global warming and our economic recovery. The House of Representatives brought us one step closer to addressing these needs on Friday, June 26, 2009. By a floor vote of 219-212, representatives passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES-H.R. 2454) which would, for the first time, provide a national plan to address global warming and build the clean energy economy.

Clean Energy, Bright Future Rallies across Virginia

September 17, 6 p.m.

Join Sierra Club, Environment Virginia, Chesapeake Climate Action Network and a host of other environmental organizations at our Clean Energy, Bright Future Rallies across the Commonwealth. Demonstrate your support for bold action on clean energy and global warming.

Come to a Rally near you

Alexandria
Williamsburg
Harrisonburg
Norfolk
Charlottesville
Fredericksburg
Blacksburg
Richmond

For details on Clean Energy, Bright Future Rallies go to www.repower-virginia.com

Congressional delegation members Boucher, Connolly, Moran, Perriello and Scott all voted for the legislation while Nye, Forbes, Cantor, Wolf, Goodlatte and Wittman opposed the legislation. While imperfect, the bill paves the way for a set of goals the U.S. must achieve -- and exceed.

The bill's biggest achievement is that it sets the United States on a path to reduce carbon emissions some 80 percent by 2050. ACES makes strides by:

- Halting international deforestation
- Requiring new buildings to dramatically slash energy waste
- Speeding the development of made-in-America electric vehicles
- Providing important protections for workers, consumers, and others who may be affected by our transition to a clean energy future.

The House of Representatives has acted but we need to strengthen the bill before it reaches President Obama's desk.

The U.S. Senate should strengthen the legislation in four key areas:

More Wind, More Solar

ACES must drive a shift to U.S. energy production toward cleaner, cheaper sources like wind and solar much more quickly.

Focus on Reducing Energy Waste

The bill must also prioritize significant investments in slashing energy waste in order to quickly, cheaply, and effectively cut emissions, rather than focusing on other unproven and expensive technologies.

Keep EPA Authority Intact

A strong energy bill must clean up dirty coal plants by allowing the Environmental Protection Agency to keep its existing power under the Clean Air Act.

Hold Polluters Accountable No More Handouts

Finally, ACES must make polluters pay for their carbon pollution in order to fund investments in clean energy jobs, clean energy; protect consumers, wildlife, and vulnerable communities rather than rewarding Big Oil, Big Coal, and other polluters with billions in giveaways.

To answer the call of millions of citizens to get America running on clean energy and reduce our impact on global warming, the final bill must include:

- A mechanism for cleaning up the oldest and dirtiest coal plants
- A greater investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy like wind and solar

• More money routed toward the public benefit rather than polluters

Without these provisions Dirty Coal and Big Oil will continue to overwhelm America's energy supply, and will continue to fuel the destructive status quo policies stifling economic gain and environmental protection.

However, those in favor of a bright future fueled by clean energy realize failing is not an option. America must have a clean energy jobs plan that will jumpstart the economy and reduce the costly effects of global warming.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Call Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner and tell them you support bold legislation that invests in a clean energy economy and fights global warming.

Senator Jim Webb 202-224-4024
Senator Mark Warner 202-224-2023
For more details go to www.repower-virginia.com.

Volunteer Let Jim Gould know you want to help, jim.gould@sierraclub.org

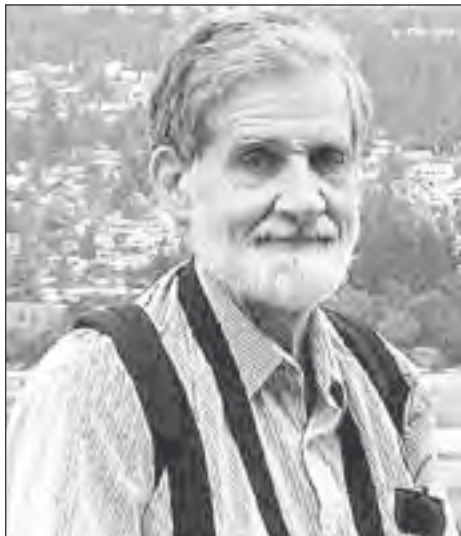
Jim Gould is Virginia Chapter Conservation Coordinator

RENEWABLE, CLEAN ENERGY



Volunteer in the Spotlight

Dick Ball -- expert extraordinaire on energy and climate change



by Charles Price

The Virginia Chapter's energy chair, Dr. Richard H. Ball, is known to everyone simply as "Dick." The line that describes Clark Kent, a.k.a. Superman, as a "mild mannered reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper" characterizes Dick Ball -- mild mannered, quiet, unassuming, and kindly, but a titan of scientific knowledge, intelligence, and ability. Like E. F. Hutton, when Dick speaks on energy issues, global warming, and climate change, we all listen.

Dick's distinguished educational background includes a 1957 BS degree in physics, with honors, from Penn State University and a 1965 Ph.D. from Stanford University with a major in physics and a minor in mathematics.

His work experience is equally distinguished. Following completion of his Ph.D., Dick went to work for the RAND Corporation in California. Between 1964 and 1973, Dick performed basic and applied research on various topics in geophysics and mathematical physics. Between 1971 and 1973, he managed and participated in studies of energy/environmental policy, energy use, and energy resources.

Dick's next job, from 1974-1978, was with the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C. where he served as special assistant for strategic analysis to the assistant administrator for research and development.

