

# Tennes Sierran

SIERRA  
CLUB  
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

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

Volume 55, Number 4—July / August 2022

## The Mayor, a Salamander and Some Tree Sitters: The Untold Story of Knoxville's James White Parkway Story on Page 5

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Cover Photo: A Berry Cave salamander. Photo by Matthew Niemiller. Masthead photo © Ron Shrieves

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect



# From Tennessee Chair Dr. Cris Corley

## Early Morning Thoughts: Busy and Happy, Happy and Busy



Sadly, early mornings have recently been greeted with troubling news of the deaths of thousands of civilians in the Ukraine and the mass killing of elementary school children in Texas. Where can we find any semblance of happiness and tranquility during these troubling times? Memories of my early college days at David Lipscomb University have come to my rescue.

Mornings at Lipscomb required daily attendance at chapel where we were greeted with the words of our wise and beloved president, Dr. Willard Collins. The eternal optimist, he was always lifting up the student body from despair, guiding us to greater heights by prescribing the best medicine for overcoming sadness — “get busy making the world a better place to live and you will be rewarded with happiness.” With this in mind, I recently retreated from the barrage of bad news and headed out to

my beloved Cumberland River farm.

My morning started with a quiet, brisk walk among the old-growth trees, pausing to evaluate the chew marks of the busy beavers on the massive tulip poplars. Further down the shoreline trail, in a meadow filled with native grasses, my blood pressure dropped ten points as I quietly watched three adult pairs of Canadian geese, with their new offspring who awaited me. Alas, I may have infringed on their happiness as the mothers busily gathered their broods, swimming to the safety of the opposite shoreline.

After my meandering, I headed to the barn and jumped on my old faithful John Deere tractor. While battling invasive plants to assist the restoration of native grasses protecting the watershed, and nourished with the views of the tranquil Cumberland, I was busy and happy, with not one moment focused on the tragic news. While acknowledging the devastation of war and senseless gun deaths, I directed energy towards my own health and well-being.

As Sierra Club members, how do we find happiness and health? Our mission statement directs us to “explore and protect.” While exploring our state’s scenic beauty, how do we protect our Wildlands? The Tennessee Chapter’s conservation committees focus on specific areas—clean air and water, smart land usage, reducing greenhouse gases with renewables, fighting natural gas replacement of retired coal plants, and promoting the use of electric vehicles. While our wonderful staff is heavily involved with the environmental protection struggles on the local, state, and federal government levels, they rely on the help of volunteers.

If you are glued to the news, feeling overwhelmed or sad, consider getting “busy and happy” with the Tennessee Chapter, working to “protect” in an area that spurs your passion — exploring and protecting our planet brings much happiness!

Contact Cris at [chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org](mailto:chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org)

## Call for Nominations

### Chapter At-Large Executive Committee Elections

This year three of the seven members of the Chapter’s At Large Executive Committee (ExCom) reach the end of their term. The Sierra Club uses democracy to hold itself accountable to its membership, so we need good candidates to best represent our members’ interests. The Chapter’s Nomination Committee is seeking candidates to run, so we’re looking to you to self-nominate or suggest nominees!

The ExCom sets the Chapter budget and strategic direction, reaches consensus on conservation positions, raises money, appoints officers and committee chairs, and approves litigation and electoral endorsements.

To accomplish all of this, the Chapter ExCom meets bimonthly (4 virtual, 2 in-person), and corresponds by email between meetings. The ExCom also plans additional important events throughout the year.

After receiving your nominations by August 15, 2022, the Chapter Nominations Committee will consider and recommend candidates for the ballot, which is published in the November/December edition of this *Tennes-Sierran* bi-monthly newspaper. Candidates may also petition to be included on the ballot. Candidates get space on the ballot to advocate for their election. Candidates receiving the top votes will start their two-year terms in January 2023.

Any Sierra Club member wishing to be considered as a Nomination Committee candidate should indicate their intent to do so by emailing Bill Moll [whmoll@aol.com](mailto:whmoll@aol.com) by August 15th.

