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TENNESSEE CHAPTER

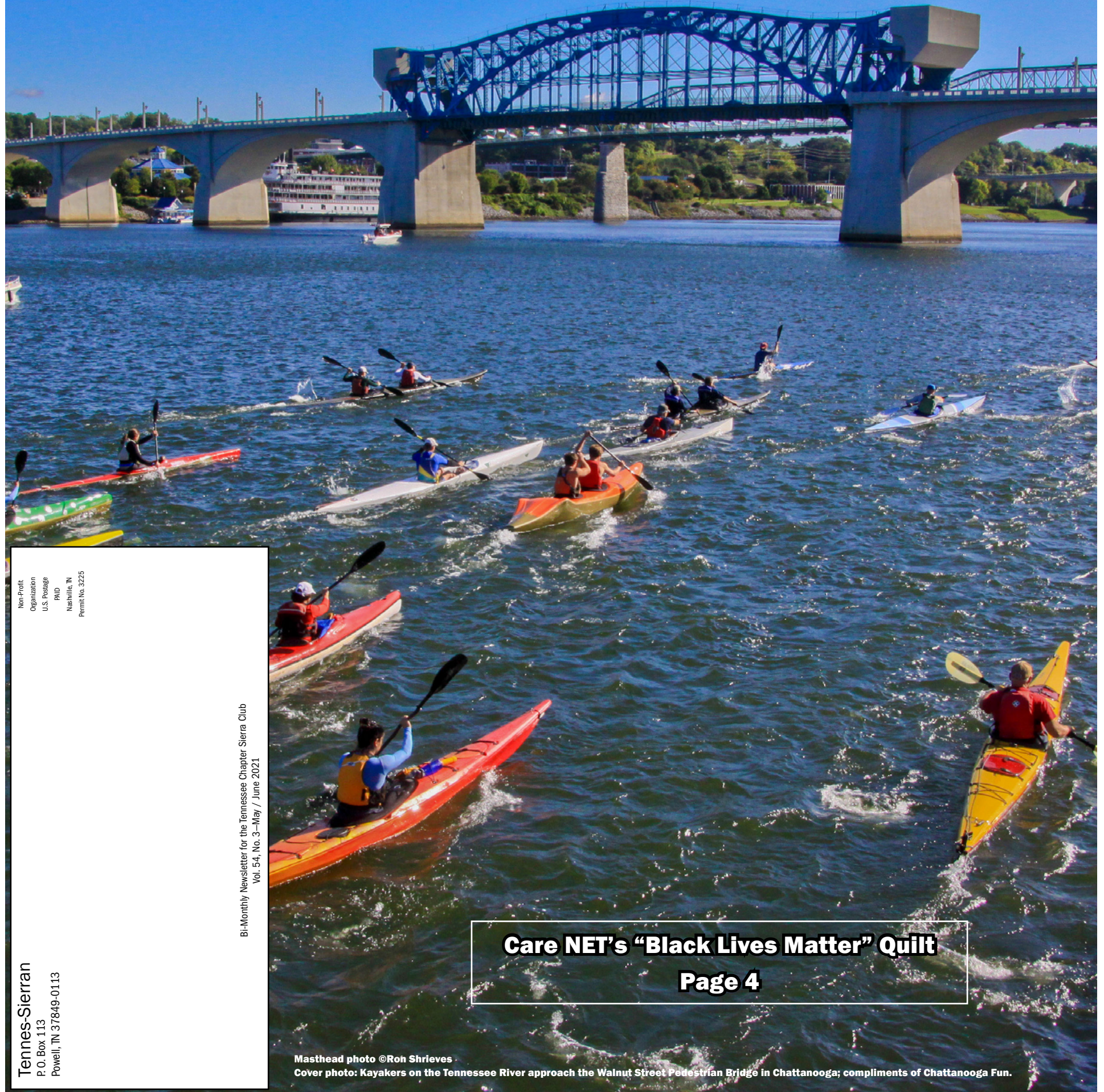
Bi-monthly newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

Volume 54, Number 3 - May / June 2021

Take Me to the River

**The Tennessee Riverline: a continuous
652-mile water trail along the Tennessee River**

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Care NET's "Black Lives Matter" Quilt

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Masthead photo ©Ron Shrieves

Cover photo: Kayakers on the Tennessee River approach the Walnut Street Pedestrian Bridge in Chattanooga; compliments of Chattanooga Fun.

From Mac Post, State Chair

The Hidden Cost of Fossil Fuel



I recently paid my utility bill. Unfortunately, a large fraction of the electricity I paid for was still generated by burning fossil fuels. This is the “direct” cost of fossil fuel use — money paid for energy from coal, natural gas, and oil. But that expense does not include the total cost of fossil fuels to each of us or to our society as a whole.

There are “indirect” or hidden costs that aren’t included in the market price of fossil fuels. In Tennessee, we are all too familiar with these hidden costs. A few specific examples come quickly to mind:

1) The massive failure of TVA Kingston coal plant ash pond in 2008 (only one of hundreds that surround coal burning facilities) poured more than a billion gallons of toxic coal ash into the Emory River. Of the 900 workers who cleaned up the spill, more than 50 have died from cancer, leukemia and other diseases. Another 400-plus workers are sick or dying.

2) Power plant and transportation vehicle exhaust result in air quality over most of the state that does not meet Clean Air Act requirements. Most of Tennessee’s urban areas often exceed healthy limits set on ozone, sulfur dioxide and sometimes lead and carbon monoxide. It is estimated that 13.1% of deaths in the US, mostly in the east, or 333,000 per year, are attributable to particulate matter of 2.5 micrometers and smaller (PM_{2.5}) from air pollution resulting from fossil fuel burning.*

3) Much of the Cumberland Mountains have been impacted by strip mining and cross mountain (i.e. mountain top removal) mining, resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of acres of forest cover, blasting away mountainsides, and pushing huge volumes of rock and soil into adjacent valleys and streams. These sites are left with poor soil conditions and buried valleys that are slow to recover. Tennessee was doing such a poor job regulating surface mining that, in 1984, the Federal Office of Surface Mining took over permitting and enforcement programs. If passed, a recent Tennessee bill (SB742/HB901) will return control of coal mining regulation to Tennessee state regulators. This will cost Tennessee taxpayers and our environment.