In this capacity he supervised the development of models and methods for projecting trends and anticipating future environmental problems. His work included writing and publishing EPA's annual *Environmental Outlook Report*.

Dick led the team that developed a

five-year plan for environmental research related to nuclear, solar, and geothermal technologies as part of the Strategic Energy R and D program.

Dr. Ball then moved to the U.S. Department of Energy where he worked until 1999. From 1978-81, as chief of the Methods Development and Data Evaluation Branch-Environmental Impact Division, he developed impact assessment methods, including models for all environmental media, economic and energy projections, and social impacts.

During the second phase of his work at DOE, he was responsible for managing research, analysis, and assessment programs, preparing in-house analyses of environment-energy issues -- especially air pollution regulation, acid rain, and global change issues. He represented DOE on several national and international fora, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Dick was the lead author on the IPCC first and second assessment reports dealing with climate change impacts on energy and industry. After retirement from the USDOE in 1999, he served as a private consultant for a brief period.

During these years of highly important scientific work with the U.S. government, Dick maintained his Sierra Club membership and his commitment to its goals, active in many of its campaigns. He first joined California's Angeles Chapter in 1966. This year he completes his 43rd year as an active club member.

He cites among his best club work the big battles he and others of the Angeles Chapter fought against California's bad coastal development. Out of this long struggle came the idea for a California Coastal Alliance to protect the state's coastline from a myriad of untoward development schemes. The CCA coastal initiative eventually passed a statewide referendum, creating the California Coastal Commission. He says this is one of his proudest achievements.

The Virginia Chapter and National Sierra Club have benefited greatly from Dick's vast experience and expertise in scientific research and analysis on energy and global warming issues. For many years he has been Virginia Chapter's Energy Chair and now serves on the National Sierra Club Energy Committee as well.

His most recent contribution to the Virginia Chapter was co-researching and

co-writing the Citizen Energy Plan, which has received wide recognition and acclaim.

Dick recently was awarded a high honor from the International Panel on Climate Change recognizing his important work. The citation reads, "Presented to Richard Ball for contributing to the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 to the International Panel on Climate Change." The Award recognizes his contributions as one of the authors of the first and second IPCC assessment of the impacts of climate change.

We are most fortunate that Dr. Dick Ball is a member of the Virginia Chapter and that he maintains such a high degree of activism and commitment to our work on energy and climate change. Most importantly, we are pleased that he is an inveterate friend of the environment and our friend, also.

Charles Price is Virginia Chapter chair

EPA awards grants to reduce diesel emissions and create jobs

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mid-Atlantic regional office awarded \$16.1 million to seven significant projects to reduce diesel pollution. These clean diesel projects will create jobs while protecting air quality.

Recovery Act funds were awarded to the following projects in Virginia:

Mid-Atlantic Diesel Reduction Campaign

A \$4.3 million grant will fund a wide range of diesel projects in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, including replacing transit buses and off-road engines, retrofitting dump trucks, replacing cement trucks and repowering boats.

Chesapeake Bay

Marine Engine Repower

A \$1.3 million grant to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation will fund retrofitting two education vessels, seven watermen workboats, and one tug boat operating out of Maryland and Virginia in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Virginia Diesel Emissions Reduction Initiative

A \$1 million grant to Virginia Clean Cities will fund retrofitting transit buses with diesel particulate filters in Hampton Roads; replacing a refuse vehicle with a hybrid version in Chesterfield County; replacing school buses with propane powered school buses at Spotsylvania Public Schools; and replacing refuse, dump, and fire trucks, and ambulances in the City of Chesapeake.

In addition to helping to create and retain jobs, the clean diesel projects would reduce premature deaths, asthma attacks and other respiratory ailments, lost work days, and many other adverse health impacts every year.

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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.

Chapter Leadership

Chair: Charles Price
804-358-0256; fewmit@comcast.net
Vice Chair: John Cruickshank
434/973-0373; jrcruickshank4@gmail.com
Secretary: Tom Ellis
757-722-9785; tiellis@gmail.com
Treasurer: Bob Shippee
804-360-3483; richmondbob@netzero.com

Staff

Director: Glen Besa
804-225-9113; glen.besa@sierraclub.org
Asst. Director, Legislation and Development:
Jayme Hill, 804-225-9113, jayme.hill@sierraclub.org
Central Virginia Conservation Coordinator: Jim Gould, 804-225-9113; jim.gould@sierraclub.org
Hampton Roads Organizer: Eileen Levandoski
757-277-8537; eileen.levandoski@sierraclub.org
Northern Virginia Organizer: Vacant

Environmental Action Chairs

Air Quality: Ana Prados
703-338-2119; ana_prados@yahoo.com
Chesapeake Bay: Fred Adams
757-467-2775; warbler2@cox.net
Conservation: Steve Bruckner
703-883-3622; sbruckner@cox.net
Energy: Dick Ball
703-256-9309; acericardo@mindspring.com
Environmental Justice: Barbara Williamson
804-643-0461; barbaraawmson@juno.com
Forests: Sherman Bamford
540-343-6359; bamford2@verizon.net
Group Boundaries: Jim Lynch
540-775-7002; jplynch@crosslink.net
Membership: Norbert Pink; 703-264-7445;
norbert.pink@virginia.sierraclub.org
Outings: Joe Apple
703-860-1254; joe.apple@comcast.net
PAC Treasurer: George Calvert
804-358-5178; calvertge@comcast.net
Parks/Public Lands: Charles Price
804-358-0256; fewmit@comcast.net
Political/Legislative: Tyla Matteson,
804-275-6476; tmatteson1@mindspring.com
Assistant (Political): Bob Pearson
703-690-3071; bob_pearson@cox.net

