

Tennes-Sierran

The monthly state newsletter for the Tennessee Chapter Sierra Club

Volume 46, Number 1 - January/February, 2014

“Please folks: Pass this bill” - The Tennessee Wilderness Act

Pat Byington, Tennessee Wild Coordinator

Just in time for next year's 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, Senator Lamar Alexander has reintroduced for the third time the Tennessee Wilderness Act.

The act, which will protect nearly 20,000 acres, adds acreage to five existing wilderness areas and creates the new Upper Bald River Wilderness. The U.S. Forest Service recommended all of these areas for protection by in its 2004 management plan, and the proposal has garnered enthusiastic bipartisan support from Tennessee businesses, organizations, and community leaders.

Ecologically significant, the Tennessee Wilderness Act will protect biologically rich habitat important to brook trout, black bear, bobcat, and white-tailed deer – as well as migratory, breeding, and wintering areas for

numerous bird species. Additionally, the protected areas also include portions of the popular Appalachian Trail and Benton MacKaye Trail as well as areas close to the Ocoee Whitewater Center in Cherokee National Forest, site of whitewater events during the 1996 Summer Olympics.

Chattanooga Times Free Press Editorial writer Pam Sohn best summed up the legislation in a November 3rd opinion piece.

“This bill is a no-brainer for passage. It has no cost, no downside and would benefit Tennessee, the nation and the state and regional outdoor industry. As a bonus, it preserves this beauty for generations to come.

Who knows, as something Congress should easily be able to find agreement on, it might even help heal the country.

Please, folks: Pass this bill.”

Senator Bob Corker has also joined Sen. Alexander as a co-sponsor of the Tennessee Wilderness Act. The legislation has deep and broad support. This our best chance in a generation to pass major wilderness legislation.

Take Action Now!

All Sierra Club members should take a moment and thank our two U.S. Senators for reintroducing the Tennessee Wilderness Act. In addition to our Senators please contact Representatives Chuck Fleischmann and Phi Roe and urge them to support their senators and the Tennessee Wilderness Act. Call the Capital Switchboard at 202-224-3121 or visit the Tennessee Wild website at http://www.tnwild.org/get_involved for all the details and sample letters.

Questions? Contact Pat via e-mail at Pat@wildsouth.org

Trans-Pacific Partnership OpEd

Free trade boosters in Congress are closing in on an agreement to renew Trade Promotion Authority as U.S. trade officials ramp up their efforts to complete the Trans-Pacific Partnership by year's end. Also known as “fast track”, Trade Promotion Authority gives the President of the United States the power to negotiate international agreements that the Congress can then approve or disapprove but cannot amend or filibuster.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement is an expansive trade agreement being negotiated between countries in the Pacific Rim, including Japan, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States. Other Pacific Rim countries are allowed to join over time.

The agreement touches on a broad range of issues—the environment, workers and jobs, agriculture, health, access to medicines, and more. Government officials tout the agreement as a “21st Century Trade Agreement,” but it is hard to know what this means or what they are negotiating because the talks are held in near complete secrecy.

The agreement is being developed behind closed doors with very little public input. None of the texts are available with the exception of those recently released by WikiLeaks. The only people with access, apart from trade officials, are the more than 600 business representatives who serve as official US trade advisors. Even members of Congress are left in the dark on the actual contents of the agreement.

According to leaked texts, the Trans-Pacific Partnership poses a major threat to our environmental, consumer and public health laws. It would extend patent rights, keeping pharmaceutical prices high, and undermine efforts to re-regulate the unsound financial practices that lead to the 2008 stock market crash. The agreement would also outlaw “Buy American” procurement policies, and encourage the off-shoring of millions of U.S jobs through foreign investment privileges and benefits.

The chapter on investment would allow foreign corporations to sue governments directly-- for unlimited cash compensation-- over almost any domestic environmental or other law that the corporation believes is hurting its ability to profit. These so-called ‘investor-state cases’ are heard in private and non-transparent tribunals without public participation.

To date, corporations such as Exxon Mobil and Dow Chemical have launched than 450 cases against 89 governments under existing free-trade agreements. Nearly \$675 million has been paid to corporations under U.S. Free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties, with about 70% of money going to oil, gas, and mining industries. For example, Lone Pine Resources is using investment rules under the North American Free Trade Agreement to sue Canada for \$250 million for Quebec's moratorium on fracking.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership would also threaten our clean air, water and land here in the United States by stripping our government of its ability to manage exports of natural gas, thus opening the floodgates to more environmentally destructive fracking here at home to satisfy foreign markets like Japan. The subsequent rise in natural gas prices would harm domestic manufacturing and hit virtually every pocketbook in the country.

Trade experts say that a fast-track authority bill could be introduced in December, despite bipartisan protests from a group of House Democrats and Republicans who say they oppose giving the White House fast-track authority.

In November, Representative John Duncan (TN2) signed a letter along with 23 house Republicans to the President stating that they

“[would] not cede [their] constitutional authority to the executive through an approval of a request for ‘Fast Track Trade Promotion Authority.’” Representative Steve Cohen (TN9) and 151 house Democrats similarly wrote “...Twentieth Century ‘Fast Track’ is simply not appropriate for 21st Century agreements and must be replaced. The United States cannot afford another trade agreement that replicates the mistakes of the past.”

Far-reaching trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership should not be negotiated solely by business interests that stand to profit from them, and they should not be fast-tracked through Congress. Our representatives in Congress should be called on to do their constitutional duty and demand that they have an opportunity to fully review and debate this and future free-trade agreements. If due diligence is not applied, this and future trade agreements may just be a fast-track to ruin.