4) Pipelines are connections from refineries, mines, and drilling sites to places where greenhouse gases and other pollutants are released to the air. There are also high potentials for leaks along their length that might impact water sources. High profile opposition to the Byhalia crude oil pipeline that would cut through Memphis is ongoing. (See article on page 4.) The danger of this pipeline to the Memphis Sand Aquifer, the source of all of Memphis’ drinking water, is enormous. This pipeline project highlights another hidden cost— environmental racism and injustice. Fossil fuel infrastructure, like the Byhalia pipeline, is more frequently sited in low-income communities, especially Black neighborhoods. These communities bear the overwhelming majority of costs from intentional and unintentional environmental degradation.

These are just the most tangible hidden costs of fossil fuel burning. There are also industry subsidies, military expenditures, and climate change impacts. It is time we move beyond this environmentally damaging and socially expensive era of dependence on fossil fuels for energy and move aggressively to improved energy efficiency and generation of energy from renewable sources.

* Vohra K., A. Vodonos, J. Schwartz, E. A. Marais, M. P. Sulprizio, L. J. Mickley. Global mortality from outdoor fine particle pollution generated by fossil fuel combustion: Results from GEOS-Chem. Environmental Research, Volume 195, 2021, 110754, ISSN 0013-9351, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2021.110754>.

Rita Harris Receives Tennessee Conservation Voters Individual Advocate Award

by Todd Waterman, Harvey Broome Group



Memphian Rita Harris’ big heart kept sending her where she could make a difference. It urged her on from mom to Girl Scout leader to Girl Scout Cookie Chair to Mid-South Peace & Justice Center (MSPJC) South Africa Task Force Coordinator to MSPJC Local Issues Coordinator. Soon she was taking on Memphis’s now notorious legacy of economic and environmental racism. She’d made herself a consummate environmental justice (EJ) organizer by the time Sierra Club hired her to lead its Memphis EJ Office in 1999. She stayed until 2017, when she retired. But she didn’t quit. She is now advocating for environmental justice as an elected Director of the national Sierra Club Board.

“Everybody wants to have clean, safe neighborhoods to raise their children, and to not be worried about health issues,” Harris said in accepting her Tennessee Conservation Voters’ Individual Advocate Award on February 26. She’d realized, she said, back in 1991, at the first National People of Color Leadership Summit in D.C., that “The problems that we were seeing in Memphis and across Tennessee were not ... isolated for poorer people and neighborhoods. It was way beyond that. There was obviously a pattern of exploitation for People of Color communities across the globe.”

“Environmental justice brings together social justice issues with environmental issues,” Harris said. “And if you bring those people that are represented, and those organizations together, you’re naturally going to have a broader movement. ... The biggest thing in environmental justice organizing is building relationships of trust. ... Always elevate the voices of the folks in the local communities, and push their reputation to the top.”

“One or two people can’t do all of this. ... You need an army of people.” And an organizer like Rita Harris.

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Tennes-Sierran

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June Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by May 21

July Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by June 25

July / August Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by May 31

Request Submission Guidelines at sierratnnews@gmail.com

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Regional Conservation Committees

Contact information for conservation committees on page 2. Meeting times on page 8.

Watauga Conservation Committee Reporting In

by Gloria Griffith

Folks on the Watauga Conservation Committee, in upper northeast Tennessee, are excited to see their community stepping up. The 12th annual Watauga Lake Cleanup (WLCleanup) is scheduled for Saturday, September 18th, and for the first time, includes six months of community outreach to involve more citizens, businesses, elected officials, high school students and nonprofit organizations. Watauga Lake, located in Carter and Johnson Counties, is the upper-most impoundment in the TVA system. Since the vast majority of its shoreline is in the Cherokee National Forest, pollution levels are low.

After a letter published in our weekly *Tomahawk* newspaper pinpointed the eyesore litter, Mayor Taylor held a Johnson County commissioners special hearing March 15th to address the issue. The Commissioners approved and Mayor Taylor announced April 10th would be Johnson County Clean Sweep Day. Shady Valley, Trade, and Doe Valley communities all participated with 1500 pounds of trash collected.

Several neighborhoods have enthusiastic members already picking up trash from rights-of-way, scenic byways, state highways and waterways. One dedicated duo self-dubbed "Litter Chicks" was featured in a *Tomahawk* article.

Spontaneous "Pop-Up" cleanups will be announced between now and the September 18 event. A Stop Litter Essay Contest was offered to Johnson County High School students. The winning essays were published in the *Tomahawk* and shared on social media. Community service volunteer hours were offered to Tennessee Promise students. Outreach continues to restaurants asked to display "Dispose of Trash Properly" signage.

Partnering with Johnson County Litter Officer, Sandy Hammons will highlight citizens' litter control efforts on social media; she has an account access at the Transfer Station that members can use for properly disposing of and weighing collected trash.

Notes from Clarksville-Montgomery County

Moving a Community toward Sustainability

by JoAnn McIntosh

Last things first: On March 4, the Clarksville City Council passed a resolution to create a Sustainability Board for the City of Clarksville, the result of months of work by Sierra Club Clarksville-Montgomery County (SC CMC). SC CMC, northwest of Nashville on the Kentucky border, was created by the Tennessee Chapter in 2018. Clarksville had previously been the only one of Tennessee's five largest cities with no dedicated sustainability resource for working with city or county government, so the 12-1 vote to establish this board was a significant and necessary step forward for our community.

SC CMC prepared for this step by participating in the candidate-endorsement process overseen by the Chapter political committee last summer. Twenty-two City Council candidates, vying for seven seats, were contacted by our committee, and those who requested them were sent endorsement questionnaires. The Committee endorsed three candidates, two of whom won their seats in the November 2020 election.

Meanwhile, it became apparent during campaign season that the 22 candidates were not being given the opportunity by local media to address community sustainability issues, so SC CMC contacted the candidates once again to invite them to a public forum for this purpose. Candidates received the forum questions in advance, and half the slate attended our Zoom forum in September.

Encouraged by the interest shown in the public forum and by the November election of two of our endorsed candidates, SC CMC prepared a sustainability resolution to present to City Council. By the time new Council members were seated in January, the decision had been made to request creation of a Sustainability Board as a resource for city agencies. SC CMC spoke for the resolution when Councilperson Jason Knight presented it to City Council in February, and the resolution passed with overwhelming support the following week.