Recycling/Solid Waste: Vacant
Smart Growth & Transportation:
Roger Diedrich
703-352-2410; roger.diedrich@sierraclub.org
Assistant (Transportation) Jim Wamsley
703-751-6086; jawamsley@comcast.net
Sustainable Consumption: Diana Artemis
703-671-4916; artemdi@yahoo.com
Water Quality: David Bernard
804-658-3712; david@aquariusplumbing.com
Webmaster: Ralph Grove
540-433-1323; ralph.grove@gmail.com
Wilderness: Pete Bsumek
540-568-3386; bsumekpk@jmu.edu

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

Editor

Barbara Null
bnnull@comcast.net

Don't miss the fun Annual Gathering Sept. 18-20 filled with variety of learning and exciting events

by Ann Moore

Meet Sierra Club President Alison Chin • Air your views with representatives of gubernatorial candidate Creigh Deeds • Go on a bat hike • Meet Virginia reptiles and discover problems they face today • Take a plant and tree identification walk

These are some of the activities planned for the Sierra Club Annual Gathering September 18-20 at Pocahontas State Park which also includes enjoying the fabulous cuisine of Melanie Roberchick

- Learn about take-action issues such as mountaintop removal and find out why coal-powered power plants are so harmful.
- Learn about Virginia's growing interest in farmers' markets.
- Or just relax to the award-winning music of Narissa Bond and get to know other Sierra Clubbers from around the state as you enjoy a pleasant fall weekend in the park.

Check-in begins at the dining hall in the Ecology Center on Friday afternoon, September 18. The evening get-acquainted session starts at 6:30 and continues until 10 p.m. lights out. At 7 p.m. a park ranger will lead a bat hike along nearby trails.

Saturday morning begins with breakfast. The opening session begins at 9 a.m. with introductions and informative updates about current action issues presented by Glen Besa and the Sierra Club staff.

At 10 a.m., a ranger will give a Reptile Review, introducing us to live Virginia reptiles. Information sessions will continue throughout the afternoon.

At 4 p.m., a ranger will lead a plant and tree identification hike to discover the diversity of plant life in the forest.

Gubernatorial candidate Creigh Deeds has been invited to speak to the group on Saturday evening.

Dinner at 6 p.m. will be followed by an awards ceremony and an after-dinner talk by Alison Chin. The evening will conclude with the music of Narissa Bond, dancing and conversation.

A wrap-up session Sunday morning will bring the weekend to a close, with checkout at 11 a.m. Last year new friends found it hard to say goodbye, and plans were laid for future collaborations between club members and other environmental groups to address many important global warming issues.

This popular weekend event costs only \$80 for adults, a fee that covers all events and activities at the Ecology Center, two nights' housing in simple, screened cabins (with bunk beds, electricity and access to bath houses), meals including a Friday evening get-acquainted reception, two breakfasts, lunch and dinner on Saturday, and a snack on Sunday. The club is offering an August-only early bird registration discount of \$5. Register online at www.sierraclub.org or mail forms and checks to the Sierra Club Office 422 East Franklin St, Richmond, VA 23219.



Among the world's oldest mountains, the Appalachians today are under relentless assault in the central Appalachian coal fields, including Virginia, as result of mountaintop removal coal mining.
Photo courtesy of Appalachian Voices

Which side are you on?

Mountaintop removal coal mining

by Glen Besa

Which side are you on?" a powerful anthem for labor organizing in the coal fields in the 1930s poses an equally compelling question today in the fight to end mountaintop removal coal mining.

The haunting beauty of Natalie Merchant's rendition of *Which Side are You On?* evokes tears and anger in a new documentary film, *Coal Country*, on this devastating mining practice.

Coal Country is the latest collaborative effort of Mari-Lynn Evans (director) and Phyllis Geller (producer) who teamed up to make the PBS series, *The Appalachians*. Sierra Club Productions provided supported in the making of this film.

Coal Country takes us inside modern

Leaders wanted to serve on chapter executive committee

The election of four at-large members to the Virginia Chapter executive committee (ex com) will be held in November. They will serve a two-year term beginning January 2010.

Virginia Chapter Sierra Club members in good standing who wish to be considered should submit their name, contact information and a 100-word or less petition summarizing their work for the environment and interest in serving on the chapter excom to Nominations Committee, 445 Preston Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22807-4308, ralph.grove@alumni.perdue.edu, 540-433-1323.

Individuals nominated by others must give their permission to be considered and their information submitted to the nominations committee. Closing date for nominations and accompanying information is September 30, 2009.

coal mining. We get to know working miners along with activists who are battling coal companies in Appalachia. We visit the homes of people most directly affected by mountaintop removal mining (MTR), including Kathy Selvage of Wise County, Virginia, and we hear about health problems, dirty water in their wells and streams, and dust and grime on their floors.

We hear from miners and coal company officials who are concerned about jobs and the economy and believe they are acting responsibly in bringing electric power to the American people.