**Scott Banbury, Conservation Chair
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club
1051 Stonewall Street
Memphis, TN 38107
901-619-8567 or smbanbury@gmail.com**

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Tennes-Sierran

The bi-monthly newsletter of the
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club.

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SEND ARTICLES TO:

E-mail: gvanhorn26@gmail.com
USPS: Gene Van Horn, Editor
895 Red Cloud Trail
Spring City, TN 37381
423-365-0692

ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Submission Target Date is January 25 for the March-April issue.

1. E-mail and e-mail attached files are preferred. Send to gvanhorn26@gmail.com either with embedded text messages, or attached files. Attached files are preferred. Word is preferred but Apple users may send articles in Pages.

2. Photographs should be scanned in a .jpg or a .tif file format then either attached to e-mail or mailed via U.S. Postal Service on a 3 1/2" diskette or CD RM. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you would like your diskette or photo prints returned.

3. Hard-copy handwritten or typewritten articles may be accepted: however, pre-approval from the Editor is required.

4. Any materials submitted via USPS mail will not be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided.

5. Concerns or complaints should be addressed to: Barbara Kelly, Communications Committee, bk1rivers@comcast.net.

The opinions expressed in the Tennes-Sierran are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Tennessee Chapter, or the Sierra Club.



It's time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power. Let your voice be heard.

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Contributions, gifts, and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible unless 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.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 477041, Palm Coast, FL 32140-1041 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org #242 W43M

Sierra Club Officers

TENNESSEE CHAPTER:

Chair: Keven Routon (901) 485-3960
kwrates@me.com
Vice Chair: Angela Garrone (901) 827-3687
angelasierraclub@gmail.com
Secretary: Barbara Kelly (423) 718-5009
bk1rivers@comcast.net
Treasurer: **Open**
Contact Keven Routon if willing to serve
Asst. Treasurer: Bob Perlack (865) 229-5027
perlack@aol.com
Conservation: Scott Banbury (901) 619-8567
smbanbury@gmail.com
Outings: Phil Davis (423) 247-0473
phildavis2006@gmail.com
CCL Delegate: Joel Gearhardt (941) 518-0063
jgearhardt@yahoo.com

TN LOCAL GROUPS:

Cherokee Group

www.tennessee.sierraclub.org/cherokee
Chair: Emily Marr Davis (423) 413-3083
emily.marr.davis@gmail.com
Vice Chair: John Doyal (423) 596-8171
baldie052@yahoo.com
Secretary: Barbara Kelly (423) 718-5009
bk1rivers@comcast.net
Treasurer: Barbara Hurst (423) 886-9503
barbaraduckhurst@hotmail.com
Conservation: Davis Mounger (423) 877-4616
wdmounger@yahoo.com
Outings: Emily Marr Davis (423) 413-3083
emily.marr.davis@gmail.com

Chickasaw Group - Memphis

www.tennessee.sierraclub.org/chickasaw
Chair: Sue A. Williams (901) 274-0524
z4cmv@juno.com
Vice Chair: Mark Plumlee (901) 679-4622
mark.chickasaw@gmail.com
Secretary: Adam Guerrero (901) 275-5637
siradam575@yahoo.com
Treasurer: Ed Jones (901) 374-0582
edshouse35@comcast.net
Conservation: Scott Banbury (901) 619-8567
smbanbury@gmail.com
Membership: Keith Hoover (901) 363-8299
hooverkw@yahoo.com
Outings: Open - would you like to organize the Outings?

Harvey Broome Group - Knoxville/Oak Ridge

www.tennessee.sierraclub.org/broome
Chair: Robin Hill (865) 966-9435
robin.hill8@gmail.com
Vice Chair: Dave Reister (865) 670-8991
dreister@bellsouth.net
Secretary: Kris Christen (865) 593-9876
christen@knology.net
Treasurer: Bob Perlack (865) 229-5027
perlack@aol.com
Conservation: Axel Ringe (865) 850-0255
onyxfarm@bellsouth.net
Outings: Ron Shrieves (865) 922-3518
ronaldshrieves@comcast.net

Middle Tennessee Group - Nashville

www.tennessee.sierraclub.org/mtg
Chair: Betsy Garber (615) 668-1977
garberb@hotmail.com
Vice Chair: Joel Gearhardt (615) 591-0268
jgearhardt@yahoo.com
Secretary: Betsy Garber (615) 668-1977
garberb@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Joel Gearhardt (615) 591-0268
jgearhardt@yahoo.com
Conservation: Scott Heflinger (615) 351-2626
sheflinger@aol.com
Outings: Craig Jervis (615) 400-4309
cmjervis@comcast.net

Watauga Group - Carter, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington Counties

www.tennessee.sierraclub.org/watauga
Chair: Gloria Griffith (423) 727-4797
gla4797@embarqmail.com
Vice Chair: Sandi Cranford (423) 727-5044
sunshine@highcountryonline.net
Secretary: Dennis Shekinah (423) 727-6497
dshekinah@centurylink.net
Treasurer: Cindy Johnson (423) 768-3882
doemtn@hotmail.com
Conservation: Dean Whitworth (423) 727-7214
Outings: Webb Griffith (423) 727-4797
gla4797@embarqmail.com

National Sierra Staff in Tennessee:

Rita Harris, Field Organizer
Environmental Justice Program: (901) 324-7757
rita.harris@sierraclub.org

Please notify the Editor when changes are needed

Target Date for
March-April Issue is
January 25, 2014.

All meetings and outings
notices,
articles, and photographs
should be in by then.