Our thanks to all of the Sierra Club members and supporters in Clarksville-Montgomery County who responded to our alert and contacted City Council members. Thanks also to Chapter folks who researched and shared info with us about successful sustainability efforts in their own cities across the state. It truly does take a village, and it is gratifying to know that the village is there for you when you ask. Try asking.

Tri-Cities Conservation Committee

Tri-Cities Conservation Committee is now having a monthly program meeting in addition to their ongoing monthly business meeting. Members are invited to attend and be a part of the Sierra Club's exciting re-emergence in the Tri-Cities. See the meeting schedule on the back page of this paper.

Care NET Community Conservation Committee

Members of the Care NET Conservation Committee joined with friends to make a quilt in honor and remembrance of Black victims lost to racist violence. See the story and the quilt on page 4.

Governor Proclaims March 31 Mack S. Prichard Day

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee has designated March 31 as Mack S. Prichard Day, honoring Tennessee's first state naturalist and state archaeologist.

Prichard, who died last year at 81, built a career of state service beginning at age 16. He worked to conserve Tennessee's landscape and was instrumental in the acquisition of more than 40 sites for Tennessee State Parks, natural areas and archaeological areas.

"Mack Prichard was a Tennessee treasure, and we are pleased to proclaim this day in his honor," Lee said. "Mack recognized the wonder of the nature we have in Tennessee and was a champion for its preservation and promotion."

"We are indebted to Mack Prichard for his lifelong contributions to Tennessee State Parks—contributions that helped make Tennessee's state parks system the best in the nation," David Salyers, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), said. "He was an inspiration to us at TDEC, to people throughout Tennessee and beyond."

A native of Memphis, Prichard was known for presenting slideshows throughout the state for audiences such as state parks friends' groups, school groups and camps. He enjoyed leading hikes to Tennessee waterfalls and informing outdoors enthusiasts about wildlife and native plants. Prichard's writings, presentations and thousands of photographs can be found at www.mackprichard.com, a site curated by Friends of South Cumberland State Park. The Mack S. Prichard Foundation was established in 2019 with the mission of protecting and conserving the environment. It provides scholarships for students in environmental science.



Group Scoop

Group contact information on page 2. Meeting times on page 8.

Cherokee Group (Chattanooga) by Kate Anthony

The Cherokee Group's February public program was on the Abandoned Mines of Signal Mountain and their effects on Water Quality. It was very well attended, and featured a spirited discussion. For the March program, Cherokee Group member David Hoot presented on electric vehicles and their rising importance in our society. He was joined by the TVA's Drew Frye, who talked about the major Electric Vehicles Initiative underway in Tennessee. We participated in the Tennessee Valley Chapter of Wild Ones Native Plant Symposium and plant sale. We planned a virtual Earth Day Festival and are starting to plan the October State Chapter meeting—hopefully we will meet in person this time! See you there!

Chickasaw Group (Memphis) by Dennis Lynch

The Chickasaw Group remains engaged with City Council, County Commission, Land Use Control Board, Water Board, Solid Waste Board, MATA (Memphis Transit), and MLGW (Memphis Light Gas and Water), plus various non-governmental organizations.

The Chickasaw Group's March program, held on Zoom, was on waste: food waste, zero waste, and recycling. We had great presenters—friends and allies from Clean Memphis, the "Compost Fairy," and the city's Solid Waste (and Recycling) Department. Our Solid Waste Working Group is starting to get organized, and we'd love a few more volunteers (see email below).

A growing share of Memphians, public and politicians alike, have become engaged in efforts to prevent installation of the "Byhalia Pipeline," a 49-mile oil pipeline proposed by Texas-based Plains All American Pipeline and Valero Energy Corporation. Memphis Community Against the Pipeline (MCAP) organized a large public rally featuring former Vice President Al Gore, with allies Protect Our Aquifer, the Sierra Club and many other organizations. Justin Pearson and the growing MCAP group have gotten lots of public attention. (See article on page 4.)

The City of Memphis and MLGW have decided to get real cost proposals from companies that could produce MLGW's electricity, and allow MLGW to depart TVA. The Chickasaw Group continues to be involved. Email: ChickasawSierra@gmail.com

Harvey Broome Group (Knoxville) by Jerry Thornton

HBG has been busy analyzing and commenting on: a proposed nuclear and hazardous waste dump and a successful effort to prevent a car racetrack within the Oak Ridge Reservation; a proposed coal ash disposal dump by TVA near the Bull Run steam plant; proposed off-road bike trails adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park and a new entrance road into the park at Metcalf Bottoms.

HBG partnered with SEED, the Sunrise Movement, Tennessee Interfaith Power and Life, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, and other environmental organizations in presenting an Earth Day celebration focused on affordable, SEED-trainee-built solar-powered homes for low-income owners in Knoxville.

Recent programs featured Dr. Kitty McCracken, President of the Tennessee Invasive Plants Council, presenting on Zoom about the huge problem we have with invasive, exotic plants, and Dr. Elizabeth Hamilton of Better Nature, LLC, talking about the use of Integrated Pest Management. The May 11 program will be "Hiking the Backcountry of Southern Utah" by Roger Jenkins. Request a link to the Zoom program: www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/harvey-broome

HBG plans to resume its outings program in July and has kicked off a project to write a third edition of the *Hiking Guide to the Cherokee National Forest*. Learn more and find out how to volunteer to hike on the back cover of this paper.

Middle Tennessee Group (Nashville) by Antoinette Oleson

Our April program presentation on the "Dark Skies," presented by Joseph M Boyd and At-Large council member Berklee Allen, was a big success largely due to our new Program Chair Stephanie Perry, with help from Jack McFadden, Gary Bowers and new addition to the committee Susan Shann. Please join us for our May 13th program! Good news: Nashville Solid Waste Board has denied the construction and demolition landfill expansion in the historically black area of Bordeaux. We want to send a big thank you to the hard work and action of our Conservation Chair Scott Heflinger.

Opposition to Proposed Byhalia Pipeline Grows



Left: Maxine Thomas Marsh raises her fist while listening to speakers at a rally in opposition to the proposed Byhalia Pipeline in Memphis, Tennessee, March 14, 2021; right: Justin Pearson, Co-Founder of Memphis Community Against the Pipeline (MCAP), elbow-bumps former Vice President Al Gore at the rally. Photos by Andrea Morales.

by Dennis Lynch, Chickasaw Group

Opposition is growing in Memphis over plans to build the Byhalia pipeline. The proposed 49-mile pipeline would carry crude oil for export through predominantly Black communities in Memphis. The planned path not only risks residents of multiple Memphis neighborhoods—Westwood, Bostown, and White Chapel—it would also pass through the Davis Wellhead Protection Zone (where water is pumped from the Memphis aquifer), which would pose a risk to Memphis’ drinking water.