Virginia Chapter Sierra Club with the Wise Energy Coalition is committed to ending mountaintop removal coal mining. In September and October we are promoting showings of *Coal Country* in venues across Virginia. Proceeds from these showings will benefit Sierra Club's and Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards' efforts to end mountaintop removal coal mining.

Plan to attend *Coal Country* at a venue near you and join our campaign to end mountaintop removal coal mining.

Coal Country The movie

For a current schedule go to www.virginia.sierraclub.org/coalcountry.html

- Blacksburg at The Lyric: Sept. 10th
- Richmond at The Byrd: Sept. 26th
- Norfolk at The Naro: TBD
- Charlottesville at Charlottesville Pavilion: TBD-Oct. 2nd or 16th
- Arlington at Unitarian Universalist Church: TBD
- Burke: Oct 16
- Radford: TBD

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

The battle for Black Mountain

Environmentalists try to stop the Ison Rock Ridge mountaintop removal coal mine

Over the past year Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards (SAMS) and Sierra Club have teamed with local residents in Wise County to oppose a new mountaintop removal coal mine on Black Mountain. The Ison Rock Ridge mine permit, being sought by A&G Coal Corpora-

Sierra Club included in Virginia DEQ's wind energy permit process

by Jayme Hill

The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club has been invited to participate as a member in the Department of Environmental Quality's Wind Energy Regulatory Advisory Panel (WE RAP) to establish general permit language to site, develop and operate wind energy projects with less than 100mW capacity in Virginia.

Legislation passed by the 2009 General Assembly directs the DEQ to establish a permit by rule for renewable energy projects, such as wind power. Other renewable projects distinguished in the legislation will go through a similar DEQ process establishing general permit language and requirements for operation.

The wind advisory panel has an intense meeting schedule this summer into fall engaging the panel's diverse membership. Other RAP members include state agencies, electric utilities, wind energy developers and other environmental, non-profit entities. Based on the work of WE RAP, DEQ anticipates an adoption of rules by spring 2010.

The Virginia Sierra Club is participating in this process to ensure the permitting process is supportive of wind energy developments in Virginia, with appropriate considerations given to environmental impacts and natural resource protection at each site.

You can get involved

These meetings are open to the public and allow for public comment at the end of each agenda. The meeting schedule is listed at www.deq.state.va.us/calendar

DEQ's Notice of Intended Regulatory Action will be published in the Virginia Register August 31. The official public comment period ends September 30, 2009.

For questions or comments related to the Sierra Club's involvement in WE RAP, contact Jayme at the Virginia Chapter office at 804-225-9113 x103 or jayme.hill@sierraclub.org.

Jayme Hill is Virginia Chapter assistant director, legislation and development

tion, would obliterate approximately 1,300 acres of steep, forested, mountainous terrain near the town of Appalachia, Virginia.

The mine would bury about 14,000 linear feet of streams in nine valley fills. In addition, the mine would include construction of sediment ponds that would discharge pollutants to various streams, including Callahan Creek – an “impaired” waterway.

Worst of all, the mining would inflict severe and unconscionable harm on surrounding communities with all its associated blasting, truck traffic, dust and so forth.

The Virginia Department Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) continues to process A&G's application for a surface mine permit despite our objections, and it appears the agency is very close to issuing the permit.

The permit under consideration for these nine valley fills includes several which represent waters within the jurisdiction of



Another Virginia mountain devastated by mountaintop coal mining. This is Turkey Pen Ridge in Buchanan County. Photo by Kent Kessinger, Appalachian Voices

the Army Corps of Engineers for which a permit from the Corps will also be required. However, we anticipate that once A&G receives its surface mine permit from VA DMME, the company will likely commence mining operations immediately, while avoiding waters within Corps jurisdiction.

Sierra Club and SAMS are presently considering our options to stop the Ison Rock Ridge mine. For an update on the status of Black Mountain, Ison Rock Ridge and Sierra Club's efforts to stop mountaintop removal coal mining go to: www.virginia.sierraclub.org/stopmtr.html

Now with a Wise plant victory

How do we stop ODEC's Surry County coal plant?

By Kate Pollard

Wise County coal plant opponents rejoiced when Richmond Circuit Court Judge Margaret Spencer ruled on August 11 that the plant's air permit limits for mercury were illegal. Sierra Club, one of the parties in the litigation, along with several partners from the Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition, were represented by Cale Jaffe of the Southern Environmental Law Center.

Judge Spencer invalidated the second of two air permits the state Air Pollution Control Board had originally issued the plant. The judge agreed with environmental groups the air board violated federal law by including a so-called “escape hatch” clause that would let Dominion apply for relaxed mercury standards after the plant is operational.

Though the ruling may not kill construction of the Wise coal plant, in the long war against climate change and dirty coal, it is a notable victory. Appeals will likely follow and other legal maneuvers could be found to “fix” the defect the judge pointed out.

Yet, the challenge offered an opportunity for concerned citizens to get engaged, increasing public awareness about the effects of coal plants. Local activists share in the victory and can recognize the power they have to influence plant construction throughout the process. In the ongoing battle for a clean energy future, a citizen

movement demanding energy sources that suit this century will also offer the support politicians need to stand up against coal.

Local leaders from the town of Dendron in Surry County, where an even larger dirty coal-fire plant is being proposed, are joining together to do just that. The town council will soon decide whether to maintain authority over a zoning permit that would

allow construction of the largest coal plant ever to operate in the state.