Send material to
Gene Van Horn at
gvanhorn26@gmail.com



The Sierra Club - Chickasaw Group in collaboration with Livable Memphis and the Brooks Museum will have a Memphis Premier showing of A Fierce Green Fire - The Battle for a Living Planet

SPECIAL GUEST: Mark Kitchell, Director

VENUE: Brooks Museum,
1934 Poplar Ave,
Memphis, TN 38104

DATE: Sunday, February 23rd

TIME: 2 P.M.

Donation: \$6 members, \$8 non-members
(cost off-set only)

Tickets will be on sale by January 10th on the web at
<http://www.brooksmuseum.org/buytickets>

Movie Trailer can be seen now at
<http://www.afiercegreenfire.com>

Sierra Contact: susan.routon@gmail.com

Proposed Colorado Air Quality Standards Need to be Stronger

By Catherine Collentine, Sierra Club Beyond Natural Gas Colorado Campaign Representative

Successful ballot measures in Colorado to ban or place moratoriums on hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") built momentum to get methane emissions regulated in new statewide air-quality standards released in late November. In last month's elections, all four of the local ballot initiatives to halt or ban fracking in Colorado communities passed. Industry outspent community activists 40 to 1, but the people of this state got their message across loud and clear that they don't want fracking near their homes, schools, or communities.

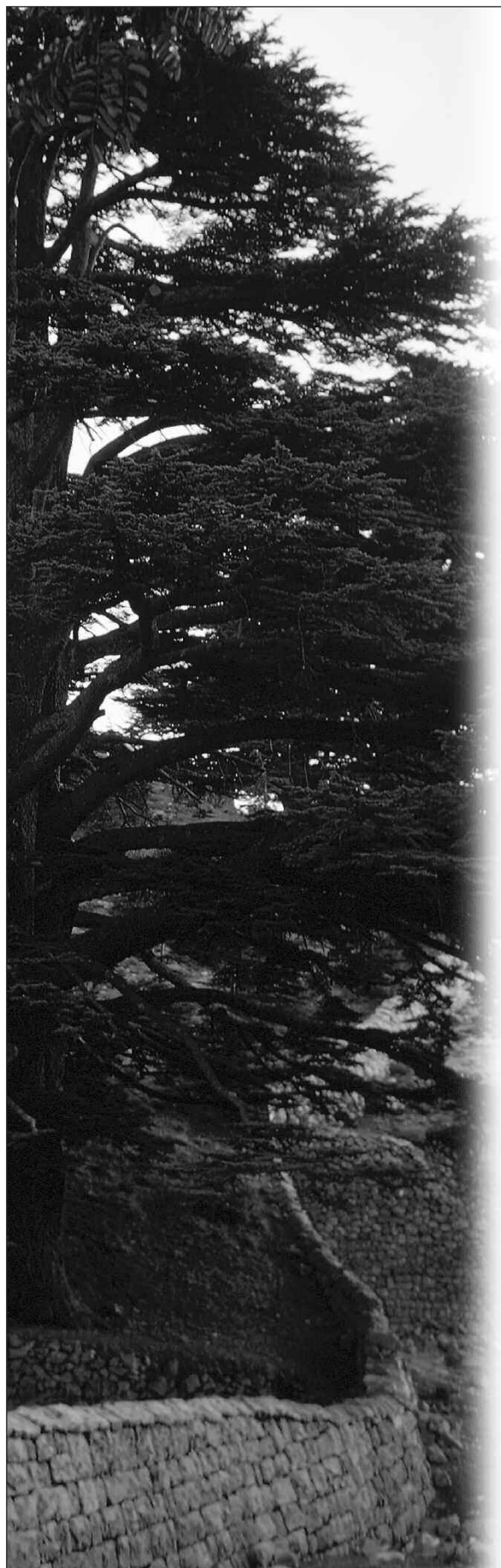
These big wins were followed by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission proposing a set of emissions standards that would, if enacted, lead to a significant reduction in emissions of ozone-inducing methane and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) -- chemicals which form ground-level ozone (commonly known as smog) -- and emissions from natural gas drilling and fracking operations in the state.

While these rules are a step in the right direction to regulate the natural gas industry and would make Colorado the first state in the nation to regulate methane emissions, more action is needed. Colorado is out of compliance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air-quality standards along the population centers of the Front Range, where four out of five Coloradans live. (Colorado's population is about 5.2 million; more than 4 million live along the Front Range.

The serious health effects of poor air quality are borne by citizens, especially young children and the elderly who suffer from asthma and other upper respiratory ailments. The natural gas industry is exempt from significant federal environmental regulations including the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Through exemptions and lack of regulation, natural gas operations have been allowed to expand without safeguards for public health and the environment. The Air Quality Control Commission rules are necessary to slow this out-of-control polluting by drilling operations.

The proposed rules provide a promising start to significantly reducing methane and other pollutants from Colorado's oil and gas operations, but they must be strengthened further before they are finalized. A final rule must ensure that local control is given to communities to determine if they want destructive fracking in their backyards. The rules must address both the health and climate impacts of drilling and fracking, and require state-of-the-art technology to maximize emission reductions and tighten the timeline for leak detection and repair provisions.

This is our opportunity to hold the natural gas industry accountable to our citizens, communities, and the health of our environment. We look forward to making sure that all voices are heard, especially people facing the prospect of drilling near their homes and neighborhood schools, and those whose health and quality of life are at stake. We will work with the Air Quality Control Commission and the administration of Governor Hickenlooper -- as well as with other stakeholders in this process -- to push for the highest air-quality standards possible.



Chapter Retreat!

January 24-26, at Cedars of Lebanon State Park

Get the date on your calendars now for our Winter Retreat at Cedars of Lebanon, just north of Murfreesboro, TN.