The evolving story gained national attention with coverage by *The New York Times*, *The Seattle Times*, and *CBS This Morning* and more. Justin Pearson, co-founder of “Memphis Community Against the Pipeline” (MCAP), has gotten lots of public attention. 300-400 were in attendance at a recent MCAP rally on March 14, including former Vice President Al Gore, Congressman Steve Cohen, multiple local officials, and activists from Protect Our Aquifer, the Sierra Club, Climate Reality Project (CRP) and others. Gore called the Pipeline a “reckless, racist, rip off.” Duffy-Marie Arnoult of CRP called the rally “a beautiful testament to collective people power.”

Justin Pearson said the rally had “a transcendent moment when Clyde Robinson uplifted the community with a song of resilience ... It was a climactic moment, it caught the spirit in a special way. To see Representative Barbara Cooper, she’s still on the battlefield for the community at age 92, sitting next to the former VP. That was really powerful.”

Memphis City Council unanimously passed a resolution in opposition to the pipeline. Shelby County

Commission voted down a resolution to sell two vacant county-owned lots. The campaign against the pipeline also called on President Biden to use an executive order to remove the United States Army Corps of Engineers’ blanket Nationwide Permit 12, which it now uses to streamline approval of even large pipelines like the Byhalia without adequate environmental review or public input.

Contact Dennis at dmlynch1@gmail.com

Editor’s Byhalia update, from a Southern Environmental Law Center April 1 press release

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) filed suit April 1 on behalf of Memphis Community Against Pollution (MCAP), Protect Our Aquifer, and the Sierra Club, against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ 2017 decision to adopt the Nationwide Permit 12 for large oil and gas pipelines, and to verify that permit’s use for the Byhalia pipeline.

“The Corps has approved this pipeline under Nationwide Permit 12, despite the fact that a court has already determined that the permit is unlawful,” said Amanda Garcia, director of SELC’s Tennessee office. “The lack of public input under this permit is not appropriate for large oil pipelines like Byhalia, which tend to have significant impacts on communities and the environment. Communities

who are being asked to bear the disproportionate risks associated with a large oil pipeline have every right to be fully informed and voice their concerns about the ramifications for their quality of life.” “While the Corps may not have known back in 2017 when it adopted Nationwide Permit 12 that the Byhalia pipeline would even be proposed, the agency claims it can look into the future and conclude there’s no problem with any large oil pipeline, in any community,” said Axel Ringe, Water Quality Chair for the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club. “This practice amounts to the Corps rubber stamping approvals for massive pipelines, while preventing communities from speaking up when pipelines are subsequently proposed in their own backyards.”

Care NET Conservation Committee Makes “Black Lives Matter” Quilt

by Bobbi Smith, Care NET Community Conservation Committee of TN Sierra Club



A square from a Black Lives Matter quilt made by members of the Sierra Club’s Care NET Conservation Committee in Rogersville, Tennessee. Pictured in the square are Denise McNair, 11 years old, and Addie Mae Collins, 14, Carole Robertson, 14, Cynthia Wesley, and Carole Robertson, all 14, killed in 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama.

Overwhelming grief and all-consuming sorrowfulness inspired members of Care NET Community Conservation Committee, and their friends to make a “Say Their Names – Never Forget” Black Lives Matter quilt. We needed a way to mend, and also a way to speak out.

The situation in Hawkins County, like other communities across the country, was volatile last summer. A small group of Care NET CCC members, along with others in the community, took actions in response to the killings of George Floyd by police on a street corner in Minneapolis, and the killing of Breonna Taylor by police in her home in Louisville. These actions culminated in a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest held in downtown Rogersville on July 11, organized by a group of Black and White youth from the Tri-Cities known as the New Panther Initiative (see *Tennes-Sierrans* September-October 2020). The number of peaceful protesters for Black

Lives Matter was relatively small, the number of counter-protesters large and vocal. Arrests were made of counter-protesters, many tattooed with swastikas or wearing Nazi paraphernalia. A large law enforcement contingent kept the peace.

At its next regular monthly meeting, Care NET members discussed, “Where do we go from here?” Many of us were shaken, but not surprised, by the virulent hatred shown by counter-protesters, the expletives, and the unabashed displays of racism. We wanted to take the late John Robert Lewis’s words to heart—to stand up and do something.

Wendy Ritchey, an art therapist who knows that art can have a healing power, suggested we create a quilt and invite others in the community to join in. Those who made a quilt square were asked to write about the person or persons they chose to honor. Their murders range from as far back as 1903 (George Washington Lee), to as recently as 2020 (George Floyd and Breonna Taylor). The names represent a tiny fraction of Black lives lost due to racism.

Two Care NET members asked the folks at Price Public Community Center (formerly a segregated, ‘colored’ school) if they would host an open house to display the quilt. The answer was not only “Yes”, but “Yes, yes and yes!”

The quilt was displayed on three separate Saturdays in February (Black History Month) to allow social distancing, and time to share conversations with others about the quilt, and their own experiences with race, systemic racism, and the violence it brings. Price Public staff members CaSandra Palmer and Stella Pyles offered advice and assistance. A booklet was created as a memento for those who attended. Care NET members put the quilt together, while Alicia Salzman did the hand-quilting and Cecilia Gunnell made a quilt stand. 28 quilt squares were completed.

Over 70 people visited Price Public Community Center during the three Open House days. We plan to display the quilt at other local venues later this year – a community center in Church Hill, a church in the Tri-Cities, a Juneteenth celebration in Hamblen County, and local festivals in Hawkins County.

Contact Bobbi at ardia1952@yahoo.com



Above: Anita Rondeau of Care NET CCC (left) and Casandra Palmer, Interim Director of Price Public Community Center and Swift Museum, hold up the “Say Their Names – Never Forget” Black Lives Matter quilt made to honor and remember Black victims lost to racist violence. Below: individual squares from the Black Lives Matter quilt honoring Merci Mack, killed in Dallas, Texas, in June 2020 (left); George Floyd, killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2020 (right).