Further opportunities exist to thwart the Surry proposal because the company behind the project, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC), is a large cooperative comprised of 11 retail cooperatives (nine in Virginia, one in Maryland and one in Delaware), all of whom have voting customer-owners. Two members of each retail coop sit on the ODEC board, so any of the citizens who pay their electric bill to a member coop can use their voice and their vote to derail the mammoth plant.

Letters and resolutions from downwind communities and ODEC cooperative members are building a strong foundation of opposition to the plant. The local Coalition to Keep Surry Clean is not wasting time, taking the lead on efforts to build popular opposition to the plant – demanding planning authority remains local and the zoning permit be withheld.

For more details on efforts to stop the Surry and Wise Counties coal plants, go to www.virginia.sierraclub.org/nocoalplant.html.

Questions or to volunteer, contact Kate Pollard, kate.pollard@sierraclub.org (703) 442-0435.

Is your electric utility an ODEC Coop?

As a member/customer of one of the nine Virginia based electric coops that make up Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, you have a voice in whether the proposed coal plant in Surry County gets built. Please contact Kate Pollard (kate.pollard@sierraclub.org; (703) 442-0435) if you belong to any of the following coops.

- A & N Electric Coop
- BARC Electric Coop
- Community Electric Coop
- Mecklenburg Electric Coop
- Northern Neck Electric Coop
- Prince George Electric Coop
- Rappahannock Electric Coop
- Shenandoah Electric Coop
- Southside Electric Coop

Biomass -- the low hanging fruit to provide Virginia jobs in renewable energy

By Emile Derek Boyle

Virginia farmers and rural communities have great potential to replace all coal burning power plants with locally grown biomass -- wood, food crops, grassy and woody plants, residues from agriculture or forestry, and the organic component of municipal and industrial wastes.

The fastest growing high-yield trees and crops that can be produced by Virginia farmers include poplar, willow, cottonwood, miscanthus, and switchgrass. Southern Virginia in particular has excellent potential for biomass energy to replace coal.

Mining in Virginia supports less than one-fifth of one percent of jobs and Virginia is a net importer of coal from West Virginia and Kentucky.

Utilities such as Dominion Power argue that coal is cheaper than renewable energy sources such as biomass, wind, solar and geothermal. Unfortunately, when Dominion calculates costs, it does not factor in costs related to climate change, health care needs resulting from coal pollution, mountaintop blasting and pollution of local rivers. Nor does it consider jobs lost by failure to invest in renewable energy technologies.

The two most effective actions we can take to ensure Virginia creates jobs and industries to power us into the future are:



Switchgrass Fields in Southwest Virginia

Courtesy of Andrew Rosenberger Conservation Management Institute Virginia Tech

- Identify our biomass resources
 - Enact an aggressive mandatory Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) for the Commonwealth's electric utilities.
- Public Policy Virginia (PPV) is developing a comprehensive report on Virginia renewables resources, *A Policy Framework for Our Bioenergy Future*, to identify biomass resources and optimal locations for production facilities.

... we could replace the most damaging energy sources quickly with modest changes to our coal firing infrastructure all while creating jobs and revenue for the citizens and institutions of Virginia.

Identifying Virginia's biomass resources and the best locations for biomass and torrefaction facilities are the first step towards wide scale biomass production and local job creation.

Torrefaction is the process of heating biomass to give it the energy density of coal. Combined Heat and Power Plants (CHP) allows biomass facilities to reutilize heat that would otherwise be lost, resulting in energy efficiencies of 90 percent, versus 30 percent for coal produced heat that is lost in cooling and transmission.

Biomass jobs for energy production can also benefit from distributed production. Smaller scale (CHP) plants can be located closer to where crops, wood waste and other sources are generated and where the energy output is used. Reducing the distance biomass is transported to 45 miles or less results in more than 50 percent reduced cost for source material.

By enacting an aggressive mandatory RPS, we could replace the most damaging energy sources quickly with modest changes to our coal firing infrastructure, all while creating jobs and revenue for the citizens and institutions of Virginia.

Emile Derek Boyle is a member of Great Falls Group.

Proposed PATH transmission line permitting process complex and convoluted

by Steve Bruckner

Public hearings were held in Winchester and Purcellville on August 3, 5, and 6 on the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) Transmission Line proposed by American Electric Power and Allegheny Energy (AEP/AE.) Commissioners from the State Corporation Commission (SCC) attended the hearings.

Opposition was very strong with most people speaking against the line expressing concern about the negative impact of the lines on their property values and their rural landscape.

PATH, as proposed, is a \$1.8 billion 200-plus mile long 765 kV extra high voltage electric transmission line. The line starts in West Virginia, crosses northern Virginia and ends in Maryland.

It is planned to link a substation near the 40-year-old 3,000 MW coal-fired John E. Amos Power Plant in West Virginia to a new substation proposed to be built in Frederick County, Maryland. Towers for a 765 kV line are usually a lattice steel structure between 140

and 160 feet tall. New or additional rights of way will be needed for the entire length of the proposed line.

PATH has been recommended by PJM Interconnection, the regional transmission organization that handles the wholesale electricity market in our region, because of forecasted reliability violations in load simulations projected to appear in 2014. PJM has responsibility for assuring the transmission backbone is sufficient to handle projected demand.