There will be Red Cross Re-Certification First Aid training, as well as time to relax close to nature and in the company of good friends, old and new. The schedule of activities is in development. E-mail Barbara Hurst (barbaraduckhurst@hotmail.com) for the schedule. The Chapter ExCom will hold its meeting on Sunday morning.

Eight miles of hiking trails meander through the "cedar" forests and glades; fox, deer, squirrel, rabbits and turkey are frequently spotted along the trails. The terrain is Karst topography, characterized by sinkholes, springs, caves, disappearing springs and underground drainage. The State Park has 900 acres, while the State Forest has 8,100 acres. The sections of the park built by the W.P.A. recently received national recognition when they were added to the National Register of Historic places, and a section of the Forest with its cedar glades has been designated as a federally protected natural area.

Prices are low, with bunk house accommodations, at the Group Lodge. (Early Bird fees, which cover 2 breakfasts, Saturday dinner and lodging are just \$40/person. However there's a 1/2 off discount if it is your first time, and children 15 and under are free. Scholarships are also available. Call Barbara Kelly, 423-718-5009, to request one.)

Contact Barbara Hurst for advanced notice of the activities and you also register with her: barbaraduckhurst@hotmail.com. Payment will be accepted when you check in at the Group Lodge. The fee goes up to \$50/person for registration after January 17. The Cherokee Group, Chattanooga, is hosting the event.

If interested in First-Aid recertification, please register as soon as possible with Phil Davis at phildavis2006@gmail.com. Cost will be approx. \$30.

EPA Seeks Environmental Education Grant Applications

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently accepting applications for environmental education projects under the agency's Environmental Education Grant Program. The program works to engage communities across the country through a wide variety of educational projects that have a lasting impact on people's health by facilitating environmental stewardship. Projects in the past have engaged students in stream monitoring, created sustainable mentoring communities, and provided professional development to teachers on subjects including science, technology, engineering and math. Eligible organizations include local education agencies, colleges or universities, state education or environmental agencies, tribal education agencies, 501(C)(3) nonprofit organizations, and noncommercial educational broadcasting entities working in education. This competitive grants program will total \$2.77 million. Each of the ten EPA regional offices will award two or three grants and one or two grants will be awarded from EPA's headquarters in Washington, DC. Each award will be an estimated \$75,000 to \$200,000. EPA expects to award between 22 and 32 grants nationwide. For more information about the program and how to apply: <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>

Meetings

The public is very welcome at ALL Sierra Club Meetings and Activities! All members traveling across the state should feel free to drop in and attend another Group's meetings. You will find yourself among friends and learning something interesting.

CHEROKEE GROUP (Chattanooga) -- 2014: Learn Globally, Then Act Locally

January 5: After Holiday New Year Get-Together, 5 P.M. at the home of Bill and Barbara Hurst, Signal Mountain! YOU are invited to gather for our annual covered dish party at Bill and Barbara's just after the new year begins. Bring a covered dish to share, and a friend or two you'd like to introduce to environmental concerns. We'll have fun, socialize and talk about our ideas for our new year's conservation campaigns. Call Barbara Hurst for directions -- 423-886-9503; best to get directions from her, the GPS services are incorrect and will steer you far away to a non-existent road and you'll miss dinner! (It is easy to get to, unless you try to use your GPS device.)

Strategy/Business Meeting: Jan. 11, 10:00 AM - Note: Big Change! We're meeting in January for breakfast at the Farmer's Daughter Cafe, a farm-to-table restaurant, 1211 Hixson Pike in North Chattanooga. All Group members and interested people welcome - this is where we plan our actions! To place an item on the agenda, contact Barbara Kelly at 423-718-5009 or bk1rivers@comcast.net.

January Program: 4th Monday, January 27, 7:00 P.M. at Outdoor Chattanooga, Coolidge Park, 200 River Street, Chattanooga. **Learn: How To Get Your Voice Heard: Grassroots Politics, presented by Jeremy Dahl.** A sales professional living in Chattanooga, Jeremy spent 2009-2011 traveling the country, working and volunteering as a political field representative and campaign consultant. He will talk about grassroots politics, teach you how to get your voice heard and capture your representative's attention in order to get your concerns heard and needs met. **In addition we'll have an update on helping push Cherokee Forest federal wilderness bills to passage. ** And, a regular meeting feature, The Energy Watchers will have a practical how-to tip to cut your home energy bill!

Follow Up Activity: Sierra Lobby Day in February, exact date to be announced! YOU are invited to put what we've learned into practice by lobbying our local legislators. We'll be putting together a group for a day lobbying either in Hamilton County or Nashville. Sign up at the meeting.

Strategy/Business Meeting, February 10 (2nd Monday), 6:30 P.M. Held at Second Presbyterian Church, at the corner of E. 7th Street and Pine, 700 Pine Street - parking is free in their Pine Street lot, across the street from the church, next to the old Blue Cross (orange) building. All members of the Group and interested people are welcome -- this is where and when we plan our actions! Come add your ideas and share your concerns. To place an item on the agenda, contact Secretary Barbara Kelly at 423-718-5009 or bk1rivers@comcast.net, preferably a week before our meeting.

February Program: 4th Monday, February

24, 7:00 P.M. at Outdoor Chattanooga, Coolidge Park, 200 River Street, Chattanooga. **Learn about Wacker & Solar Energy, presented by Dr. Conrad Bachhuber,** site manager and VP of Wacker Polysilicon. Dr. Bachhuber will speak on Wacker's production of solar cells and the plant being built in Charleston, which starts production in 2015. Wacker has been a pioneering manufacturer in solar-technology products, and is very involved world-wide in sustainable energy systems. Come with your questions! Also, The Energy Watchers will have a new how-to tip to cut your energy bill!