## Tennes-Sierran

The bimonthly newsletter of the  
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Volume 55, Number 4 July/August 2022  
Digital Edition

### Change of Address

Email: [Address.Changes@SierraClub.org](mailto:Address.Changes@SierraClub.org)

Online: [MyAccount.SierraClub.org](http://MyAccount.SierraClub.org)

Snail Mail: Mail new address AND the mailing label on page 1 to:  
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041

Request no paper copy here: [http://bit.ly/Stop\\_My\\_Paper\\_Copy](http://bit.ly/Stop_My_Paper_Copy)

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September Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by August 26

October Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by September 23

September/October Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by July 31

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**Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee**

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**Watauga Regional Conservation Committee (Johnson and Carter Counties)**

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# Spring 2022 Legislative Update

by Scott Banbury, Tennessee Chapter Conservation Program Coordinator



The 112th Tennessee General Assembly came to a close on April 28, 2022. The first year of the two-year session was marked by limited public access and participation due to the Covid-19 virus. The second year was marked by a heavy presence of economically-vested lobbies and limited participation by a Covid-wary public. During the 2022 proceedings the majority of legislators and staff refused to wear masks or follow safe distancing protocols, and members of the public that felt such safeguards should be required were often chastised. Despite these challenges, we were able to mount an effective legislative campaign

and won on several issues while we also stopped several very bad measures.

We won on several fronts in regards to solid waste management. Due to increased awareness around the imminent closure of the Middle Point Landfill in Rutherford County, legislation was passed that strengthened the role of our county and regional solid waste boards in determining whether the construction of new, or expansion of existing landfills, is warranted.

Since 2018, TN Sierra Club has been working to stop illegal dumping in Tennessee. In 2022, the General Assembly finally voted to impose serious increases in the criminal penalties for tire dumping. We also increased the fines that can be charged by local governments for illegal dumping, and empowered home owners and neighborhood associations to ban individuals that are repeatedly convicted of illegal dumping.

Since 2015, Sierra Club has been working to create a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing program in Tennessee. PACE would allow property owners to finance renewable energy, energy efficiency or water efficiency upgrades to their properties, to be paid back as an amortized item on the property's annual tax bill, riding with the property until paid off. In 2021, we enacted this in regards to commercial properties, and in May 2022, the

City of Memphis was the first city to adopt. While we weren't able to get this passed to include residential properties, we hope to add them in years to come. See [pacenation.org](http://pacenation.org) for more information.

Out of concern for the preservation of wilderness near Virgin Falls that was deeded by Bridgestone Corporation to the State of Tennessee in 2000, a broad bipartisan coalition came together to stop the clearcutting of a large part of the property and legislation was enacted that requires the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency to follow the same procedures that the Tennessee State Forest Program must follow when bidding timber sales with regard to public notice and participation.

We managed to stop quite a few pieces of bad legislation introduced in the 112th General Assembly. Prominent among these were bills that sought to strip the authority of Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) to regulate sewage discharges. One bill would have allowed developers to engineer land-applied septic systems with no input from TDEC or local communities. Another bill would have allowed houseboats to discharge their wastes to Tennessee's rivers and lakes. We killed both of these bills.

We also stopped a really bad bill that might have stripped local communities of any authority to restrict or regulate the use of legacy mining sites as solid waste landfills. This came out of one land-use case in Davidson County, but may have led to the unbridled use of abandoned quarries as landfills.

Because in July, 2021, Sierra Club and partners were successful in stopping the construction of the Byhalia crude oil pipeline through South Memphis and North Mississippi, in 2022, certain Tennessee state representatives and senators introduced legislation to preempt local governments from having anything to say about fossil fuel projects in their jurisdictions. Weeks of lobbying led to amendments to protect local drinking water, but the Tennessee General Assembly ultimately voted to do away with local self-determination.

We also got a couple of good things started in 2022. We introduced the idea of Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging, which would make the producers of packaging waste pay for the management, recycling, or disposal of those materials. We also introduced legislation that would curb the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in Tennessee that we know are having a huge impact on pollinator species and our aquatic ecosystems. Contact Scott at [scott.banbury@sierraclub.org](mailto:scott.banbury@sierraclub.org) or call 901-619-8567

## SEED Teams up with Green Innovators on the Home of the Future

by Kent Minault, Harvey Broome Group

Friday, May 6th, was heavily overcast and the radio broadcast was full of tornado warnings. But the leaders at Socially Equal Energy Efficient Development (SEED) were determined to finally cut the ribbon on their first "Solar Home of the Future" in the Lonsdale neighborhood in Knoxville. They had originally planned it for April 22nd, but a hitch in getting the solar panels installed pushed it back a couple of weeks. Rowdy Tennessee weather wouldn't stop them this time.