Sierra Club will intervene in the case in all three states, principally because this line will significantly increase pollution and GHG emissions in our region. It will lead to large increases in



coal-fired electricity from West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky.

The cheap, dirty coal-fired power from these plants will supplement and even displace the cleaner energy generated in the eastern parts of the PJM region.

Eleven East Coast governors stated in a letter to Congressional leaders that the existence of these transmission lines will undermine the development of regional energy, especially offshore wind

energy, which could bring large economic benefits to their states.

The environmental community argues there are cheaper, cleaner and environmentally

friendlier alternatives to PATH, including electricity efficiency, demand side management and local generation, such as offshore wind.

PJM, on the other hand, is tasked to find transmission line solutions to resolve only the transmission line reliability problems they identify. Although PJM is willing to consider the alternative solutions mentioned above, they are constrained to do so only if those solutions are already committed to be deployed prior to the forecasted reliability violation.

No authority in Virginia considers it their responsibility to request proposals from the community of alternative solution providers. This demonstrates a responsibility gap. No authority in Virginia has been assigned the responsibility to proactively identify the best energy solutions for the Commonwealth.

Our legal team will seek to prove to the SCC that superior alternative solutions do in fact exist and they cannot therefore award a permit for PATH.

Steve Bruckner is Virginia Chapter Conservation Chair

Sierra Club volunteers heat things up during Congress August recess



Jim Gould introduces Rev. Jon Heaslet, veteran Terron Sim, and Environment Virginia advocate, J. R. Tolbert, at a press event outside Sen. Jim Webb's Richmond office.

by Jim Gould

Although our U. S. Senators and Representatives may be on recess, Sierra Club volunteers are not playing around. Across the state, our dedicated activists are uniting with clean energy businesses, faith leaders, veterans, and other concerned citizens in an unprecedented effort to show their support for strong clean energy jobs and climate legislation.

Whether they are participating in town hall meetings, scheduling in-district office visits, holding press events, submitting letters to the editor, or collecting public comments on postcards to our senators, Sierra Club volunteers are definitely going the extra mile.

Within the first week of Congressional recess, Sierra Club volunteers participated in four in-district office visits, held three press events, submitted a dozen letters to editors, and helped collect more than 900 public comments.

Collaborating with supportive and eager Sierra Club staff members, volunteers expect to continue the marathon of activity throughout August and all the way to December, when the United States will join the rest of the world in Copenhagen for the UN Conference on Climate Change.

Solar Decathlon to be held October 9-18 in Washington DC

The 2009 Solar Decathlon will be held October 9-18 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The biennial competition features 20 teams of university students from around the world that have developed fully-functional houses which draw all their energy from the sun.

After spending two years developing their projects, the students ship the partially completed homes to the National Mall where they finish building them. They compete in 10 contests that measure the teams' skills in architecture, home design, and communications.

The solar homes must produce enough electricity and hot water to perform all the normal functions of a home, including powering the lights and home electronics, washing clothes and dishes, showering, cooking, all while maintaining a comfortable temperature. Teams earn bonus points if their homes produce a surplus of electricity.

The event will be open to the public on October 9-13 and 15-18.

Notice to members of Roanoke Group

Roanoke Group members are invited to submit nominations for the 2009 executive committee election to be held in November. Self-nominations are acceptable. Nominees must be Sierra Club members in good standing. If elected they will serve a two-year term. Submit nominations by September 30 to Mark McClain at mcclainmark@comcast.net.

McIntire Park one of Virginia's most endangered historic sites



Park lovers proudly display a document that designates McIntire Park in Charlottesville as one of Virginia's most endangered historic sites.

Photo by John Cruickshank

The Coalition to Preserve McIntire Park received important support in May when *Preservation Virginia* designated McIntire Park as one of Virginia's most endangered historic sites.

The nonprofit organization stated that "new road construction proposed through the park has the potential to adversely impact the historic integrity of the park and to lessen its recreational use."

The Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club is a leading member of the coalition which has gone to court to prevent road construction through Charlottesville's central park. "Save McIntire Park" yard signs are sprouting up on front lawns all over the city.

For more information about how you can help save this historic natural area, please contact John Cruickshank at (434) 973-0373 or jcruckshank4@gmail.com.

Small farms can meet local demand, achieve greater marketshare

by Diana Artemis

Demand for locally grown food in the U.S. is expected to rise from an estimated \$4 billion per year in 2002 to as much as \$7 billion by 2012, according to David Shipman, of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Direct sales of farm products for human consumption tripled between 1992 and 2007, from \$404 million to \$1.2 billion.

Farmers markets have grown from 1,755 in 1994 to 4,800 in mid-2009. Community-supported agricultural (CSA) arrangements have increased from two in the mid-80's to more than 2,800 in mid-2009. There are now more than 130,000 farmers involved in direct food sales and over 12,000 farmers involved in CSAs.

Shipman suggests local farmers work together to identify successful collective marketing arrangements and options for product aggregation so that a greater number of producers can participate in retail, foodservice and institutional marketing



channels. The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service can help family farmers with grants and resources to build the necessary infrastructure that supports collective product aggregation, sorting, packaging and storage of locally grown foods.

Sierra Club members can help

As consumers we have the power of the pocketbook. Every time we choose local foods over Big Ag, we empower small farmers to stay on their land to produce fresh food that benefits our health, our land, and the local economy.