Follow-Up Activity: Build Your Own Solar Panel Workshop, Sat. Mar. 1, by Davis Mounger, sign up at the meeting!

The public is very welcome and healthy snacks are served, bring something along to share if you'd like. Parking is free in the driveway & parking lot behind the building, or paid parking in the Theatre lot. Invite your friends!!

CHICKASAW GROUP (Memphis)

TUESDAY, Jan 14, 6:30 P.M. February Executive Committee Strategy Meeting. Contact Sue A. Williams for location information A strategy meeting that is open to all members. To place an item on the agenda -- or for current location -- contact Chairperson Sue A. Williams at (901) 274-0524 or z4cmv@juno.com at least five days before the meeting.

February Executive Committee Strategy Meeting—with the election of new executive committee members, the date and time are to be determined. Check <http://www.facebook.com/Chickasaw.Group/>

HARVEY BROOME GROUP (Knoxville)

January 14, 7:00 P.M., Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, Knoxville. AT Through Hiking and "Top 5" Gear Show and Tell Paul and Barbara Akers (aka Yak and Stitch) Contact: Mac Post mpost3116@aol.com

February 11, 7:00 P.M., Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, Knoxville. Transcontinental Bike Riding By Mike Winck, Contact: Mac Post mpost3116@aol.com

For additional information contact Mac Post <mpost3116@aol.com>. All Harvey Broom Group meetings take place at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church at 2931 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN and are free and open to the public.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE GROUP (Nashville)

PROGRAM: January 9, 7:00 P.M. at Radnor Lake Visitor Center (always enter from Granny White Pike)

Tennessee Rivers: They are right under our noses, but you'll look at them differently after Paul Davis, retired Director of Water Pollution Control, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, navigates us across time and the state for a look at our Tennessee rivers. We will hear about the early days when James Robertson came in 1779 to settle at French Lick, which is now Nashville, and about the Cumberland River today, with reservoirs, locks and dams, and canals.

Paul will tell us of the many uses for the Cumberland's waters, the fish and wildlife species, navigation, and flooding. He will also discuss rivers in other parts of the state, such as the Tennessee River, the Mississippi, the Clinch, the Duck, and others, as well as the threats to Tennessee waters and the ways that we are combating those threats.

We invite you to this free presentation and know that you will leave with a heightened understanding of these critical issues.

PROGRAM: February 13, 7:00 P.M. at Radnor Lake Visitor Center Organic Lawn Care Safe for Wildlife and Public Health

According to the U.S. National Wildlife Federation, "lawn care" has come at a high cost to the environment. Reported by Eartheasy, a member of Sierra Club Green Home, some 100 million pounds of pesticides are used by homeowners in homes and gardens each year.

Almost all chemical fertilizers are derived from petroleum products. Synthetically treated lawns green up quickly because the chemicals pump unnatural chemical nitrogen into the soil. So, as soon as the chemicals wear off, the lawn dies and has to be fed another treatment. Some of the chemical companies use the term "Natural" with their product, which has no legal meaning in the U.S. This can be misleading. The term "Organic" however, has an established legal definition in the U.S., as well as an agreed upon international standard.

Commonly used lawn pesticides are toxic to wildlife, pets, fish, and other aquatic organisms, bees, birds, and ourselves. The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in a study of 9,282 people nationwide, found pesticides in 100% of the people who had both blood and urine tested. The average person carried 13 of 23 pesticides tested.

To help us have a 100% organic green lawn, Edward Jones II, with 20 years of all organic lawn experience in this community and COO/President of All Natural Lawns in Antioch, Tennessee will be speaking at our meeting. Bring your friends and we can learn how to protect the environment from the potential adverse public health and environmental effects associated with the use and misuse of pesticides.

This meeting is free and open to the public.

STRATEGY MEETINGS: January 21 and February 18 at 6:30 P.M.

Everyone is welcome at this local issues and business meeting. Meetings are usually held at the Mad Platter Restaurant, 1239 Sixth Ave. North, Nashville 37208 (near the Nashville Farmer's Market), but there may be times we meet elsewhere. If you are not a regular attendee, please contact Betsy at 668-1977 or garberb@hotmail.com. Come a bit early because we start the meeting at 6:30, and please contact Betsy at 668-1977 to let her know you're coming. The Mad Platter is not open on Tuesday evenings, so be sure to eat before you come or bring something with you. We look forward to seeing you.

WATAUGA GROUP (Northeastern TN)

PROGRAM MEETINGS: Every second Tuesday at 7 P.M. Please contact Gloria Griffith at gla4797@earthlink.net or 423-727-4797 for more information.

Outings

CHEROKEE GROUP (Chattanooga)

Emily Marr Davis is our Outings Chair, and point-person for outings information for our Group. Our activities are always open to the public and to members of the Club from across our state! Outings are planned to take in the interests and skill levels of the participants. For more information, contact Emily at emily.marr.davis@gmail.com. Please check our Facebook page, Cherokee Sierra, for the latest on our outings.

24-25-26 Jan. (Fri.-Sun) Tennessee Chapter Winter Retreat, hosted by the Cherokee Group at **Cedars of Lebanon State Park**, just north of Murfreesboro. Come for First Aid recertification, hiking, relaxing close to Nature and the company of good friends old and new. We'll be at the Group Lodge; prices low (\$40/person with e-mail reservation by Jan. 17, after that \$50/person; first-timers 1/2 off; kids 15 and under free.) For that price you get bunkhouse lodging, 2 breakfasts and Saturday dinner. Contact Barbara Hurst at barbaraduckhurst@hotmail.com for reservations and details. Payment accepted when you check in at the Group Lodge.

