

# Tennes - Sierran

The Monthly state newsletter for the Tennessee Chapter Sierra Club

Volume 49, Number 2 - March/April 2016

## Sierra Club Helps Stop Road through Cumberland Homesteads

The Sierra Club, SOCM, SELC (Southern Environmental Law Center), the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Cumberland Homesteads Tower Association had a major win in 2015 in finally defeating a road widening project through the Cumberland Homesteads National Historic District. TDOT originally proposed this road project over twenty years ago. We submitted innumerable comments to TDOT, TVA and the Army Corps, attended public hearings and participated in consultation processes under the National Historic Preservation Act before TDOT finally gave up and withdrew its permit requests.

The proposed road widening would have destroyed the Historic Triangle at the heart of the Historic District and would have had

significant impacts on many streams, springs and wetlands, including culverting two streams designated as Exceptional Tennessee Waters, on the edge of the Cumberland Mountain State Park.

The Cumberland Homesteads is the largest of Tennessee Historic Districts and the largest, and one of the best preserved, of the country's 1930's era Homesteads communities built by the federal government. It was established as a Subsistence Farm Community in 1934 for a stranded community of miners and timber workers that had been in and out of work since the 1920s. It is important not just for its significance in the nation's history for community planning and development and for social history, but also for its architectural style and the crab orchard stone

of its buildings.

The Triangle intersection of US 127S and state route 68 in Cumberland County is a signature original element in architect William Macy Stanton's design for the Homesteads community. There were originally 22 triangular intersections within the planned Homesteads community, only fourteen of which survive.

Many thanks for this effort go to Vicki Vaden (daughter and granddaughter of original Homesteaders) of the Cumberland Homesteads Tower Association who was tireless in her efforts and enlisted the help of others in this fight. If you've never been to the Homesteads it's a great outing to take a drive to Crossville and interesting to tour the museum and see some of the Homesteads homes.

## Despite Supreme Court, Clean Energy and Climate Progress Are Full Speed Ahead

By Mary Anne Hitt

Let's make one thing perfectly clear - while the Supreme Court's decision yesterday to put a temporary hold on the Clean Power Plan was disappointing, it won't revive the fortunes of the coal industry, slow the transition to clean energy, or cripple progress toward meeting the climate commitment the US made in Paris last year.

Yesterday's decision means the Supreme Court is temporarily pausing the Clean Power Plan from going into effect, while the courts consider the merits of the case. As that legal process unfolds, likely into 2017, something else will continue unfolding as well - the steady progress of the Sierra Club and our allies to retire coal plants and replace them with clean energy. As we outlined in a report released late last year, our strategy gives us a pathway to meet our climate targets, even as the Clean Power Plan makes its way through the courts.

Thanks to coal retirements and the rise of clean energy, US carbon emissions are at their lowest level in two decades and are continuing to fall. In 2015, the US got just 34 percent of our electricity from coal, the lowest level in recorded history, and experts don't see a reversal of that trend. Since 2010, we've won retirement of 231 coal plants that make up one-third of the US coal fleet, and we're just warming up, with the goal of securing retirement of half the US coal fleet no later than 2017.

The momentum behind clean energy keeps growing, and this pause of the Clean Power Plan won't slow it down. In 2015 renewable energy - like wind and solar - was our biggest source of new power on the grid, making up 65 percent of all new electricity generation and eclipsing gas for the very first time. As we outlined in that report last year, all this progress has the US already halfway to meeting the 2030 Clean Power Plan carbon reduction requirements, five years

before the rule even takes effect.

With grassroots power and market forces on our side, the US will remain on track to meet our Paris commitments in the electric sector, but there is still more the US and Obama Administration must do to avert a climate crisis, including adopting strong standards to reduce methane pollution from all sources in the oil and gas sector.

While the Supreme Court stay is a disappointing development, we are confident that the courts will ultimately uphold the Clean Power Plan, just as they have upheld the EPA's responsibility to address climate pollution under the Clean Air Act many times before. And in the meantime, we are fortunate to have a proven, resilient, grassroots strategy that ensures we will keep making progress on clean air and water, climate change, and clean energy. We're not taking a break - we're stepping on the accelerator. Join us.

## National Sierra Club Elections are Underway - VOTE! A Democratic Sierra Club Demands Grassroots Participation

By Liz Walsh

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will have received in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) their national Sierra Club ballot in early March. These include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's web site. Your participation is critical for a Strong Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in

elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation.

In a typical year less than 10% of eligible members vote in the Board elections. A minimum of 5% is required for the elections to be valid. Our grassroots structure is strengthened when our participation is high. Therefore your participation is needed in the voting process.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. Each candidate provides a statement about themselves and their views on the issues on the official election ballot. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you

know. You can also visit the Club's election web site for additional information about candidates: <http://www.sierraclub.org/board/election>

Then make your choice and cast your vote! Voting online is quick and easy! Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, we encourage you to use the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If sending via ground mail, please note your ballots must be received by no later than Election Day, April 27, 2016.

# VOTE

# Tennes-Sierran

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

SEND CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO:

\*Email: [address.changes@sierraclub.org](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org)

\*Snail Mail: clip the Moving? coupon below and mail

\*Address changes are processed much faster if you include your Sierra Club membership number. To find your membership number, look on the address label of this newsletter.