A hefty contingent of community leaders, young apprentices, energy efficiency experts, solar installers, green building entrepreneurs, and elected officials clearly agreed. In fact, when calls came in with tornado warnings, SEED staff told the callers not to worry: the Solar Home was the safest place in town. Attendees gathered underneath a pavilion set up behind the home as a few raindrops hinted at an approaching downpour. I networked with a couple of young guys from NuDura, a company that makes insulated concrete forms. They told how plans for the solar home were completely revamped after Covid-related price hikes put lumber beyond their low-income budget. But that change dramatically increased the energy efficiency of the final structure, because these blocks made the house super-staunch. Don Horton of Horton Consulting drew and redrew the plans until the use of lumber was minimized. It was used for the rafters and roof, with foam sprayed internally to maintain the heat-retaining integrity. But the external walls were completely constructed from the blocks.

This flexible and inventive collaboration mirrored the whole creative team. The planning and execution was the work of racial and social justice advocates working alongside green energy entrepreneurs and innovators from the Green Building Council.

I got a tour through the house and checked out the energy-efficient appliances and the heat-pump HVAC unit. A friend made sure I didn't fall off the ladder when I climbed up to poke my head into the attic and ogle the spray foam and ducting. I met Councilman Tommy Smith when I climbed back down. Then we all gathered back under the canopy for speeches and the ribbon cutting.

Of course, we heard from Stan Johnson and JD Jackson, but their inspiring words were quickly followed by introductions for the folks who did the actual building and planning. We heard from other green building experts,



Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs, City Council member Seema Singh and SEED members cut the ribbon on Seeed's solar home. Photo by Kent Minault.

and then the moment arrived. County Mayor Glenn Jacobs and City Councilwoman Seema Singh stepped onto the back porch while Stan and SEED leader Wando Stacy stretched a blue ribbon across the banisters. Someone produced a giant pair of scissors, and the ribbon was cut. This pioneering project was officially complete. We rushed back to our cars as the downpour finally started.

Pioneering is the right word. This is the home of the future, with a host of features most homes currently lack. And it is specifically designed to help a low-income family build wealth. Ground is already broken on a second solar home in East Knoxville, and we look forward to more in the future. Visit SEED's website (<https://www.seeedknox.org>) for more programs and exciting events.

Contact Kent at [kminault@gmail.com](mailto:kminault@gmail.com)



# Let's Make the Benton MacKaye Trail a National Scenic Trail

by Will Skelton, Harvey Broome Group

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) is seeking Congressional approval for the 288-mile-long Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) to be designated a National Scenic Trail. To date, eleven long-distance trails have received the prestigious designation, with the Appalachian Trail (AT) and the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) being the first two. These trails epitomize the splendor, diversity and historical significance found in the wide array of the American landscape.

The BMTA reached the first milestone in its quest on May 27, 2022, when House Bill #7884 (<https://bmtamail.org/docs/HB7884Text.pdf>), the "Benton MacKaye Scenic Trail Act" was introduced in the House. But there still is much to be done and they need our support to achieve the final goal.

The BMT is named for visionary forester Benton MacKaye. October 2021 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Benton MacKaye's treatise, "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning." That essay was the initial blueprint for the AT. The Benton MacKaye Trail extends 288 miles from Springer Mountain in Georgia to the Big Creek Campground at the northern end of the Smokies.

With its glorious ridgeline views and innumerable crossings of mountain streams, the BMT comes by its reputation for beauty honestly. Nestled in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, the BMT has some of the most varied and abundant wildflowers of any temperate climate forest in the world and the variety of tree species is second to none. Whether it's the creek-side trilliums in the spring, the reddish orange of the fall sugar maples at the higher elevations, or the unmatched 360-degree views in the winter, the BMT is a visual treat any time of the year — it truly is an awesome hike!

A National Scenic Trail designation would help ensure the preservation of the timeless beauty of the trail's corridor. The status would augment the BMT's already high value as a popular recreation destination for hikers as



Whigg Meadow. Photo by Rick Harris.



Benton Creek on the Benton MacKaye Trail. Photo by Will Skelton.

well as increase the trail's positive economic impact on local communities. It also would release additional USFS and NPS resources to help the Benton MacKaye Trail Association fulfill its mission to preserve, protect and maintain the trail corridor.

To be successful in getting this National Scenic Trail designation for the BMT, the trail association needs a lot of grassroots support. You can help by writing a letter or sending an email to your United States senators or representative to let them know why YOU believe the BMT should receive Congressional Approval as a National Scenic Trail.

To learn more about contacting your senators and representatives:

<https://bmtamail.org/docs/ContactSenatorFlier.pdf>

<https://bmtamail.org/docs/ContactRepresentativeFlier.pdf>

For additional information on the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, please visit [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org) or email Communications Director Joy Forehand: [jwfbarga@gmail.com](mailto:jwfbarga@gmail.com).