Take Me to the River

The Tennessee RiverLine is creating a continuous 652-mile system of trails along the Tennessee River

by Emily Ellis, Editor, The Tennes-Sierran



The Tennessee River in the City of Loudon, Tennessee. Photo courtesy of The University of Tennessee School of Landscape Architecture,

It's hard to overstate the importance of the Tennessee River to those who have lived near it over the centuries. Archaeologists have found evidence of people in the Tennessee River Valley 8,000 years ago. Mound builders made their homes here 1,000 years ago, relying on the Tennessee for food, water and transportation. The Valley is also the ancestral homelands of Indigenous nations such as the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Yuchi, Muscogee, among others. In the 18th century, Europeans invaded. Since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and then the 20th century's mushrooming population, the river has served as a natural highway for moving goods and, unfortunately, as a dumping ground for industrial and human waste. With the advent of modern transportation, awareness of this essential natural resource has faded.

The Tennessee RiverLine is changing that. The Tennessee RiverLine's ambitious and far-reaching mission is to reconnect the Tennessee River to its communities and people, by ultimately creating a continuous system of paddling, hiking and biking experiences on the 652-mile reach from Knoxville through northern Alabama and up to Paducah, Kentucky.

Brad Collett is the Director of the Tennessee RiverLine and Associate Professor in the Department of Plant Sciences, with a faculty appointment in the School of Landscape Architecture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. "Rivers used to be the front door to and from communities," Collett said. "Since we have transitioned to rail and highways for transportation and commerce, rivers have become the back door. Even though the river is visible in our communities, there are very few places where people have access and can experience it. That condition renders the river's value — and threats posed to it — invisible, and the economic development, public health and environmental opportunities it offers unmet."

"There are examples throughout modern history, predating the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], of how use of the river for transportation and waste management has improved. But still today, urban systems such as stormwater management and energy production impact the river that we rely on for drinking and recreation," Collett said.

One of Collett's Architecture students first had the idea for the life-changing trail system. "We had started a new multi-year teaching initiative in 2016 called the Tennessee River Project. And we were interested in understanding the legacy of the Tennessee River and the Tennessee River Valley and how that legacy would be carried forward," Collett said.

And so Collett took 12 of his students — six from the School of Landscape Architecture and six from the School of Architecture in the College of Architecture and Design — to the river. "We started in Knoxville and drove over the course of five days to Paducah," Collett said. "In that experience, the landscapes we saw and people we met demonstrated for us how important the river is to our communities and how important it is as an ecosystem."

They also witnessed how difficult it can be to experience the river, and how vulnerable the river is. "The infrastructure systems that support our communities are very much integrated with the river. The river is a critical natural resource that supports drinking supply, agriculture, industrial process, waste management and energy production," Collett said.

"But, you can travel a dozen miles or more and have no access to the water. And that renders the threats to the river invisible. If you can't experience the river, then you don't see the litter, stormwater outfalls, shoreline habitat replaced by riprap, the eroding banks, and other threats," Collett said.

"It was through the students' synthesis of the value, the threats and the lack of equitable access that they realized the Tennessee RiverLine would be an effective strategy to reintroduce a region to one of its most valuable resources," Collett said. "Additional opportunities for economic development, entrepreneurship, public health and cultivating new generations of river stewards grew out of that initial idea for a continuous water trail from Knoxville to Paducah."

In the summer of 2019, the Tennessee RiverLine's "652 to You" program was initiated by Collett and a small team of students and staff. Five pilot communities were selected that were representative of all river communities in terms of geopolitical region, size, capacity and resources. "We ran an intensive series of workshops and events in each community. The feedback and ideas that were

shared by community leaders and residents gave us clarity on what the next step would be, leading us to design the new program that we launched last year [in 2020] called the Tennessee RiverTowns Program."

All Tennessee River communities were then invited to apply for the new program. Fifteen communities, which include 25 cities and counties in Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky, are now enrolled in the Tennessee RiverTowns Program, and more communities will be added every year. The program is planned as a three-stage initiative that cultivates collaboration among river communities around the Tennessee RiverLine. According to the program's website, "In the next 3-5 years, the communities will start developing and finishing water trails that benefit their residents." They will also plan "animation" experiences, another way of saying paddling events, and stewardship activities such as shoreline cleanups.

One community participating in the program is Clifton in Wayne County, Tennessee. As the Director of Wayne County Economic and Community Development Board, Rena Purdy understands that a healthy river is good for quality of life. "We have boaters stop here who are traveling the Great Loop [a system of waterways that includes inland rivers in the eastern portion of the United States]," Purdy said. "We want more recreational biking and hiking trails for residents and visitors. We have a good group of locals who want that, too."

A responsibility of communities enrolled in the Tennessee RiverTowns Program is to practice stewardship of the river. "We are planning an Earth Day clean-up of the river, which was initiated by Wayne County Solid Waste and Recycling, and then a May Day clean-up of both the river and Clifton," Purdy said. "There are six miles of river frontage in Wayne County. We are working with the city, the Tennessee RiverLine, and Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful." They are also working with the K-12 schools so that the children can participate.

A multifaceted project of this magnitude naturally needs many players. The initial phase of trail planning and organizational development is being conducted with the assistance of the National Park Service through the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. In addition, the Tennessee RiverLine Partnership includes a diverse volunteer consortium of Tennessee River advocates from across the Tennessee River Valley. Among them are the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee Valley Authority, the Nature Conservancy, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, Southeast Tennessee Tourism Association, Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee State Parks, the City of Knoxville, Tribal Connections Consulting, the River Discovery Center in Paducah, and Chattanooga's Tennessee Aquarium.

Along with UT, Knoxville, TVA is a principal partner of the Tennessee RiverLine and an active member of the partnership. "The way the river has changed since the 1930s has had undeniable consequences for its ecosystems," Collett said. "However, it is because of TVA's commitment to its mission of stewardship since the '30s that we have a river today that offers the experiences and beauty that the Tennessee RiverLine celebrates and makes accessible. We are truly fortunate to have an agency that works at a watershed scale and that is dedicated to the stewardship of our most important natural and cultural resource."

Collett also recognizes UT's involvement as a land-grant institution that provides service to the region, "The Tennessee RiverLine is an innovative example of how the contemporary land-grant university invests in our communities, our state and our region, and impacts the people who call them home in so many positive ways," Collett said.