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Submission Target Date is March 25 for the May/June issue.

1. E-mail and e-mail attached files are preferred. Send to [gvanhorn26@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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.

**Target Date for  
May/June is  
March 25, 2016.**

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

**Send material to  
Chris Demetreon at  
[c.demetreon@mchsi.com](mailto:c.demetreon@mchsi.com)**



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## All Creatures Great and Small



"Every good thing, great  
and small, needs defense"

- John Muir

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Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49
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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.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club,  
P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32141-6417  
or visit our website [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

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## Tennessee Valley Authority's Coal Ash Pond Closure Study Falls Short

By Scott Banbury

Throughout January, Sierra Club members across the state of Tennessee attended public hearings on the Tennessee Valley Authority's Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on their plans to close coal ash ponds at many of their facilities in Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama. Using very little site specific information, but instead relying on "modeling" by power industry consultant EPRI, TVA concludes that "closure in place" is their preferred alternative. This would entail draining the

ponds and capping them with a layer of dirt to keep rainwater out. Unfortunately in most cases, this would still leave the ponds subject to groundwater flooding as the coal ash at most ponds is below the groundwater table. In other words, TVA wants to create dozens of unlined landfills that leak toxic metals into surrounding groundwater.

When asked to see the data and methodology that EPRI used in creating their modeling, EPRI said that anyone could go to their website and download it--to the tune of

\$25,000. Sierra Club and allies are requesting an extension in the comment period so that we may evaluate each of individual sites. This request was initially rebuked since TVA is in a hurry to get the sites closed so that they won't be subject to more stringent post-closure monitoring requirements that come into effect with the EPA's Coal Combustion Residuals Rule in 2018. A Final Environmental Impact Statement will likely be released later this spring or early summer. Watch for action alerts.

Soon to be updated,  
due to ExCom Elections.

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**Please notify the Editor  
when changes are needed**

# Five Things You Should Know About President Obama's Coal Leasing Moratorium

By Cesia Kearns

When President Obama and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced a suspension of pending federal coal leases and a top-to-bottom review of the long broken coal program, we cheered.

Digging past the headline, here are important implications about what this proposal means for the climate, the economy, and our future that are worth cheering about.

**1.** Serious climate progress: The coal lease suspension stops the zombie-like inertia of a federal coal leasing program that is a major source of our country's climate pollution. That inertia simply can't continue if we are serious about climate. Just this week, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA announced that 2015 was the hottest year on record. With rising temperatures, extreme weather, and human displacement, we know that not all populations will be harmed by climate change in the same way. The elderly, children, communities of color, and low income populations will be disproportionately harmed by the impacts of climate change, underscoring and even greater responsibility our decision-makers have to act on climate out of justice.

America needs to lead. A study published in *Nature* in 2015 concluded that the U.S. needs to keep 92 percent of its coal reserves in the ground as part of an overall slashing of fossil fuel use if we are going to avoid dangerous climate disruption.

Following the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan, a historic climate agreement with China, and the Paris climate accord -- this coal lease suspension shows that the Obama administration is committed to continuing its climate leadership.

**2.** Serious climate and financial scale: The federal coal leasing program is massive and costs far more than any benefits it might produce. Plus, the program, as it has been managed for decades, no longer serves the national interest: federal taxpayers lost out on an estimated \$28.9 billion in revenues over the 30 years since the federal government last overhauled its coal leasing program.

And look at its massive scale when it comes to climate disruption: Forty percent of the coal burned in U.S. power plants is mined from federal public lands, and ninety percent of that is from the Powder River Basin in northeastern Wyoming. That's 400 million tons of coal every year! From methane released by coal mines, to the pollution from moving the coal, to the carbon dioxide and toxins from burning the coal, the coal mined out of our public lands is making people sick and heating up the planet. A study by Center for American Progress and the Wilderness Society found that federally leased coal in Montana and Wyoming drives at least ten percent of all U.S. climate pollution. As part of this new review, the federal government will finally develop a publicly available database of the carbon emitted from fossil fuels taken from public lands and account for the costs that carbon pollution imposes on people.

Michael Greenstone, the Milton Friedman professor of economics at the University of Chicago, has written that "The climate damages from coal mined from this region [Powder River Basin] are five to six times greater than its market value (\$0.66 at market value versus \$3.89 of climate damages)."

**3.** The sky isn't falling (but it is heating up): The administration is suspending leases that have not received final approval and won't be approving any new ones the industry may propose. There's still 20 years of coal production with existing approved leases. That doesn't mean we should burn it all, but it does mean that this announcement leaves time for finally reforming a program that is endangering our future and polluting communities. We are already hearing manufactured panic about the announcement, ignoring that we've been here before. Presidents Nixon and Reagan oversaw pauses to study the program. We aren't breaking new ground here--unlike coal mines that rip up our public lands. The government will continue to press ahead with some harmful lease expansions, including one that is the single biggest in the program's history and another that will ruin parts of a National Forest road-less area in Colorado.

We still have work to do.

**4.** The coal market is in a permanent decline--it's time to start planning for the future, and invest in community transition: Just this week the Billings Gazette editorialized that Montana can't stake its future on coal. At a time when clean energy continues to expand exponentially every year, this suspension and review offers an opportunity to rethink a 30-year-old-program while starting to invest in communities that need help transitioning away from coal.