Contact Will at [whshome@bellsouth.net](mailto:whshome@bellsouth.net)

## Drive Electric Earth Day in Memphis

by Joe Ozegovich, Chickasaw Group

The Drive Electric Earth Day (DEED) held at Memphis' Shelby Farms Park Saturday, April 23, was a big success. The participating vehicles, both hybrid and electric, included a Rivian R1T pickup truck and over 20 other electric vehicles (EVs) ranging from the Tesla Models 3, Y, S, and X, a Chevrolet Volt, Hyundai Ioniq5, Ford Mustang Mach-E, Polestar 2, and a late-arriving BMW i8. DEED was an official event of Plug In America (PIA), the nation's largest association of EV drivers and enthusiasts.

Shelby Farms is one of the 20 largest urban parks in America with 4,500 acres, covering more than five times the area of Central Park's 843 acres in New York City. The designated route was pre-planned and provided a safe and effective circuit for conducting the ride-and-drive event. The Park's ten-stall, solar-powered free EV charging station served as the center point. Twenty-plus adjacent parking spaces were available for park-and-ride exclusive use, thereby improving the impact of the event.

Notwithstanding significant competition from the Memphis International Auto Show, back from a two-year hiatus, the energy-aware and the environmentally committed showed up at our DEED event to learn more about the impact of hybrid and battery electric vehicles' twin impacts on energy production and the reduction of environmental degradation.



Memphis' Shelby Farms Park was the location of Electric Earth Day on Memphis' Shelby Farms Park Saturday, April 23, Event. Photo by Wes Hicks



Joe Ozegovich (left) with Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris at the Drive Electric Earth Day Event in Memphis on April 23, 2022. The red car belongs to Ozegovich and is an electric Tesla Model S. Photo by Wes Hicks.

Most hearty volunteers were present for the full-day event despite a steady wind of nearly 20 mph that gusted to 35 mph, a temperature that peaked at 87 degrees and humidity that at times was 55 percent. All signage and collateral materials were appropriately branded with the required PIA-furnished branding assets, including the DEED logo. Locally produced and sourced food was provided as an enticement for ride-and-drive participants. Further, a food truck owned and operated by a local entrepreneur was onsite.

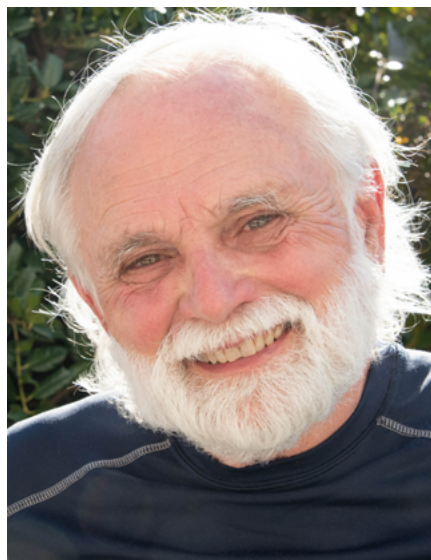
An appropriate canopy, custom-produced banners, tables and traffic cones enhanced the setting. The estimated number of attendees was 100-125; the tally of the number of rides was relatively small, as was the drives per vehicle. However, notably, the Mayor of Shelby County, Lee Harris, did attend and was given a ride Joe Ozegovich's Tesla model S. Ozegovich was the designated City Captain of the event. (Continued on page 6)



# The Mayor, a Salamander and Some Tree Sitters:

## The Untold Story of Knoxville's James White Parkway

by John Nolt, Guest Writer



If you take the four-lane James White Parkway from downtown Knoxville south, you cross the Tennessee River on a massive open bridge and in less than a mile come to the Parkway's end in a parking lot. Why? Originally it was supposed to continue further south, but years of determined opposition stopped it. Some stories of that fight are told here for the first time in print.

The road was proposed in the 1970s as a quick route from Knoxville to the Smokies. But it faced almost continuous controversy. By 2000 the bridge had been built and the road had been bulldozed and paved through to its current terminus at Moody Avenue. The Tennessee Department of Transporta-

tion was eager to keep going. But all the routes they proposed would have encroached on South Doyle Middle School, destroyed many homes, and split established neighborhoods. Some saw the road as a bonanza of economic development, but many residents in the path of the Parkway feared losing their homes. It was clear from the start that the residents' protests and public opposition were a long shot against the big money that backed the road. Still, they doggedly organized and did what they could.