Tribal Connections Consulting, a member of the partnership, is a company that works with municipal and private projects that involve Federal Tribal interests. "The Tennessee River held a significant place in the history of many tribes who navigated it, lived along it, and ultimately were removed down it along the Trail of Tears," Shannon Smith, the company's vice president, said. "So far, our specific contributions have been to connect the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail [curated by the National Park Service], to the Tennessee RiverLine. We have been on the partnership for a couple of years working to involve local communities, review partnership applications and make connections to agencies and entities who are also stakeholders along the Tennessee River."

As development continues to build and to grow in the Tennessee River Valley, it is important to take care of our waterways. "The Tennessee Riverline is bringing attention to stewardship of our river so it can be enjoyed for generations to come," Collett said. By creating a network of river experiences, stewardship opportunities and public support, the Tennessee RiverLine is showing us all a path back to the river.

Contact Emily at tnsierran.editor@gmail.com



The Tennessee River with downtown Knoxville, Tennessee, in the distance. Photo by Emily Ellis.

Get on Board the RiverLine

To support the Riverline project, participate in animation and stewarding events at a rivertown near you. Tennessee rivertowns currently include: Benton County, Clifton, Hardin County, Knoxville, Loudon County, South Pittsburg, Stewart County, Roane County. Upcoming events are listed here: www.tnriverline.org/events

Chapter Committees Reorganized

by Bill Moll, Chapter Conservation Chair

The Chapter conservation committees have been reorganized to be a more effective agent in supporting the Sierra Club mission. The 20-plus committees have been replaced by six:

- Forest and Public Lands (Cris Corley—Chair, Davis Mounger—Vice-Chair) covering National Forests/Federal Lands, State Parks, Natural Areas & Forests, National Parks and Recreation Areas
- Water Quality (Axel Ringe—Chair, Carl Richards—Vice-Chair) covering water quality, wetlands, surface water, aquifers
- Land Management (Virginia Dale—Chair, Ray Graham—Vice-Chair) covering agriculture, biodiversity, endangered species/wildlife, CAFO, farm incentives
- Energy (JoAnn McIntosh—Chair, Joe Schiller—Vice-Chair) covering the Beyond Coal Campaign, Rebuild and Repower, Nuclear (TN)
- Solid Waste Management and Mining (Dan Firth—Chair) covering plastics, biosolids, landfills, manufacturing byproducts, extractive industries
- Transportation (Kent Minault and Bill Kornrich—Co-Chairs) covering electric vehicles, public transportation, roads

Please note that the Environmental Justice Coordinator, Legal Committee and Know Nukes are not part of this change.

The chairs and co-chairs have been selected from members who are currently active in Chapter conservation activities. The intention is to have a wider group of active members to select from in future years.

The committees will meet on a regular basis as needed, dealing with Chapter issues, assisted by the Conservation Coordinator. Each group or geographical conservation committee will be encouraged to have a member on each committee; other members may be on the committee, but each area should have a presence, if possible.

Conservation issues will come first to the Chapter committees, but will be addressed by the local groups, if they have the resources. Otherwise, the Chapter committees will provide supporting resources. Many Chapter members will be active on a committee only when there is an issue of local concern, while others will have a more extended involvement.

Since this structure is new, the operations are still being defined. Committee activities will be documented as part of the Chapter project to better document and store Chapter information, so members not on a committee will be able to follow what is being done.

If you would like to be part of one of these committees or would like to recommend someone else to be considered, please go to www.sierraclub.org/tennessee or contact Bill Moll: whmoll@aol.com or 404-401-7899.

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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Sierra Club's democratic process ensures it is held accountable to its membership with viable candidates who best represent members' interests. Any Chapter member in good standing is eligible to be considered for nomination.

The Chapter and Group nomination committees are seeking candidates to self-nominate, and also are accepting suggestions for nominees. Candidates may also petition to be on the ballot. After receiving nominations by September 1, 2021, the committees will consider and recommend candidates for the ballot.

Chapter and group ballots will be published in the November/December edition of this newspaper, and also online. Candidates are allowed space on the ballot to advocate for their election. Candidates receiving the top votes will start their two-year terms in January 2022.

Tennessee Chapter ExCom At-Large Election

This year, four of the seven at-large Chapter ExCom members will reach the end of their terms. The ExCom sets the Chapter budget and strategic direction, reaches consensus on conservation positions, raises money, appoints officers and committee chairs, plans important events, and approves litigation and electoral endorsements. To accomplish all of this, the Chapter ExCom meets 6 times a year (4 electronic meetings, 2 in-person meetings) every other month, currently virtually by Zoom, and there is email correspondence between meetings. At-Large candidates must be willing and able to participate fully.

Any Sierra Club member wishing to be nominated or to recommend a member as a 2022-2023 At-Large candidate should indicate their intent by July 31, 2021. Email Todd Waterman at jtoddw@gmail.com, or send by paper mail to: Todd Waterman, 418 Orchard Knob Road, Clinton, TN 37716.

Group ExCom Elections

Each year, some members of the Group executive committees (ExComs) reach the end of their terms. Each ExCom sets its Group budget and strategic direction, reaches consensus on conservation positions, raises money, appoints officers and committee chairs and makes electoral endorsements within its area.

To accomplish all of this, each Group ExCom meets every month, currently virtually by Zoom, and will do so until in-person meetings are deemed safe. Each ExCom also plans additional important events throughout the year.

To self-nominate or suggest a nominee for your group, contact:

Cherokee Group (Chattanooga) Kate Anthony rainbowgardener2@gmail.com
Harvey Broome Group (Knoxville) Jerry Thornton gatwildcat@aol.com
Chickasaw Group (Memphis) Charlie Belenky cbelenky@gmail.com
Middle Tennessee Group (Nashville) Gary Bowers sierra@totheforest.net

If you wish to serve on your Group's nominations committee, please contact the person listed above.

Your Path to an Impact: Support the Tennessee Chapter Lobbyist.