The future of coal is bleak. It's a dirty, expensive, and outdated energy source. As coal loses space in the U.S. and coal companies try to push it overseas, communities spanning the coalfields, rail cities, and port towns, are standing up to stop coal export facilities. Communities around the world are also resisting the development of new coal in favor of clean energy access. The coal industry's business model is collapsing, not unlike the shifts seen in other parts of our economy where rapid change has swamped incumbent players who can't compete. This is an opportunity to start planning for the end of mining coal on our public lands and to ensure that any coal that remains to be mined will financially contribute to the transition of affected communities.

**5.** Coal leasing program reform means more clean energy: Underpriced federal coal prolongs the life of coal plants and crowds out clean energy. That means fewer clean energy economic opportunities in communities and more illnesses. President Obama has called for accelerating clean energy and this program has run directly counter to that goal.

Plus - clean energy is growing by leaps and bounds. Solar jobs grew 123 percent in the past six years. Wind power continues to break records! Instead of mining and drilling our federal public lands for dirty fuels that put us and future generations at risk, we should focus on moving faster and farther on clean energy that won't harm our air, water, and climate but that will create jobs and boost the economy.

## Working for Climate Justice: A Student Experience

By Wenona Kunesh

While I was in New Orleans for a hurricane Katrina Commemoration, I was invited by Cliff Cockerham to go to Paris, France and be there for COP21. I was there with the Sierra Student Coalition and I'm very pleased to have the amazing opportunity to help them with their climate change actions. The SSC had a booth in the Generations space at COP21 and I helped out there. We told people who we are and what we're doing to save the earth and its people from the affects of climate change. Working with the Sierra Student Coalition was a blast. I met a lot of people who share the same views as me and have a fun and positive attitude.

One of my tasks was to videotape people. One woman I interviewed had a booth about birds, and how climate change is hurting their migration routes and mating seasons. I began

to understand how important it is to pay attention to our earth.

At COP21 there were two spaces: The Generations Space and the Negotiations area. My main focus was in the Generations Space along with many other organizations and people from around the world. The atmosphere there was positive. People want to help and show that they care about our earth. COP21 was well populated by indigenous people with a large exhibit section in Generations Space. People from all over the world came to tell us that their villages are being flooded and they need help and fair treatment. Those included one of our Sierra Student Coalition members. He lives in a village in Alaska that is being flooded out by rising seas. The people's culture and way of life are being destroyed as they are forced to move.

There were many actions held all around

Paris. One that I attended was the "100% clean energy" action. We made huge signs in the shapes of "0"s plus a percent sign and used the Eiffel Tower as a "1". We welcomed anyone to come take a photo as we held the signs. Those photos were posted on social media to get the word out that we need clean energy and air, and we need it now.

A couple things that surprised me while I was in Paris, was the amount of people in the city. Not once, have I experienced so many people on a metro car. Another thing was the complexity of mass transportation. Who thought of the underground system? It's awfully complicated.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to my attending COP21 through my GoFundMe campaign. I had such a good time and I truly appreciate all the help. And a special thanks to the Sierra Club Cherokee Group!

# Meetings

## CHEROKEE GROUP (Chattanooga)

**Strategy/Business Meetings: March 14 and April 11 (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] Come add your ideas and share your concerns. We've got committees on outings, clean energy, forest watch/protection, mining/fracking issues, and room to support YOUR concern. Come share! The building looks like an old school - knock on the door, and if somebody doesn't answer, call 423-718-5009 for a door-unlocker! All are welcome!

**March Program: 4th Monday, Mar. 28, 7:00 P.M. at Green|Spaces, 63 E. Main St., Chatta. 37408. Trails at Moccasin Bend: Michael Wurzel,** Executive Director of the Friends of Moccasin Bend, will tell us what is happening at Moccasin Bend National Park. Moccasin Bend became a unit of Chickmauga & Chattanooga National Military Park, and the National Park System's first and only National Archeological District, when it came under the management of the National Park Service in 2003.

The Bend currently offers two public hiking trails and year-round, ranger-led programs for families, teachers and students, history buffs and outdoor enthusiasts.

**Learn about local Sierra Club outings and advocacy activities. The public is very welcome, healthy snacks are served.** Invite your friends!! Look for our banner.

**April Program: 4th Monday, April 25, 7:00 P.M. at Green|Spaces, 63 E. Main St., Chatta. 37408: Native Fish Restoration:** Conservation Fisheries' goal is to restore fish populations that have been eliminated because of pollution or habitat destruction. They were the first facility in the Southeast to propagate rare, non-game fishes for recovery work. **J.R. Shute, Co-Director of CFI,** will discuss these and other activities, including non-invasive monitoring of the status of populations of rare fishes in the Southeast. CFI's restoration efforts include work in the Conasauga River.

**Learn about local Sierra Club outings and advocacy activities. The public is very welcome, healthy snacks are served.** Invite your friends!! Look for our banner.

## CHICKASAW GROUP (Memphis)

Check <http://www.facebook.com/ChickasawGroup/> for meeting information.