Sierra Club members may want to work with their local schools, hospitals and institutions to incorporate local foods into their menus and events. For more information see <http://www.sierraclub.org/truecostoffood/> and <http://www.edible-schoolyard.org/>

Diana Artemis is co-chair Sierra Club National Sustainable Consumption Network

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: Terra Pascarosa

757-291-4736; terrabs@gmail.com

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; jcruckshank4@gmail.com

Rappahannock: Doris Whitfield

540-775-7856; dalw@va.metrocast.net

Roanoke: Bill Modica

modicabill2@aol.com

Shenandoah: Ralph Grove

540/433-1323; ralph.grove@alumni.perdue.edu

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



Kayakers examine the lily pads in the Pocket, a cove adjoining the Pamunkey River. Photo by Garrie Rouse

Pamunkey River kayak excursion planned for Saturday, September 19

Join us for a kayak excursion on the freshwater tidal marshes of the Pamunkey River on September 19.

Kayakers will meet at 2 p.m. at the launch site, an hour and 15 minute drive from Richmond. We will visit a small local museum, then launch at 3:30 from the "Pocket," a beautiful cove adjoining the Pamunkey River.

We will explore some of the finest examples of freshwater tidal wetland systems on the Atlantic seaboard. These diverse habitats are dominated by wild rice and home to several rare plant species, including the mat-forming water hyssop, Parker's pipewort and the sensitive jointvetch.

A trip on this section of the Pamunkey provides an excellent opportunity to observe waterfowl, including osprey, blue herons, egrets and bald eagles.

From here we will take advantage of the high tide cycle to paddle a short distance up the main stem of the Pamunkey River

An Appeal for our Members' Help

As noted throughout this newsletter, Virginia Chapter is pushing to advance a clean energy agenda. We are actively working to stop the Surry County and Wise County coal plants; challenging the PATH transmission line, opposing a new mountaintop removal mining site, and working with the Kaine Administration to adopt a new energy-efficient building code and promote offshore wind power.

This in addition to our effort to secure passage of a clean energy and climate bill in Congress by the end of this year.

We need your help. Though you may have already given to Sierra Club this year, we're asking that you consider a special gift to help us advance this work.

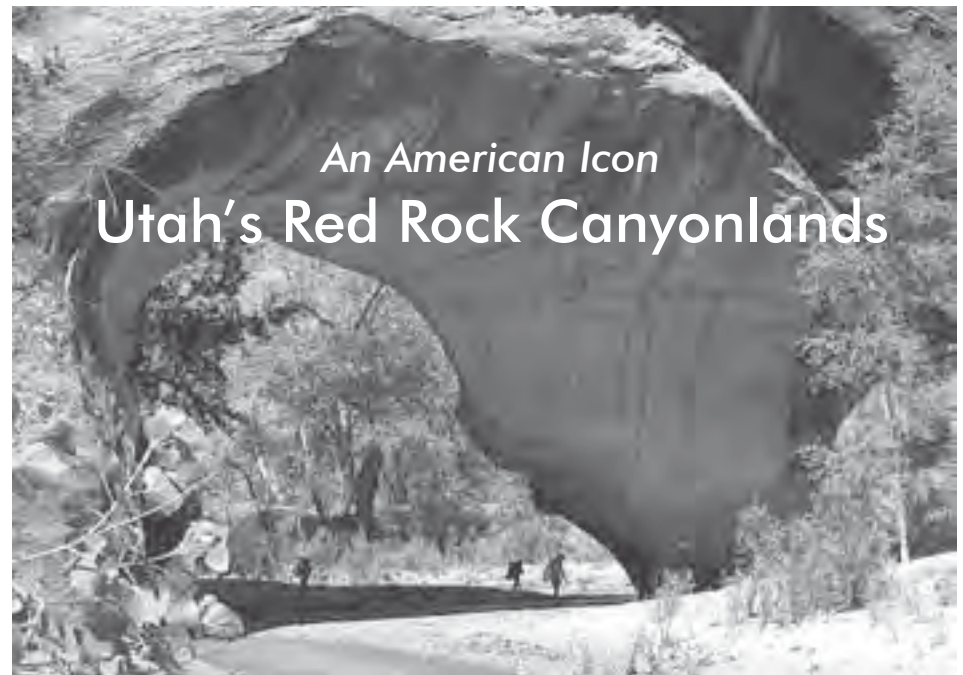
Make checks payable to Sierra Club-Virginia Chapter, and mail to 422 E. Franklin Street, Suite 302, Richmond, VA 23219.

to "Poplar Grove," an historic site where Col. George Washington first met Martha Dandridge Custis (later to become his wife). After exploring a small tidal creek adjacent to Poplar Grove, we will return to our starting point (we hope on an outgoing tide). We should be off river by 6 p.m.

This trip is suitable for novice paddlers. Participants, however, should be reasonably fit and come prepared for moderately strenuous activity. There is no whitewater on this section of river, but some wind and wakes from motorized boats may need to be negotiated.

Garrie Rouse with Mattaponi Canoe and Kayak will provide the kayaks. Fees are \$25 for Falls of the James members, \$30 for other interested explorers. Participants will need to sign a waiver. Minimum of 14 paddlers is needed.