Environmentalists, hoping to defend the wooded hills and valleys of south-east Knoxville, also fought the road. In 2002 or 2003, Chris Irwin (now a Knoxville lawyer) organized a tree sit in a grand old oak tree that stood at the end of the built portion of the Parkway. I helped with supplies and materials. But tree sits, while they may temporarily delay construction, seldom stop road projects for long. One night when the tree platform was unoccu-



Scott Johnson ascends to the platform to sit in an oak tree at the end of the constructed portion of James White Parkway in 2003. Photo by Debbie Shumate.

ried, someone cut the grand old oak down.

Sometimes, an effective way to stop a road is to find an endangered species in its path. Since no one else was attempting this, I took it on. There were limestone caves in the path of the road where many bats roosted. My friend Gary McCracken, a bat expert at the University of Tennessee, thought that some of them might be endangered gray or Indiana bats. So one evening he organized a foray to the caves, where, equipped with listening devices, we monitored the bats' ultrasonic chatter as they emerged to hunt insects. Their characteristic calls revealed their species. We heard several species that night and even netted some; but disappointingly, there were no Indiana bats or grays.

So far as I could tell, no other species on the federal endangered list lived in the path of the road. We were at a dead end ... unless there was some species that was *not* listed but ought to be. In the streams that flow through some of the caves lives a rare and unusual amphibian, the Berry Cave salamander (*Gyrinophilus gulolineatus*). The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency listed it only as "threatened." But it was known from only a small

number of caves in East Tennessee. Could it in fact be endangered? I contacted every expert on the salamander that I could find, culminating with Addison Wynn at the National Museum of Natural History. The consensus of the experts was that because of its small and probably shrinking population, it was in fact endangered.

Armed with the research of these experts, in 2003 I petitioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to add *Gyrinophilus gulolineatus* to the federal endangered species list. In response I was told that to list the salamander, the USFWS would first have to conduct a study to determine whether listing was justified and then create and implement a habitat protection plan. But these processes cost both money and staff time, and, given tight budgets, they would likely be postponed indefinitely.



The endangered Berry Cave salamander. Photo by Matthew Niemiller.

These matters stood for about eight years until the Center for Biological Diversity, a national organization devoted to species protection, stepped in. They bundled my petition together with dozens of others and successfully sued the USFWS, demanding action on all the petitions. Responding to the suit, the USFWS ruled in 2011 that the Berry Cave salamander "warrants addition to the federal list of threatened and endangered species." This federal declaration alone might have posed a substantial legal obstacle to the road, but closer to home other forces had already been at work.

Victor Ashe, the Republican Mayor of Knoxville from 1988 to 2003 — and a long-time member of the Sierra Club — was a strong advocate for greenways and parks. Moreover, as he told me in a recent conversation, he saw the James White Parkway as "a boondoggle" and "a colossal misuse of money." State government, however, up to and including then-governor Don Sundquist, favored completion of the road. Unexpectedly one evening — I think it was in 2003 — Ashe called me at home to suggest that it might be good if some outspoken opponents of the road greeted the governor when he visited the next day. Not able to organize that myself because of teaching obligations, I called Chris Irwin, who cheerfully saw to these arrangements.

Ashe, however, was just warming up; he had bigger things in mind. He knew that a *really* effective way to stop a road is to put a public park in its path. Before leaving office, he put not just one, but two of them in the path of the Parkway. One was Marie Myers Park which he established on land donated to the city by the Myers family, who opposed the road. The other was the initial portion of William Hastie Natural Area. (Both parks are now encompassed by the much larger Knoxville Urban Wilderness.)

In the face of these obstacles and, later, the firm opposition of Madeline Rogero, who became mayor in 2011, the Tennessee Department of Transportation ultimately dropped its plan to complete the Parkway. There are still people who would like to complete it, and new proposals to do so emerge from time to time, but the growing acclaim and popularity of the Urban Wilderness render this increasingly improbable.



Knoxville's portrait of Victor Ashe who served as mayor from 1987 to 2004

*John Nolt, a long-time member of the Harvey Broome Group, is Professor Emeritus in Philosophy at the University of Tennessee and a Research Fellow in the Energy and Environment Program at the Howard Baker Center for Public Policy. His most recent books are Environmental Ethics for the Long Term (2015) and Incomparable Values (2022) both from Routledge.*

Contact John at [nolt@utk.edu](mailto:nolt@utk.edu)



# KAT Reimagines the Future of Public Transit in Knoxville

by Kent Minault, State Transportation Chair

In February, Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon sent invitations around Knoxville asking for people to help Knoxville Area Transit (KAT) create a better transit system. KAT was holding a series of public listening sessions called “KAT Reimagined.” At stake is a vision for feasible, affordable, comprehensive services going forward.