## HARVEY BROOME GROUP (Knoxville)

Harvey Broome Group monthly programs are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, 2931 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN 37919. Our business meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at The Church of the Savior, 934 N. Weisgarber Rd. Knoxville, TN 37909. Both start at 7:00 P.M. Both are free and open to the public

## Middle Tennessee Group (Nashville)

**March 7, 2016 (Monday) – 6:15 P.M. – ICO MEETING:** Come join our Nashville Inspiring Connections Outdoors Group as we meet at the Mad Platter restaurant at 1239 6th Ave. North, Nashville. We will discuss our outings for disadvantaged kids and senior citizens, and training. Contact Daniel Shaykevich at [daniel.a.shaykevich@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:daniel.a.shaykevich@vanderbilt.edu) to make sure the meeting is still on. Put "ICO" in the subject line.

**March 10, 2016 (Thursday) 7:00 P.M. – The ELF & Alternative Transportation:** Joel Griffith is launching a local dealership for a vehicle called the ELF. The ELF generates no pollution, allows you to pedal for exercise, has battery power for distance, and has a solar panel to charge the battery. Joel will present an overview on alternative transportation, how the ELF works, and then showcase the vehicle and let people sit in it (and possible ride around the parking lot!). This Sierra Club program will be held at Radnor Lake Visitor Center, 1160 Otter Creek Road, Nashville. You must enter the park from Granny White Pike to reach the visitor center. Free and open to the public.

**March 15, 2016 (Tuesday) - at 6:30 P.M. LOCAL ISSUES MEETING:** Everyone is welcome at this local issues and business meeting. We are in the midst of changing our meeting location, so please contact Jim at (225) 281-4089 or [jamesmredwine@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmredwine@gmail.com) to find out where we will be meeting and to let him know that you plan to attend. We look forward to seeing you.

**April 4, 2016 (Monday) – 6:15 P.M. – ICO MEETING:** Come join our Nashville Inspiring Connections Outdoors Group as we meet at the Mad Platter restaurant at 1239 6th Ave. North, Nashville. We will discuss our outings for disadvantaged kids and senior citizens, and training. Contact Daniel Shaykevich at [daniel.a.shaykevich@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:daniel.a.shaykevich@vanderbilt.edu) to make sure the meeting is still on. Put "ICO" in the subject line.

**April 14, 2016 (Thursday) 7:00 P.M. – "Nashville's Urban Green Lab"** Jennifer Tlumak Westerholm, Executive Director of Urban Green Lab, will describe their innovative programs, dedicated to improving the health and well-being of our city through workshops on everything from green building to urban agriculture. The result is that people are inspired to incorporate sustainability into their lives, thus saving money, improving health and conserving resources. Workshops have been devoted to such topics as growing food in urban environments; making rain barrels; cooking with local and healthy foods; and using reclaimed materials, green design, and new technologies to build or retrofit sustainable homes. In addition to providing workshops for the public, on February 16 they launched Nashville's first mobile sustainability classroom – a "Mobile Lab" – to reach diverse and underserved populations in public middle and high schools. Jennifer has worked within such diverse arenas as the U.S. Department of Ener-

gy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and various environmental and social justice nonprofits. She was honored as Young Leader of the Year by the Tennessee Alliance for Progress and was recently selected as one of the Nashville Emerging Leaders Class of 2016. Please come and help us to welcome Jennifer and to learn about the Middle Tennessee Group of the Sierra Club's focus areas for this year. This Sierra Club program will be held at Radnor Lake Visitor Center, 1160 Otter Creek Road, Nashville. You must enter the park from Granny White Pike to reach the visitor center. Free and open to the public.

**April 19, 2016 (Tuesday) - at 6:30 P.M. LOCAL ISSUES MEETING:** Everyone is welcome at this local issues and business meeting. We are in the midst of changing our meeting location, so please contact Jim at (225) 281-4089 or [jamesmredwine@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmredwine@gmail.com) to find out where we will be meeting and to let him know that you plan to attend. We look forward to seeing you.

**May 2, 2016 (Monday) – 6:15 P.M. – ICO MEETING:** Come join our Nashville Inspiring Connections Outdoors Group as we meet at the Mad Platter restaurant at 1239 6th Ave. North, Nashville. We will discuss our outings for disadvantaged kids and senior citizens, and training. Contact Daniel Shaykevich at [daniel.a.shaykevich@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:daniel.a.shaykevich@vanderbilt.edu) to make sure the meeting is still on. Put "ICO" in the subject line.

## Mark Your Calendar

The Sierra Club's Tennessee Chapter Spring 2016 meeting will be held the weekend of 4/22-4/24/16 at Nathan Bedford Forrest Park located on Kentucky Lake in Eva, TN. All are welcome- Sierra Club members and non-members!!

Friday will be for open arrivals and casual conversations. Saturday will include guided hikes in the forest and the opportunity to discuss Sierra Club strategies. An "Earth Day" service project will also be available if you are good with a saw or hammer. A First Aid Class may also be available (not yet confirmed). Evening dinner will be followed by a presentation and silent auction. Sunday will have an additional hike of varying difficulty, in parallel with the Chapter ExCom's business meeting.

Lodging Friday and Saturday in the Group Lodge, plus 2 breakfasts and one dinner (bring your own trail lunches) are included in the fee for the weekend.