The Defenders Fund campaign has enabled the Sierra Club to become a stronger and more visible presence in the halls of the state legislature. This allows us to work more effectively towards passage of bills that protect our air, water, land, wildlife, and the people of Tennessee. Because the Defenders Fund is a volunteer effort, there are no administrative expenses and 100% of your donation goes to supporting the program. Please help by donating to the Defenders of Tennessee. THANK YOU! Susan Johnston, Chair, Defenders Fund TN Chapter, susan.johnston2011@gmail.com

YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT OUR LOBBYIST! [] \$50 [] \$100 [] \$250 [] \$500 [] \$1000 \$ _____ **Surprise us!**

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[] Please send me weekly email updates from the Tennessee Conservation Voters during the legislative session.

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[] I do not need an acknowledgment letter. Please save the Defenders' funds for program purposes.

Mail to: Susan Johnston, Sierra Club Defenders, 1325 5th Ave N #23 Nashville TN 37208. Thank you!

Dear Eartha : Advice from An Eco-Guru

Dear Eartha,

We have all heard about the destruction of the rainforest and what happens to the environment, animals, and weather patterns. We talk about planting trees in and around Nashville, but we never speak of the total destruction of our ecosystem when developers cut down every single tree daily across many acres, then strip away the soil and blast the rock below it making sure that no living organism could survive. When are we going to pass laws that preserve old trees and force developers to work with the topography? They are changing the flow of water, and floods are a major problem from all the fast runoff. Tennessee is the third most biodiverse state in the contiguous US. You will never catch up to the loss of trees with your planting program until you address the mass destruction of OUR forests.

Sincerely,
Su Goodman

Dear Su,

Thank you for your question and I hear your passionate frustration and impatience. I have some good news, but in a different form than you probably want. It's called "forest offsets," and the capitalists like it. From my research, I believe it's the tip of the iceberg.

In a capitalist economy it seems pretty clear that beauty must dance with the bottom line. California has started the dance card by requiring the strictest greenhouse gas emissions regulations in the country. It's more expensive to pollute in our most populous state than it is to not pollute, so corporations, including developers who knock down trees, are making changes.

In the realm of forest economics, corporations can buy and sell offset credits the way BP sells oil and gas. In fact, British Petroleum says it is targeting carbon neutrality by 2050. Today they are working with a company called Finite Carbon to preserve forests, including large portions owned by The Lyme Timber Company in Grundy County, Tennessee, to basically get credit by offsetting the amount of carbon they are creating through tree preservation.

In an article in the Wall Street Journal, Ryan Dezember writes, "... by paying landowners not to cut [trees], companies can say they are responsible for having locked up a specific amount of carbon in the standing trees, calculable to the metric ton" (August 24, 2020). The science of forest carbon storage includes a laser hypsometer to gauge the tree's height, and a girthing tape to measure diameter. As the trees grow in height and girth, the corporations investing in "voluntary offsets" get credit and keep forests intact.

"Offering an income-producing alternative to logging, so that trees could remain standing and absorbing carbon, motivated California's decision to accept forest credits," wrote Andrea Tuttle, of that state's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. They have paved the way, requiring strict third-party verification and audits every six years, employing foresters like those used by Tennessee's Lyme Timber to do the measuring. One forester, a Mr. McAbee, said lumber companies never checked the cutting of trees, but now, for "carbon, we've got four different entities checking our work and measurements. Not turning woods into wood has become a carbon offset market." And Pennsylvania's Finite Carbon will work with landowners who own from 40 acres to Tennessee's Lyme Timber's 18,369 acres.

How do we protect trees closer to home? By working with our local council members. In Nashville, you'll be happy to know, Metro Codes, Article X, Tree Protection and Replacement Procedures is stringent. But as we all know, we must stay on our politicians to make sure they are working for the benefit of the environment and not their personal stock portfolio. Nashville's Tree Conservation Corps is working hard with city government to regulate developers' tendency to overlook nature's fragility. Every city/region also has similar nonprofits doing this kind of work.

The old adage "think globally, act locally" will increase our power to preserve trees, and the earth, if only we have the energy to act. The benefits of the tree canopy can never be underestimated.

Let's get to it!

Yours, in sun and shade,

Eartha

Dear Eartha is written by Rita Bullinger.

Submit your question for Eartha to SierraTNNews@gmail.com

Sustainable Living in Memphis

by Nancy Chung, Guest Columnist



One of the most common questions I am asked as an environmental consultant is, "What can I do as an individual to make an impact?" My recommendation is always: "think globally, act locally." There are two simple actions within your personal control that have an IMMEDIATE impact: composting and living a Zero Waste lifestyle. In this column, I will discuss composting.

You may have expected the answer to be recycling plastics, metals, and paper. Unfortunately, so much of recycling is impacted by global factors that are out of our control. There are many issues: dirty recyclables that cannot be sold to third parties, poor separation of products, "Wish-cycling" (individuals hoping "I'm sure this is recyclable"), poor commodity pricing for pulp and plastic in markets, lack of persistent education of employees and customers - those are just a few of the large factors. Here in Memphis, we have even more concerns that revolve around staffing and truck availability.

The first simple action to take locally is composting, or, as those in the industry like to call it, recycling food waste. The Mid-South is fortunate to have had the Compost Fairy, which is a nonprofit founded by Memphis Midtowner Mike Larrivee in October 2017, dedicated to diverting food waste from the landfill and supporting the education of the community around that impact. Their website describes what compost is and why this should be your first action to take:

"Compost is a mixture of decayed or decaying organic matter used to fertilize soil ... It is usually made by gathering plant material, such as leaves, grass clippings, and vegetable peels, into a pile or bin and letting it decompose as a result of the action of aerobic bacteria, fungi, and other organisms ... On average 35% of waste we produce at home is food waste, 75% of that is compostable ... Feed your soil with compost. Healthy soil makes healthy plants more resistant to drought, disease and other stresses."

The Compost Fairy mission had focused on educating the community about waste diversion, provided composting services, and created an industrial scale compost operation in the City of Memphis. Their main operation was providing affordable, weekly curbside collection of food scraps to make it easy for any Memphian to start immediately reducing their footprint. Due to the Safer-at-Home directive, Covid-19 had the effect of QUINTUPLING those compost subscriptions as more people were at home, cooking more and being aware of the amount of waste they produced.

This increased demand allowed them to hand off these services to a regional for-profit partner, Atlas Organics. Atlas will expand composting operations to industrial scale, hoping to provide services to as many as 10 times more Memphis households and businesses. They are an established and respected compost operator of four major facilities in the Southeast.