From a Sierra Club point of view, clean energy and a boost in service to low-income communities were top priorities. Councilwoman Amelia Parker, who formerly sat on KAT’s board, thought the biggest challenge would be to get them out of the mindset of budgetary limitations — infrastructure money is coming, they should get it.

The first listening session was on March 29. Julie Elfin, a member of the Harvey Broome Group’s Executive Committee, reported that it was a planning exercise with little specific discussion of routes, but the general idea was to bring more frequent service to the busiest areas of town. This was born out by the KAT handouts which analyzed the two alternative approaches: “Ridership” and “Coverage.” Their website summarizes:

“Service that goes everywhere but operates infrequently doesn’t work for many people, but only a few routes with really great service may not reach enough people. How do we find that balance to encourage transit use in Knoxville and make it work effectively for as many people as possible?”

At the April 9th session, it became clear that KAT tilted toward “Ridership” so as to get more passengers on popular routes, and away from “Coverage” which would open more underserved areas to service. Assuming the agency’s limited budget, doing both would be too expensive. They preferred bang for the buck — the most people moved per dollar spent.

But in the conversation at the Transit Center, the public challenged that analysis. Ricky Anquiera from Equitable Cities, a consulting firm that advocates for increased spending on pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure in cities to combat racial discrimination, did a PowerPoint presentation of the two alternatives and mentioned that getting people to jobs was the highest priority. The Ridership concept got more people to jobs over more of the city than the Coverage concept. I commented that the Sierra Club’s carbon reduction goals would be addressed by the Ridership concept because it got more people out of their cars, but our racial and social justice goals would be better addressed by the Coverage concept which would open more underserved areas to service.

The presenters also described micro transit, which uses smaller vehicles called up by smartphone and engaged by riders on an occasional basis like

for medical appointments or job interviews. Anquiera pointed out that while the cost was relatively higher per passenger, micro transit might give more people access to transportation.

In fact, as the public began commenting, they challenged the emphasis on Ridership. Testimonies from people with long experience as bus riders, like Tiara-Lady Wilson, brought in a new slant. Tiara-Lady Wilson, who is mobility challenged, talked about the difficulty involved in arranging medical appointments and how much time her daughter typically spends on the bus getting home from school. She also saw connections as an issue. If a rider needs to transfer buses, then travel time increases significantly. Other issues included needs at bus stops such as adequate bus shelters and infrastructure work on curbs and sidewalks to make accessing buses safer.

The man next to me, also in a wheelchair, described the emotional difficulties faced by seniors in public housing who needed a strong and reliable transit system to get out of their rooms and engage with services and cultural opportunities around town. He pointed out that wheelchair accessibility was much better on the new electric buses and praised the district for bringing them into service. He also raised the issue about the higher price of electric buses. I pointed out that they were paid for by a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant, so they didn’t come out of taxes or fares. My neighbor said, “They got a grant for everything.” And we all recalled that the Biden administration’s Infrastructure Bill was sending billions into the economy, much of it for transportation. If the city went after that federal money, KAT might not have to limit itself to the local budget.

This led to a larger discussion of limitations in the city’s evaluation of system changes that rely on counting riders or trips rather than including assessment of benefits both to the community as a whole and to the people in the most need.

Belinda Woodiel-Brill, KAT’s Director of Planning & Public Information, brought together a great team of people who created a welcoming atmosphere that fostered detailed testimony about personal experience and possible solutions. Folks present showed serious intellectual skill in discussing transportation issues. Participants left the room very enthusiastic about our exchange of ideas.

If you missed the opportunity to speak at any of the public input sessions, please take this link to the project website and put in your two cents:

<https://www.katreimagined.com>

Contact Kent at [kminault@gmail.com](mailto:kminault@gmail.com)

## Your Old Electronics Can Help Spark Change Lives

Do you have old laptop or desktop computers, monitors, tablets, or other electronic devices sitting around gathering digital dust? Here is a chance to put them to good use! Spark, an East Tennessee nonprofit organization that provides technology access for people with disabilities, has teamed up with Scott Recycling of Knoxville.

Scott Recycling is an electronics recycling service provider with home offices in Knoxville. It specializes in the collection and disposal of home electronic equipment. Scott accepts electronic equipment including printers, scanners, fax machines, video game systems, wires and cables, and small household appliances. Please visit the Scott Recycling web site at:

<https://scottrecycling.com/>

Scott Recycling follows a stringent set of operational standards for responsible recycling to ensure the complete destruction of data and the responsible disposition and recycling of all materials. You can now drop off your unused items at Spark’s South Knoxville location.