Regular price= \$50; Early Bird reservation= \$40. Day only price Saturday \$15 (includes breakfast and dinner) or Sunday/\$10.00 (includes breakfast). Scholarships are available. You may email [chickasawsierra@gmail.com](mailto:chickasawsierra@gmail.com) for further details.

**Note-** You must contact the Sierra Club at the email above to register, NOT the park!!

See <http://tnstateparks.com/parks/about/nathan-bedford-forrest> for general information from TN state parks.

# Outings

## CHEROKEE GROUP (Chattanooga)

John Doyal is our Outings Chair, and point-person for outings information for our Group. Our activities are always open to the public and members of the Club from across the state! For more information, contact John at baldie052@yahoo.com. Pre-registration with the trip leader is required for all outings. Also check our Meetup - Green Events page for the latest on our outings.

**March 5 (Sat) - Wildflowers, The Pocket, Pigeon Mountain.** Near Kensington, GA, we'll be viewing spring wildflowers in this very beautiful natural area, along the boardwalk. Bring water and your camera! After, we'll enjoy lunch at the Pigeon Mountain Grill near Chickamauga, GA. (for more info on the Pocket, go here: [www.georgiatrails.com/gt/Pocket\\_Trail](http://www.georgiatrails.com/gt/Pocket_Trail)) We'll meet at 11 am at the 2nd Presbyterian Church parking lot downtown, across from the Church on 700 Pine Street, where carpools may be arranged. We'll finish up around 3-4 P.M.. For more information, and to register, contact trip leader John Doyal, cell 423-800-2745 or baldie052@

yahoo.com. Open to the public!

**April TBA - Moccasin Bend Hike:** as a follow-up to our March program with Michael Wurzel, of Friends of Moccasin Bend. Check our MeetUp, Facebook pages and website for the details.

**April 30 (Sat) Lula Lake Hike.** We'll meet at 11 am at 2nd Presbyterian Church parking lot downtown, across from the Church on 700 Pine Street, where carpools may be arranged. On Lookout Mountain, Lula Lake is a stunningly beautiful area with waterfalls, with easy walking trails. We'll definitely be viewing the Upper Falls and Lula Lake itself. Again, bring your camera and water bottle. [For more information on the Land Trust which reserves and protects Lula Lake, go here: <http://lulalake.org/> ] We'll complete the day with a late lunch at the

## CHICKASAW GROUP (Memphis)

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

## 10 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!

## Middle Tennessee Group (Nashville)

We have an active outings schedule and want you to come along! Many times our outings are planned too late to be included in this newsletter. To check out our outings, please click on the outing of choice at <http://www.meetup.com/Middle-Tennessee-Sierra-Club-Outings-and-Adventures/events/calendar/>

## Faith Community Unites Against Dangerous Oakland Coal Exports

By April Thomas

Last week in Oakland leaders representing a broad spectrum of faith communities united to say no to dirty coal exports. Brought together by California Interfaith Power & Light, in partnership with the Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter, these leaders represented diverse groups -- from the Nation of Islam to Jewish, Roman Catholic and Episcopal communities.

These faith leaders are standing up to polluters who have waged a misinformation campaign in Oakland that has directly targeted local churches. The developers who want to export coal through a proposed shipping terminal have made a number of promises to local churches - promises that they may not be able to keep - and spread misinformation about the safety and health issues surrounding coal trains. That's why these faith leaders stood together last week to push back on the developer's dirty tactics, and call on the Oakland City Council to pass a ban on coal exports.

"No community, rich or poor, should endure the effects of coal. But the environmental inequity of the coal terminal proposal cannot be disregarded," said the Rev. Kenneth Chambers, pastor of West Side Missionary Baptist Church in Oakland. "West Oakland already bears a disproportionate burden of pollution, of toxic contamination from diesel exhaust spewing from thruways crisscrossing through the community. Life expectancy of West Oakland residents is far below the life expectancy of residents in the Oakland hills, and West Oakland tenants are twice as likely to visit emergency rooms for asthma as the rest of Alameda

County. The West Oakland community cannot afford to have any more pollution dumped on us. We ask the City Council to stand with us over polluters and profits."

Faith leaders have been deeply engaged in the campaign to stop coal exports in Oakland. Congregations throughout Oakland have hosted teach-ins on the health, safety and climate impacts of coal. In addition to local Oakland clergy, prominent Bay Area faith leaders from the Jewish, Roman Catholic and Episcopal communities have all spoken out against coal and signed onto a letter drafted by California Interfaith Power & Light, urging the City Council to ban coal exports.

"As a resident of West Oakland, a person with respiratory challenges and a faith leader, I am profoundly concerned about the health and environmental impacts of transporting coal through our city," said Archdeacon of the diocese of California, Carolyn Bolton. "I strongly

oppose the development of a coal terminal in our already vulnerable and highly impacted community."

At the rally the Sierra Club Beyond Coal campaign released a poll that found that 75 percent of Oakland voters surveyed oppose the proposal to ship coal, demonstrating that these faith leaders represent the vast majority of Oakland community members.