16 Feb. (Sun) Afternoon Walk, Wolftever Creek Greenway (Collegedale). Meet at 1:30 P.M. Get out and about this new year! Family Outing, kids welcome. The paved path runs along Wolftever Creek and through lovely wooded areas. As a bonus for kids, there are playgrounds at both ends. Contact Trip Leader Barbara Kelly, bk1rivers@comcast.net, for details of meeting place and to register.

CHICKASAW GROUP (MEMPHIS)

Time and dates of outings are to be determined. Check <http://www.facebook.com/Chickasaw.Group/>

HARVEY BROOME GROUP (Knoxville)

11 Jan (Sat). (date is tentative, and may be changed to the following Saturday - check with leader) Dayhike, Brushy Mountain Prison Mines, Frozen Head State Park. This hike combines the beauty of the Cumberlands in winter with a bit of history involving the formation of Brushy Mountain prison and its associated coal mining activities. We'll start at the east entrance to Frozen Head, on the Tower Trail, which ascends to the lookout tower on Frozen Head Mountain. Side trips will take in remnants of the old prisoner operated coal mines, plus an off trail route to an old surface mine site. Rated difficult. One-way drive: 43 miles. Pre-register with Ron Shrieves at 922-3518 or ronaldshrieves@comcast.net (e-mail preferred).

25-26 Jan (Sat-Sun). Winter Backpack, Elkmont area, GSMNP. This is a short-drive easy-to-moderate rated hike with emphasis on cold weather backpacking. We start at Elkmont, and go a short ways up the Jakes Creek trail to its junction with the

Meigs Mountain Trail, then west on the latter trail to back country campsite #20 (about 2.4 miles total). If you've never done a winter backpack before, this is your chance to try it out. We'll utilize Saturday afternoon to share experiences and information about equipment, supplies, techniques, and destinations relating to winter backpacking. On Sunday we'll take a leisurely breakfast before hiking west on the Meigs Mountain Trail to its junction with the Curry Mountain trail, then down the Curry Mountain trail to reach our shuttle vehicle at the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area (about 5.2 miles). Rated moderate to difficult, depending on weather and snow cover. Car shuttle. One-way drive: 43 miles. Preregister with Ron Shrieves: 922-3518; ronaldshrieves@comcast.net (e-mail preferred).

8 Feb (Sat). Take-a-Hike, Mids Branch via Little River, Huskey Gap, and Sugarland Mountain trails, GSMNP. This hike combines parts of three trails plus an off-trail segment that exposes the hiker to a bit of Smokies that was part of the Elkmont settlement prior to the birth of the Park. We'll use the three named trails to reach Mids Gap on the Sugarland Mountains trail, then descend off-trail for about 1.5 miles back into the Elkmont area, in the process examining several old home sites. Distance 9 miles, rated moderate. One-way drive: 43 miles. Pre-register with Ron Shrieves at 922-3518 or ronaldshrieves@comcast.net (e-mail preferred).

12 Feb 2014 (Sat). Abrams Falls, GSMNP. We will hike to Abrams Falls the "back-way" starting from the Abrams Creek Ranger Station in Happy Valley. To reach Abrams Falls we will start on the Cooper Road Trail (1.3 miles), hike the Little Bottoms Trail (2.3 miles) to the junction of the Hatcher Mountain Trail, follow the Hatcher Mountain Trail (0.2 miles) to the Hannah Mountain and Abrams Creek trails. The falls are about 1.7 miles up the Abrams Creek Trail. Abrams Falls drops more than 20 feet into a pool more than 100 feet wide. If water levels are low, we will hike back to the Abrams Creek Ranger Station by crossing Abrams Creek using the Hannah Mountain Trail (1.9 miles) to Scott Gap. From Scott Gap we will take Rabbit Creek (2.7 miles) to the Ranger Station. Total hiking distance is 10.1 miles. Rated moderate. One-way drive: 33 miles. Preregister with BJ and Bob Perlack: perlack@aol.com; 229-5027.

22-23 Feb 2014 (Sat-Sun). Spring Breakout Backpack, Rock Creek Loop, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. This is a 7.1 mile loop trail within the Big South Fork adjacent to Pickett State Forest. We will begin this backpack at the Hattie-Blevins cemetery hiking along the ridge top and then descending down to Massey Branch Creek to Rock Creek, a tributary of the Big South Fork. We will camp along Rock Creek. On Sunday, we will continue along Rock Creek, cross the Pickett State Forest boundary, and then hike back up to the ridge top. The trail includes several

Ten Essentials for Hiking



Sierra Club outings offer a variety of wilderness and near-wilderness experiences. It is important to realize that while all trips are guided by a leader, it is ultimately the responsibility of the individual to operate in a safe manner. To this end, the following is a list of essential items which should be modified according to the particular type of outing. These are:

1. Adequate map
2. First aid kit
3. Compass
4. Rain gear
5. Extra clothing (it is a good idea to always have a wool hat)
6. Matches
7. Knife
8. Flashlight
9. Extra food, water
10. The tenth essential: You decide what is the most important thing to bring!

creek crossings (mostly footbridges), rock houses, remnants of the Stearns Logging Railroad, and waterfalls. If there is interest and depending on the stream crossings, we can make a side loop trip involving parts of the John Muir, Hidden Passage, Tunnel, and Sheltopee Trace trails. Alternatively, we can add some short trips to see some arches and/or rock houses following the backpack. It will still be winter so preparedness for cold weather backpacking is required. Rated moderate. The driving distance is about 90 miles from Knoxville. Preregister with BJ and Bob Perlack: perlack@aol.com; 229-5027.