Scott Recycling will wipe and install new operating systems on still-usable computers and tablets, and a portion of the devices will be provided at no

The logo for Spark, featuring the word "SPARK" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is replaced by a stylized lightning bolt.The logo for Scott Recycling, featuring the words "Scott Recycling" in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the main text is a smaller line of text: "Electronic Recycling, Data Destruction, and Related Services."

cost to members of our community with disabilities.

“This is a great opportunity for people to clear out their technological clutter, and also provide assistance to people with disabilities. For the families we serve, having a reliable and accessible laptop, desktop or tablet can be a digital

lifeline,” said Mary Thom Adams, Executive Director of Spark.

Spark was founded in 1988 as the East Tennessee Special Technology Access Center by a group of parents, business people, service providers and members of the disability advocacy community who held an uncommon belief in the power of technology to help people with disabilities reach their goals. Over the years, the organization has provided a wide range of assistive technology, durable medical equipment, and related services to thousands of people with disabilities throughout East Tennessee.

People with disabilities interested in receiving one of the donated, repurposed devices can contact Spark at 865-219-0130. For more information about Spark, please visit the Spark website at: <https://www.sparktn.org>

## Drive Electric Earth Day in Memphis (continued from page 4)

The City of Memphis has an approximate population of one million and is the center of a three-state (western Tennessee, eastern Arkansas, and northern Mississippi) metropolitan region of approximately 2.4 million. The racial makeup is 66% African American in Memphis and nearly 50% in the metro area. A 2021 study by the City of Memphis revealed 30% of Memphis residents live below the poverty line yielding a rank of #2 in America behind only Detroit, Michigan. Therefore, all outreach efforts had a deliberate multi-racial impact at all socio-economic and gender levels, both urban and rural. Our advertising outreach approach was multi-media:

(1) A high impact, live television interview at the site two days in advance was conducted

(2) Announcements on social media and appropriate websites were made

steadily for two weeks leading up to the event

(3) A highly targeted direct-mail campaign was used in the four weeks leading up to the event with weekly news releases mailed and emailed to all area media and elected officials in the metropolitan area, plus other thought leaders and managers in the energy community

(4) Outreach to the Hispanic community was achieved using paid advertising on a local Spanish-language radio station.

To facilitate the pre- and post-surveys reporting, QR codes were created to assist attendees.

Video about the event: <https://youtu.be/FHydIIE5r6Y>

Contact Joe at [jozegovich@yahoo.com](mailto:jozegovich@yahoo.com)

## These Tennessee Woods

by Danita Dodson

In these Tennessee woods  
filled with dampness and birdsong,  
teeming space of ephemeral growth  
and eternal evanescence,  
conscious of cyclical wheels  
turning to begin and to end again,  
I commune with Being,  
with trillium in an emergent forest,  
with dogwood crosses  
murmuring the truth of rebirth.

As the spring breath blows softly  
upon the woodland labyrinth  
like a remembered promise,  
quicken the slumbering soil,  
returning verdant kindness  
to the waiting branches,

in surprise  
the unexpected orchids arrive—  
common once in an older day  
but now forgotten, endangered—  
pink blessings in hundreds  
of pairs of a lady's slippers,  
poised ready to amble, to ramble,  
rare beauty in this protected space  
cultivated simply by walking.

To these Tennessee woods,  
I take you too, even in your absence.  
To the trillium and to the orchids,  
I carry you in my core, in my breath,  
bringing you as to a sanctuary.

"These Tennessee Woods" first appeared in *Trailing the Azimuth* (Wipf and Stock, 2021) and is reprinted with permission of the author. Danita Dodson lives in Sneedville, Tennessee. Read more of her work at:  
[www.danitadodson.com](http://www.danitadodson.com).

## Dear Eartha: Advice from An Eco-Guru

Dear Eartha,  
I noticed that the Sierra Club is once again rallying to "Halt the Plastic Crisis." I wonder if you could update us on what progress has been made, if any, and what I can do to take personal action in ways small and more significant?  
—Concerned about Plastics

Dear Concerned,

You're right; plastic proliferation is a huge concern. The Sierra Club writes that plastic is in our water, our air, and in our food. Plastics may contain hundreds or thousands of chemicals, as many as 80% "unknown," and people are consuming microplastics in food at a rate of up to 11,000 particles/year. Despite one's best efforts to eat healthily, we are all eating petrochemicals that can kill.