"This poll clearly demonstrates what we've learned from our conversations on the ground with Oaklanders," said Brittany King of the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Sierra Club. "Oakland residents do not want dirty coal exports in their city. The City Council has the legal authority to ban coal due to the health and safety risk this dangerous commodity poses to Oakland residents. It's time for our elected leaders to make it clear that they stand with the 76 percent of Oakland voters who oppose coal exports in Oakland."



Image Source: Brooke Anderson

# You Know Electric Cars Are Poised to Take Off When the Koch Brothers Plan The Technology's Demise

By Gina Coplion-Newfield

Electric vehicles (EVs) are on the rise. In some locations, it's no longer surprising to see LEAFs, Volts, or any of a multitude of available plug-in models driving alongside us on the road. Not even the climate-change-denying, fossil-fuel-baron Koch brothers, who run Koch Industries, have been able to ignore the reality of EVs' growing popularity. According to journalist Peter Stone, the Kochs' have quietly launched a multimillion dollar plan aimed at slowing EVs down.

This week a newly released analysis by Bloomberg New Energy and Finance predicted that electric vehicles will help mark the end of the world's reliance on oil for transportation. This would be very bad for business for the Koch brothers and their allies. While EVs still make up a small portion of total US and worldwide auto sales, the projections are for rapid growth in the market share, especially once longer range, lower cost EVs hit the market in the coming months and years.

The Kochs' new anti-EV front group will promote petroleum-based transportation fuels and attack government subsidies for EVs, such as consumer rebates. This new advocacy effort, reportedly preparing to launch as soon as this spring or summer, may well spend upwards of \$10 million per year. The Koch brothers' behavior hardly comes as a surprise when we consider their record, as described in this great Rolling Stone article, launching initiatives against wind and solar power, supporting any fossil fuel project they could get their hands on, practically buying the elections of anti-environmental politicians, and funding media efforts to deny the reality of climate disruption.

This planned assault on EVs from the Koch brothers comes after a number of EV victories in recent months. In December 2015, while electric vehicles were up against the lowest gas prices since 2009, U.S. sales set a record-breaking total of 13,650 electric vehicles sold throughout the month, the highest since EVs hit the mass market in 2010, and the fourth quarter of 2015 was the best-selling EV quarter to date in the US. To date, worldwide, more than 1 million EVs have been sold.

Just last month, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, and California were among states to announce important programs to accelerate the use of EVs. Judith Judson, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Commissioner, shared at the New England Auto Show that the 'Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles' (MORE-EV) program would receive \$2 million in new funding, and Rhode Island subsequently became the latest state to add an EV consumer rebate program. In California, the Public Utilities Commission approved the Southern California Edison's "Charge Ready" program, which will open 1,500 new charging stations and educate customers about the benefits of driving an electric vehicle. In New York, Governor Cuomo recently



A sampling of electric vehicles available on the market today. Photo credit: Sierra Club

proposed funding for 900 more public EV charging stations through the Charge NY program.

EVs have a long way to go to reach mass market adoption, but the future of electric vehicles is clearly headed in the right direction. In fact, as Bloomberg's Sooner Than You Think series indicated, EV battery prices came down 35 percent last year and will drop much further to make EVs cheaper to manufacture. In the meantime, we do indeed need government programs to make EVs less expensive and more convenient for the masses.

Many groups are gearing up to face off with Koch-funded front groups. But as the Union of Concerned Scientists recently pointed out, the planned Koch anti-EV campaign may in fact bring more attention toward electric vehicles and their many benefits. Because EVs are cleaner and more fun to drive than gas guzzlers, we'll welcome opportunities to get "butts in seats" so people can check EVs out for themselves.

## TVA may face a third lawsuit over toxic coal ash leaking into Cumberland River

*Conservation groups file a notice of intent to sue TVA for violations at Cumberland Fossil Plant*

By Scott Banbury

On January 14, 2016 the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), on behalf of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, filed a notice of intent to sue Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in federal court over violations of the Clean Water Act at TVA's Cumberland Fossil Plant. TVA's own studies show that over forty years of coal ash waste stored in unlined pits is illegally contaminating groundwater, Wells Creek, and the Cumberland River with harmful pollutants.

TVA is already a defendant in two lawsuits over the contamination of the Cumberland River and Old Hickory Lake with toxic coal ash pollution from the Gallatin power plant upstream of Nashville. Last April, SELC filed suit in federal court against TVA on behalf of Tennessee Clean Water Network and Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association. These environmental groups are also participating in the lawsuit the state of Tennessee filed against TVA in state court in January 2015 for coal ash pollution from the Gallatin power plant in violation of Tennessee laws.

TVA's own reports indicate that it knowingly

stored 40 years of toxic coal ash waste at the Cumberland power plant in bedrock known to be fractured and unpredictable and without any type of protective lining. The utility has years of sampling data that shows that the groundwater beneath the coal ash ponds is polluted with metals in amounts detrimental to living things, and that the contaminated groundwater is connected to Wells Creek and the Cumberland River. TVA documents admit that these violations should have triggered the state environmental agency to initiate corrective measures. However, to date TVA has taken no action to clean up the contaminated groundwater at the Cumberland plant, and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) has not filed any action in court to compel the clean-up.

"We are doubling down to put an end to decades of coal ash pollution in the Cumberland River since state regulators are not acting to protect people or environment of Tennessee," said Beth Alexander,

Senior Attorney at Southern Environmental Law Center. "TVA needs to move all of its coal ash throughout the state to dry, lined storage away from waterways."