Start your food waste recycling impact today by signing up for a residential subscription. If you are a small office, discuss composting with your co-workers and sign up for a subscription. If you are an employee at a larger corporation, speak to the sustainability officer at your company - could they work out a plan for the corporation to compost with Atlas Organics?

Nancy Chung is an environmental consultant with Green 365 Education and Consulting LLC, an environmental services organization helping businesses, homes, schools and public events become ground zero for positive environmental impact. Contact Nancy at Nancy@Green365.com.

Earth, Our Lodging Place

by Janisse Ray

Not a day passes I don't consider catastrophe, fires in Florida, no rain since February, days too hot, smell of diesel, oil tanker overturned in West River, trapping Eduard Stripling.

Our consolation was that hospice for the earth would not be needed. No matter what, she would heal.

On the first day of June I find myself painting a room for a small child I've never met who is dying, new brain falling apart, sight going to white walls. Outside, the wind rushes around as if unleashed, looking for something to shake—branches, then whole trees. The first drops are warning.

Something is upon us, with a sudden battery of thunder, followed by an angry torrent.

The world trembles, shakes, heaves.

Hail pelts the windows like a seizure.

Arrows of lightning, a brilliant and holy fire, shoot through the poignant house.

Is there no other way to redeem ourselves?

"Earth, Our Lodging Place" first appeared in *Red Lanterns* (Iris Press). Author of several books on nature and culture, Janisse Ray lives on an organic farm near Savannah, Georgia.

Defenders Fund Contributors

Many thanks to those who have contributed to the Defenders Fund to help fund the position of our lobbyist at the state legislature. Recent contributors include:

Vince and Tina O'Brien	Peg Duthie	Mary Buckner
Marge and Paul Davis	Jack Jeffers	Marita Vornehm
Bill and Dorothy DeVan	Walter Cox	Cathy Conley
John Noel	Amy Smart	Gene & Ruth Van Horn



Be a champion for the environment. Join today.

From delisting endangered species like the Gray Wolf to drilling for dirty tar sands, the threats to our environment have never been greater. Your support is absolutely essential to preserving our most precious natural resources - join the nation's largest and most effective grassroots movement today.

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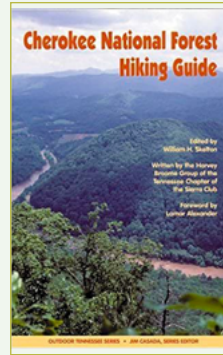
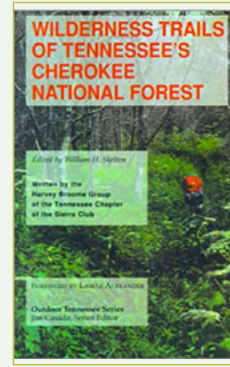
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Volunteers Needed to Hike Trails
 for a New Edition of Cherokee Forest Hiking Guide



The first comprehensive hiking guide to the Cherokee National Forest (CNF) was published by the University of Tennessee (UT) Press in 1992 as "Wilderness Trails of Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest." A second edition was likewise published by UT Press in 2005 as "Cherokee National Forest Hiking Guide." With over 15 years having passed since the last edition and it being sold out, and new Wilderness areas since designated by Congress, it is appropriate that a new edition be published, reflecting changes in newly designated trails, decommissioned trails, trailhead changes, and physical changes in trails. Accordingly, the Harvey Broome Group of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, which wrote and produced both editions, is planning to prepare a revised manuscript over 2021-2022. Will Skelton, Don Barger and Joan Tomlinson will be organizing the effort. We especially need volunteers to re-hike in 2021 all of the approximately 192 trails and over 600 miles of trails in the CNF. Some hiking experience will be necessary and, since we'll be double-checking the trail mileages (originally done by rolling a measuring wheel along all the trails), familiarity with using a GPS, or a willingness to learn to use a separate GPS device like a Garmin or a cell phone GPS program like Avenza or Gaia.

If interested, please contact:
 Will Skelton at 865-523-2272/whshome@bellsouth.net or
 Joan Tomlinson at 865-567-8051/joanptomlinson@gmail.com

State ExCom Meetings and Fall Retreat

The Sierra Club's Safety Management Team is requiring that we not hold in-person meetings through July 4, 2021. The fall retreat is still planned at Pickett State Park, October 29-31 (Happy Halloween!). The **Chapter Executive Committee** will meet via Zoom on **May 8 and July 10, both at 9 A.M. Central, 10 A.M. Eastern.** RSVP here:
<https://bit.ly/SCTNcalendar>

RETREAT SCHEDULE

	LOCATION	DATES
Fall 2021	Pickett State Park (tentative due to Covid. Confirm status at www.sierraclub.org/tennessee)	October 29-31
Winter 2022	Cedars of Lebanon SP	January 14-16
Spring 2022	Fall Creek Falls State Park	April 29-May 1
Fall 2022	Pickett State Park	October 28-30

MEETINGS

The Sierra Club continues to pause all in-person meetings. We are hoping July meetings can be in person. Most groups and conservation committees are meeting online. Check a meeting status:
<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/sierra-club-tennessee-calendar> or scan the QR code ==>
 If you would like to attend, please contact the group or committee chair. Contact information is on page 2.



Group Program Meetings

Group	Date	Location	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 5/24, 6/28, 7/26	Check for Virtual/On Line	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Thu 5/20, 6/17, 7/15	Check for Virtual/On Line	6:00 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 5/11, 6/8, 7/13	Check for Virtual/On Line	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Thu 5/13, 6/10, 7/8	Check for Virtual/On Line	7:00 PM

Group Business Meetings

Group	Date	Location	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 5/3, 6/7, 7/5	Check for Virtual/On Line	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Wed 5/5, 6/2, 7/7	Check for Virtual/On Line	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 5/25, 6/22, 7/27	Check for Virtual/On Line	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Mon 5/17, 6/21, 7/19	Check for Virtual/On Line	6:30 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Program Meetings

Committee	Date	Location	Time
Tri-Cities	Tue 5/11, 6/8, 7/13	Check for Virtual/On Line	7:00 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

Committee	Date	Location	Time
Clarksville	Tue 5/18, 6/15, 7/20	Check for Virtual/On Line	6:00 PM
CareNET (Rogersville)	Thu 5/6, 6/3, 7/1	Check for Virtual/On Line	6:00 PM
Watauga (Mountain City)	Tue 5/11, 6/8, 7/13	Check for Virtual/On Line	5:00 PM