Red Cross First Aid Recertification Training

When: Jan. 25, 10 AM - 4 PM Central

Where: January Chapter Meeting, Cedars of Lebanon State Park, Group Lodge

Cost: Approx. \$30/person, paid at training, and provide your own trail lunch

Pre-register: Phil Davis at phildavis2006@gmail.com

If you are needing initial training, that may be a possibility, contact Phil.

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LA Times Gets It Wrong on Renewables Grid Impacts

Evan Halper's December 2 article in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Power Struggle: Green energy versus a grid that's not ready" perpetuates the false narrative that renewable energy increases the risk of blackouts, when in fact the problem is centralized fossil fuel nonrenewable generation. A more accurate, but perhaps less sensational, story would detail California's national leadership in reliably increasing the use of renewables -- like solar and wind energy. A recent report by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation and the California Independent System Operator, two entities charged with ensuring grid reliability, highlights the many solutions the state is already adopting to address concerns raised by Mr. Halper. For example, despite Mr. Halper's claim that "nobody can say for certain when the wind will blow or the sun will shine," the potential grid impacts arising from the variability of wind and solar energy are being addressed through improved forecasting and new regional partnerships that better leverage the geographic diversity of wind and solar resources, reducing overall variability in the energy system.

The article also suggests that California regulators recklessly disregarded cost concerns in requiring utilities to deploy energy storage. This couldn't be further from the truth. State regulators only adopted an energy storage requirement after an independent third-party analysis concluded that it is a cost-effective resource offering significant grid benefits.

As for renewables, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory recently concluded that if a third of the energy in the West were supplied by wind and solar, these resources would displace \$7 billion in annual fuel costs and reduce greenhouse gas pollution from the energy sector by approximately 30 percent. The article also devotes significant space to depicting the effects of a 2011 blackout in San Diego that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission attributed to a faulty response by grid operators following an outage of a transmission line. This blackout had nothing to do with renewables. To the contrary, local clean energy like rooftop solar helps mitigate these types of events by generating energy locally

and reducing reliance on imported power. Of course, entirely missing from the article is the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas pollution to avoid the increasingly catastrophic impacts to California and the rest of the world. As the *LA Times* reported the day after Mr. Halper's article was published, a new National Resource Council report warned that accelerating levels of greenhouse gas pollution are increasing the risk of abrupt and severe changes to the climate that will leave nature and society with little time to react. California's leadership in both increasing the use of renewable energy and proactively finding solutions to address any grid impacts should be commended and accelerated, not baselessly criticized.-- *Matt Vespa, Sierra Club Senior Attorney*

West Virginia PSC Directs FirstEnergy to Double Its Energy Efficiency Targets by 2018

On October 7, the West Virginia Public Service Commission issued an order requiring FirstEnergy to, among other things, double its energy efficiency target to one percent annually by 2018. This is a great move for increasing savings on rate-payer bills, fighting climate disruption, and creating new jobs. It all started when, late last year, FirstEnergy-regulated subsidiary Monongahela Power requested permission from the Commission to acquire nearly 1,500 megawatts of coal-fired capacity from fellow FirstEnergy subsidiary Allegheny Energy Supply, at a price to ratepayers of over \$1.1 billion. The Sierra Club intervened in that proceeding, and, along with others, argued extensively that:

- The proposed price was too steep;
- Acquiring more coal-fired generation was environmentally short-sighted and risky to ratepayers;
- That the utility would be saddled with excess capacity it would be unlikely to recoup through market sales;
- And that investments in energy efficiency along with market purchases of electricity would be a dramatically cheaper way to serve customers, create jobs, and protect the environment.

The Club then participated in a coalition of stakeholders to help drive a settlement with FirstEnergy, resulting in dramatic increases in FirstEnergy's energy-efficiency requirements, investments in home and school weatherization projects to save even more energy, assis-

tance to low-income ratepayers, and a savings of hundreds of millions of dollars to Monongahela Power's West Virginia customers.

The Commission approved the settlement, but also went further. Citing concerns about overreliance on coal in a world seeking to address carbon pollution, the Commission determined that FirstEnergy must bear more of the risk that carbon pricing and future environmental and public health standards would render the investment in more coal-fired generation a bad bet on behalf of its customers. As such, it may only recover from customers funds for part of the asset transfer if it can't sell enough of its new, surplus electricity to non-West Virginia customers.

In the end, the dramatic increase in FirstEnergy's energy-efficiency targets in West Virginia will end up helping keep the air clean, fight climate disruption, protect customers, and create new clean energy jobs in West Virginia.

By Zack Fabish, Attorney, Sierra Club Environmental Law Program

WANTED:

Sierrans to help with 2 of our on-going administrative committees: Fundraising and Communications. There are both simple, small jobs to be done, as well as larger ones; some take little or no training/skills, while others can be complex. Can you picture yourself contributing a couple hours a month to helping the environment in this way? Are you interested in finding out more? Give me a call or e-mail me! Barbara Kelly, 423-718-5009 or bk1rivers@comcast.net.

DON'T START THAT NEW YEAR'S DIET JUST YET!!!

Please show your support for Nashville's ICO (Inner City Outings) by coming to dine at The Wild Cow Restaurant on Thursday, January 2, 2014. The restaurant is located at 1896 Eastland Ave Nashville, TN 37206.

The Wild Cow has offered to graciously donate 10% of their total sales to us on this date.

The restaurant is really small so for large groups (6 or more) the best idea is to make reservations. Better yet, in order to maximize sales to make more money for ICO, why not call in your order to go (615-262-2717), pick it up and enjoy it at home?

The Wild Cow serves vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free fare.

JOIN THE SIERRA DEFENDERS!