"Both TVA and TDEC have known about the problem for years and have failed to act." said Scott Banbury, Conservation Program Coordinator for the Sierra Club's Tennessee Chapter. "The time is now to protect the Cumberland River for all of us who depend on it for drinking water and enjoy it for recreation."

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# EPA Releases List of Communities with Dangerous Air Pollution

By Mary Anne Hitt

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took an important, long overdue step to better protect some of our communities from dangerous levels of sulfur dioxide air pollution, but they've left others still holding their breath.

Sulfur dioxide pollution, which largely comes from coal plants, is a very dangerous threat to the health of our families and communities. It's so much of a danger that even short-term exposure for as little as five minutes is associated with breathing problems like asthma attacks, particularly among vulnerable populations like the elderly and asthmatics. On top of that, the medical community has established connections between chronic exposure and even more serious conditions, such as aggravation of cardiac conditions, hospitalization, and even premature death.

Back in 2010, the EPA issued a new health standard for sulfur dioxide, which set in motion the process to clean up the air in polluted communities. The next step in the process was for the EPA to identify areas not meeting the standard. After a sustained advocacy push by the Sierra Club and our allies, a federal court approved a timeline and framework for the EPA to do a thorough review of all the communities in the country.

On February 17th, the EPA took another big step in that process and identified 12 areas with high levels of sulfur dioxide air pollution. The proposed nonattainment areas are in Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. When finalized, these des-

ignations should ultimately provide long overdue relief for those communities. Once these designations are final, the EPA will need to ensure these states actually take the necessary steps to fix the problem, and hold accountable states that drag their feet, put forward weak plans, or allow polluters to duck their responsibility to clean up this deadly air pollution.

At the same time, however, the EPA has failed to include areas with some of the highest levels of sulfur dioxide pollution in the country, places like Jefferson County, Arkansas, and Gibson County, Indiana.

Right now there are dozens of areas across the country with serious sulfur dioxide pollution problems that expose thousands of families to dirty air. The EPA has the data to identify and crack down on the polluters responsible for creating these conditions, and they need to do just that by designating all areas with high sulfur dioxide pollution levels as being "out of compliance" with clean air standards. Now they have done that for many communities, but not for all the communities suffering daily from this deadly pollution.

Parents shouldn't have to worry about

their kids when they are playing in their backyards or their schoolyards, but in many communities across the U.S., that's frequently the case because of dangerous air pollution coming from nearby coal plants. It's time for that to stop.

Americans look to the EPA to keep every family safe from pollution. We applaud the EPA for taking this step to begin to protect some communities from dangerous sulfur dioxide air pollution and holding polluters accountable to the people they are making sick.

Now we urge the EPA ensure this standard is enforced in these new nonattainment areas, once they are finalized, and also to do the right thing and add additional communities facing dangerous levels of pollution and finalize these designations this year. People's lives are hanging in the balance.



## Tennessee Sierra Club protects endangered species from coal mining pollution

The Sierra Club and allies recently won a settlement with two federal agencies that will commit them to comply with the Endangered Species Act at three Tennessee coal strip mines.

The agreement resolves a first-of-its-kind litigation brought by Sierra Club, Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM), Tennessee Clean Water Network (TCWN), and Defenders of Wildlife against the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The agreement requires OSM and the Service to fully consider the effects of pollution from individual mining operations on the endangered Cumberland Darter and the threatened Blackside Dace. Those two freshwater fish species are found in the areas threatened by mining waste pollution from National Coal's Zeb Mountain Mine, Davis Creek Energy's Mine Area 5, and Middlesboro Mining's Sterling & Strays mine.

"Extinction of endangered species is too high a price to pay for surface mining," said Mary Anne Hitt, Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign. "Although these permits should have never been allowed to go forward in the first place, we're glad that OSM and the Service are finally living up to their responsibilities to ensure endangered and threatened species will be protected from harmful mining pollution."

High levels of water conductivity created by mining pollution put the future of the Blackside Dace and Cumberland Darter at risk. Conductivity is a measure of the

ability of fresh water to carry an electric current. The higher the conductivity level in Appalachian streams, the more pollutants are in the water and the greater the threat to certain species of aquatic life. A safe level of conductivity for the darter and dace is less than 240  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ . Coal strip mining generates conductivity pollution far beyond the level deemed safe for the Blackside Dace and the Cumberland Darter. Tests of the water downstream from the Zeb Mountain strip mine, for example, show conductivity ranging from 538 to 886  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ; far outside safe limits for the fish.

Polluted wastewater from surface coal mining has already caused a significant decrease in the dace and darter populations. Numerous studies have documented a steep decline in Blackside Dace numbers, whose range is limited to portions of east Tennessee and Kentucky where strip mining is common. Locally, Blackside Dace are believed to have been extirpated from Straight Creek, where multiple strip mines have contributed to instream conductivity that often

exceeds 1,000  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ .

Destructive coal strip mining clear-cuts timber and undergrowth, blasts open the earth, and destroys streams. In the process, this devastating practice poisons drinking water, lays waste to wildlife habitat, increases risk of flooding, and wipes out entire communities. Communities near mountaintop removal mines also experience elevated rates of serious health problems such as cancer and birth defects.