Contact Shavon Peacock at peacock7@flash.net or (804) 320-2318. Make checks to Falls of the James Sierra Club and send to 7669 Rockfalls Dr., Richmond, Va. 23225. Send your cell number and e-mail address.



An American Icon Utah's Red Rock Canyonlands

Hikers explore the Escalante in Utah's red rock canyonlands. Photo by Jack Pennington by Pete Bsumek

Last year Virginia Sierrans learned about the magnificent and threatened landscapes of southern Utah's red rock canyons. Several of our groups hosted members of the Utah Wilderness Coalition, and many of us became active supporters of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act by writing letters, and meeting with our congressional representatives.

The red rock canyonlands of southern Utah is one of our nation's most impressive wild landscapes. The land is a layer-cake sedimentary geology, where ancient sand dunes form massive cliffs and domes that range starkly in color, from white to deep, brick red. The Colorado and Green Rivers have sliced deep, broad canyons through the yielding sandstone. Ephemeral streams have cut slot canyons so narrow you can touch both sides with outstretched arms.

The last place in the lower 48 states to

be mapped, it remains a remote area where any human imprint on nature is at a minimum. It is the largest unprotected network of wild lands outside of Alaska. If you've been there, you know the vast landscapes and ancient Native American cultural sites feel like a connection to eternity.

Unfortunately leftover policies from the Bush administration still allow illegal and inappropriate use of offroad vehicles and efforts to extract minimal amounts of oil and gas or the potentially larger amounts of oil shale may yet cause extensive damage to these wonderlands and their ecosystem.

The U.S. Geological Survey has cited the dust caused by off-road vehicle activity and development associated with resource extraction as a key factor amplifying the damage caused by climate change to the southwest's dwindling water supply.

The Obama administration needs to stand and deliver on this issue by reversing President Bush's "No More Wilderness" policy, which precludes the Bureau of Land Management from increasing wilderness protection in Utah and across the country.

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, re-introduced in the Senate (S.799) and in the House (HR 1925) would protect 9.4 million acres of wild lands in southern and western Utah. A small portion of these lands was recently protected by the Omnibus Public Lands Bill. It is time to finish the job.

Ask your Congressmen to cosponsor America's Red Rock Wilderness Act at www.sierraclub.org/utahwilderness.

Ask the Interior Department to revoke President Bush's "No More Wilderness" policy which prevents the Bureau of Land Management from providing additional wilderness protection for the wild lands under its jurisdiction. Send your letters to Deputy Secretary David Hayes; U.S. Dept. of the Interior; 1849 'C' St., NW; Washington, DC 20240.



Photo by Chris Bryan

Chesapeake Bay Group members and friends begin a five-mile hike at Sandy Bottom Nature Park in Hampton on August 8 where they observed a large number of birds. A canoeing/kayak outing is planned September 20 at Northwest River Park. Start time is 11 a.m. at the Virginia Beach central library and cost is \$11 per person which includes boat rental and tour guides. Contact Chris Bryan at cbryan1101@aol.com or call 757-202-3331.

Wake up and Smell the Biomass

by **Diana Abbott**

As a long time active member of the Sierra Club, I feel I must speak up about the disturbing lack of attention the *Old Dominion Sierran* awards biomass. The publication is filled with articles about the part solar and wind will play in the fight against climate change, but their potentials will not be realized for decades. We need drastically and immediately to cut the amount of oil and coal we burn for energy.

Virginia is blessed with an abundance of biomass -- loosely defined as anything that has been alive (grasses, wood products etc) or is a product of a living thing (animal waste etc) and is sustainable. We already know that biomass can be processed into fuel and the substitution or co-firing of biomass in power plants would curtail harmful gasses. Many existing power plants can already handle non-coal feed stocks.

While combating global warming, careful planning and implementation of

biomass programs would also alleviate many of Virginia's problems. Growing warm season grasses would once again give farmers a decent cash crop and help them cut down on their use of fertilizers.

Utilizing animal waste for fuel or energy would help clean up our waterways. Permanently securing open land for future food or fuel production would curtail urban sprawl.

But forcing an intensive dialogue on the use of our



A six-foot tall farmer holds a ten-foot pole in a field of switchgrass growing in Southwest Virginia. Photo from Andrew Rosenberger, Conservation Management Institute Virginia Tech

public and private forest lands could be the most important result. As it stands now there is very little agreement on how woodlands should be "managed."

People have drawn lines in the sand and are ready to go down fighting but not talking. Do we keep our hands off forests or groom them? Do we favor nature lovers or agribusinessmen? Do we take biodiversity (especially wildlife) into account or just clear-cut? If we don't discuss these issues and come up with some sensible

public policies as soon as possible, we will severely cripple serious progress toward reducing CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Sierra Club could be a huge positive force in encouraging the use of biomass. In the last five years the organization has become nationally regarded as a steward of the environment and our leaders have achieved respect in the halls of government. The club has all forms of professional and grassroots communication available to us and it is our responsibility to use them wisely in our effort to protect and preserve our planet.

Diana Abbott is a board member of the Piedmont Group

Ed. Note: Please see article on switchgrass on page 5.

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Wake up and smell the biomass



Photo by Jack Pennington

Water flows over massive red rock formations in this magnificent area of the Escalante in Utah's red rock canyonlands. This is part of the 9.4 million acres of wild lands in southern and western Utah that would be protected with the passage of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. See article on page 7.