Start 2014 right and renew your commitment to the Sierra Club's Defenders, which supports our important legislative and lobbying program. If you haven't already become a Defender, now is the perfect time!

Our Sierra lobbyist, Mike Murphy, works diligently for us while encouraging members to be part of the process. As we have become more involved, our legislators have learned that it is their constituents care about the environment. The Sierra Club sends alerts targeted to specific districts on important bills.

The Sierra Club has an impressive record working with legislators and other organizations to move forward bills that are positive for the environment and to stop bad bills. During this session, we anticipate working on bills related to fracking, forestry, renewable energy, labeling of genetically modified plants and seeds, and mountaintop removal, depending on what bills are filed by legislators.

Our successes have been because of: **strong champions** in the legislature; **our Sierra Club lobbyist** who works tirelessly for our goals; and you members who contact your legislators to tell them your views.

You can help by:

—Renewing your support for the Defenders or join now!

—Contacting your legislators about bills and initiatives that we let you know are important;

If you are not receiving legislative updates and/or want targeted information about contacts to be made on critical votes, send me your e-mail address on the form below.

Give a little if you can't give a lot. **You are the lifeblood of this crucial program!** Send the form below with a check **made out to Sierra Club**, with "Defenders" on the memo line, to Sierra Club Defenders, c/o Adelle Wood, 4641 Villa Green Drive, Nashville, TN 37215. **Donations to this fund are not tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes.**

Thank you!

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Check here if you want weekly e-mail updates from Tennessee Conservation Voters (include your e-mail address above) during the legislative session. (*Don't check this box if you already receive these updates; and/or*

Please check here if you want to receive e-mail alerts when there is a critical vote and the Sierra Club needs contacts to your state representative and/or senator (*Don't check this box if you already receive these alerts*);

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Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park 3-Day, 3-Island, Live-Aboard Cruises

April 12-14
July 22-22

2014 Schedule:
May 4-6
August 24-26

June 8-10
September 14-16

Join us as we explore these enchanting islands! Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines. Marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds. Watch for the highly endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or just relax at sea. A ranger/naturalist will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest and present evening programs. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara, California. The cost, \$590, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, and beverages plus the services of a ranger/naturalist.

To reserve space, send a \$100 check, written to Sierra Club to leader **Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732**. For more information contact leader; **626-443-0706; jholtzhln@aol.com**



Tell NRC to Stop Making More Nuclear Waste



Sierra and partners testify at NRC Hearing-over 250 attended.

By Steven Sondheim
Sierra Club Nuclear Free Campaign

For decades NRC has licensed and re-licensed nuclear power reactors without knowing what would happen with the highly radioactive irradiated/spent fuel being produced all over the country. Now, NRC has been mandated to study the environmental impacts and costs of other alternatives if a permanent repository is not found. They must consider: what will be the costs; risks; consequences of storing the highly radioactive spent fuel at the reactors. They need to determine whether irradiated/spent fuel is a public health hazard. And of even more importance, for the first time the NRC will have to consider whether better energy alternatives to nuclear are available — that don't generate tons of high level radioactive waste.

Since the summer of 2012, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been unable to issue licenses for new reactors, nor renewals for existing licenses. A federal court threw out the underpinning of the agency's radioactive waste policy--its "waste confidence" rule. That rule had stated that the NRC was confident that high-level radioactive waste always would be stored or disposed safely, and thus could continue to be generated.

But the court found that with the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site effectively cancelled and no alternative in place, the NRC could not be "confident" of permanent disposal. Moreover, the court ruled that the NRC had no technical basis for asserting that current on-site storage practices in fuel pools and dry casks would be safe for the indefinite future. This ruling forced the current moratorium on licensing.

The NRC has now prepared a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) as part of the process of replacing its "waste confi-

dence" rule and it hopes to finalize this document and resume licensing during 2014.

According to Diane D'Arrigo of NIRS, "Stop new nuclear power licensing, extensions on old reactors and creation of more nuclear waste. NRC wants to legalize its alleged 'CONFIDENCE' that nuclear waste will have no significant environmental impacts even though it remains radioactive for literally millions of years... **It's a CON Game or Hearing of NO Confidence on Nuclear Waste. They are "confident" high level nuclear power waste will always be safe...with or without a final repository. Do you believe that? Should NRC resume giving licenses to make MORE WASTE?"**

To keep in touch with latest developments and to add your voice contact: NIRS Waste CONFIDENCE webpage;
<http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/wasteconfidence.htm>

Join the Sierra Club Nuclear Free Campaign
<http://content.sierraclub.org/grassrootsnetwork/teams/nuclear-free-campaign>

THIS IS OUR CHANCE (once in million year chance!) to tell the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission that we have NO CONFIDENCE that high level nuclear waste will be safe after nuclear reactors close. NRC CLAIMS 'CONFIDENCE' that high level radioactive waste (which it admits has elements that will be radioactive for millions of years) will pose no danger after reactors close, whether it's at the reactor site of off at a centralized storage place—doesn't matter—NRC wants to keep giving and extending licenses make MORE waste.

A federal court told NRC to STOP giving licenses to make more waste so NRC is trying to justify their CONFIDENCE that the waste is safe. NRC wants to put it into the regulations (10 CFR 51 regulations) once and for all that high level nuclear waste will never have significant environmental impacts.... That way no one can legally raise these concerns or intervene when reactors go for license extensions and when new reactor licenses are proposed. By assuming the chances are low, NRC says they can ignore enormous consequences from fires or other disasters that could spread massive amounts of radiation around the globe.

Contact Diane D'Arrigo at NIRS for any questions:
dianed@nirs.org 301-270 6477 x 15

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