"Our mountain waterways and aquatic ecosystems are precious resources that need to be protected for future generation," said Rita Chadwell, Sierra Club member. "They are something for our communities and region to be proud of. I take pride in knowing that Davis Creek which runs in front of my home is special and provides a unique habitat for sensitive and rare species like the Blackside Dace. Davis Creek has suffered enough pollution from mining and should be left alone so the Blackside Dace populate can recover and my community can have a safe body of water for recreation."



Zeb Mountain site in Tennessee. PHOTO: Courtesy of Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment

# Protecting Public Lands on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau

Early this year, the U.S. Office of Surface Mining (OSM) released a draft environmental impact statement analyzing the State of Tennessee's petition to designate ridgeline corridors on land managed for public use on the North Cumberland Plateau unsuitable for surface coal mining. If the state's petition is approved by OSM, at least 67,000 acres in the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area will be protected and preserved for future generations. Protecting the important cultural, recreational and ecological resources in this region has broad, bi-partisan support, including by Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam's administration and U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander. These officials, and thousands of people across our state, recognize that maintaining the integrity of our state parks, wild and scenic rivers, and national recreation areas supports tourism and brings needed jobs and economic opportunity to a transitioning region.

Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau contains most of the old growth forest that exists in the area as well as a diverse array of habitats and wildlife. The rivers and streams of the area contain one of the highest concentrations of endangered species in North America and the area provides vital breeding habitat for almost a third of all surviving Cerulean warblers. The area is also popular for hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor recreational activities. The Tennessee Chapter of Sierra Club has been working for over a decade to protect the Cumberland Plateau

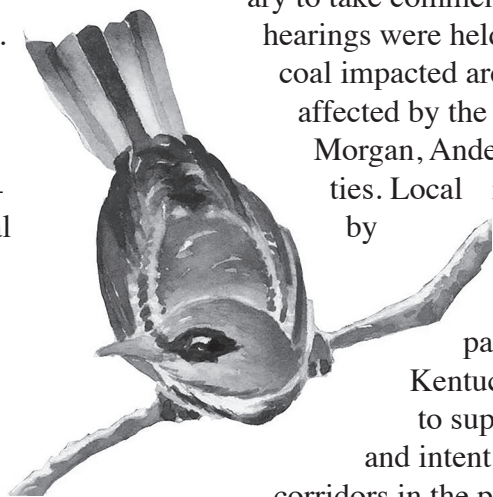
from destructive coal mining and we fully support the state's petition that would protect public lands in the Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area, Sundquist Wildlife Management Area and New River units within the North Cumberland Wildlife Management area. The petition area also includes the Emory River Tract Conservation Easement, which is managed by Frozen Head State Park for public use, and a portion of the Cumberland Trail also traverses the area.

OSM held a series of hearings in January to take comments on the proposal. The hearings were held in the heart of our state's coal impacted areas in the four counties affected by the petition, including Scott, Morgan, Anderson and Campbell counties. Local residents were joined by supporters throughout East Tennessee and allies from coal impacted areas of Virginia and Kentucky to encourage OSM to support the state's request and intent to designate all ridgeline corridors in the petition area as unsuitable for surface coal mining. More than 200 people attended the hearings and nearly 100



people gave powerful personal testimonies in support of the petition. The TN Chapter and the local Harvey Broome group members did a wonderful job of talking about Sierra Club outings in the area and the need for a fragile lands designation to protect special-status species and vital headwaters. During the hearings people also spoke of the economic benefit of the petition in protecting our ridgelines for tourism and recreation, which will support much needed economic diversification in the area. People also pushed for OSM to include very strict limits on any re-mining activities in an area that is otherwise unsuitable for coal mining.

Approval of this forward-thinking petition provides a unique opportunity to safeguard the Cumberland Mountains, a special part of our nation's natural heritage. We urge the Office of Surface Mining to grant the state's request and protect the entirety of this important area for future generations.



## NEEDED: Communications Assistants

A lot goes into keeping the TN Chapter humming and responding to all the demands of our conservation priorities statewide, and across our Groups.

There's work dealing with our printers, acting as liaison with the Post Office (mailing permits, etc.), producing the mailing list

for each newsletter issue, maintaining our list-serves, website, and social media outreach.

With some training, could you see yourself helping in one of these areas? If so, please contact me! Barbara Kelly, [bk1rivers@gmail.com](mailto:bk1rivers@gmail.com)



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## Stream Restoration Site Survey

TDEC has put online a tool to directly participate in improving water quality. From the link: <http://tdec.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=b6f46c9317e54962aa20a7dafee3cc74>

### Do you know of streams that are in need of help and assistance?

Streams where banks are eroding, they have been channelized, or all the trees have been removed? This is your chance to help!

"TDEC wants to hear about those locations. We are seeking to partner with you to identify potential stream restoration projects. We would like for you to share your knowledge of streams in Tennessee by answering a few questions below to let us know where there are streams in need of restoration and also where there are ongoing restoration projects. With your help we will be able to track restoration projects across Tennessee. We will be able to see where we have made improvements and where we need to do more work.

**"This survey should take less than five minutes to complete and includes an interactive map that will help show us the location."**

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