There are many animal victims of plastic pollution: sea turtles (of the seven species, three are critically endangered), seabirds (80% may have plastic in their stomachs; it is killing them), a dolphin autopsy in Florida revealed a balloon and two plastic bags as cause of death), whales (the bigger the animal, the more plastic found in its body), seals (strangled by plastic waste around their necks)  
Learn more here: [SierraClub.org/EndPlasticsNow](http://SierraClub.org/EndPlasticsNow).

The Sierra Club is pushing an aggressive campaign now to begin solving this crisis. Along with 600 partners and communities, here are a few policy actions the SC is pushing:

1. Replacing single-use plastic items with reusable products
2. Denying permits to new plastic producing facilities, infrastructure, and exports
3. Getting corporate polluters to pay
4. Rejecting false solutions that pass the cleanup onto the consumer
5. Exposing and suing companies that falsely claim their products are recyclable
6. Updating federal standards to eliminate pollution from plastic facilities
7. Stopping the subsidizing of plastic producers

I recently received a flier about the 'Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2021' along with a petition to Chuck Schumer. Telling our representatives and donating to organizations are both very important actions to take. I also reached out to my cohousing community to see what they are doing about plastics. Here are some more personal steps from my friends at Germantown Commons Cohousing in Nashville:

Bring reusable bags for shopping and groceries; use bar soap rather than those plastic hand soap pump dispensers; buy bulk and recycle smaller containers for ease of use; refuse plastic straws and utensils at restaurants; bring your own to-go containers for leftovers when dining out; do not buy anything packaged in #6 recyclable plastic (check your grocery store's pastries packaging, for example); keep a set of reusable utensils in your purse, car, or at work; buy reusable glasses for your summer BBQs. You can easily thrift cups or utensils that you wash and reuse, forever!

So dear Concerned, we can do this — together! Every action counts.  
Eartha

*This column was written by Rita Bullinger.*  
Submit your question for Eartha to: [SierraTNNews@gmail.com](mailto:SierraTNNews@gmail.com)

## Thanks to These Generous Contributors to the Defenders Fund!

The Defenders Fund supports the work of our State Conservation Program Coordinator Scott Banbury.

Joe Gallagher

Linda Dunton

Aldis Lapins

Glen & Martha Wilson



# Support Your Passion for a Just and Sustainable World

Create a legacy that protects and restores the natural world for future generations by naming Sierra Club's Tennessee Chapter in your will or trust. Or, name Sierra Club Foundation as the beneficiary of your retirement plan for the benefit of your local chapter and leave less highly taxed assets to your loved ones.



To learn more about the advantages of making a planned gift and to become a member of the Rachel Carson Society, please contact us.



Julia Curtis \* (800) 932-4270 \* [giftplanning@sierraclub.org](mailto:giftplanning@sierraclub.org) \* [myplan.sierraclub.org](http://myplan.sierraclub.org)

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### COVID-19 NOTICE

**COVID-19 NOTICE:** Sierra Club activities may enforce group size limits, PPE, social distancing requirements to comply with COVID-19 restrictions of the meeting venue, city, and county rules where the activity takes place. Please contact the activity organizer for any updates. Check website for Zoom or in-person meeting status or contact your chair (see page 2).

### Group Program Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 7/25, 8/22, 9/26	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Thu 7/21, 8/18, 9/15	6:00 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 7/12, 8/9, 9/13	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Thu 7/14, 8/11, 9/8	7:00 PM

### Group Business Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 7/11, 8/1, 9/12	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Wed 7/6, 8/3, 9/7	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 7/26, 8/23, 9/27	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Mon 7/18, 8/15, 9/19	6:30 PM

### Regional Conservation Committee Program Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
Holston Valley	Tue 7/12, 8/9, 9/13	7:00 PM

### Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
CareNET (Rogersville)	Thu 7/28, 8/25, 9/22	6:00 PM
Clarksville	Tue 7/19, 8/16, 9/20	6:00 PM
Holston Valley	Wed 7/27, 8/24, 9/28	6:00 PM
Watauga (Mountain City)	Tue 7/12, 8/9, 9/13	5:00 PM



## RETREAT SCHEDULE

	LOCATION	DATES
Fall 2022	Pickett State Park	October 7-9*
Winter 2023	Cedars of Lebanon State Park	January 20-22
Spring 2023	Fall Creek Falls State Park	April 28-30
Fall 2023	Pickett State Park	October 13-15
Winter 2024	Cedars of Lebanon State Park	January 19-21

\* Note change of date



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- Automatic membership in your local Chapter and Group
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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

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