

Tennessee Sierran

SIERRA CLUB
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

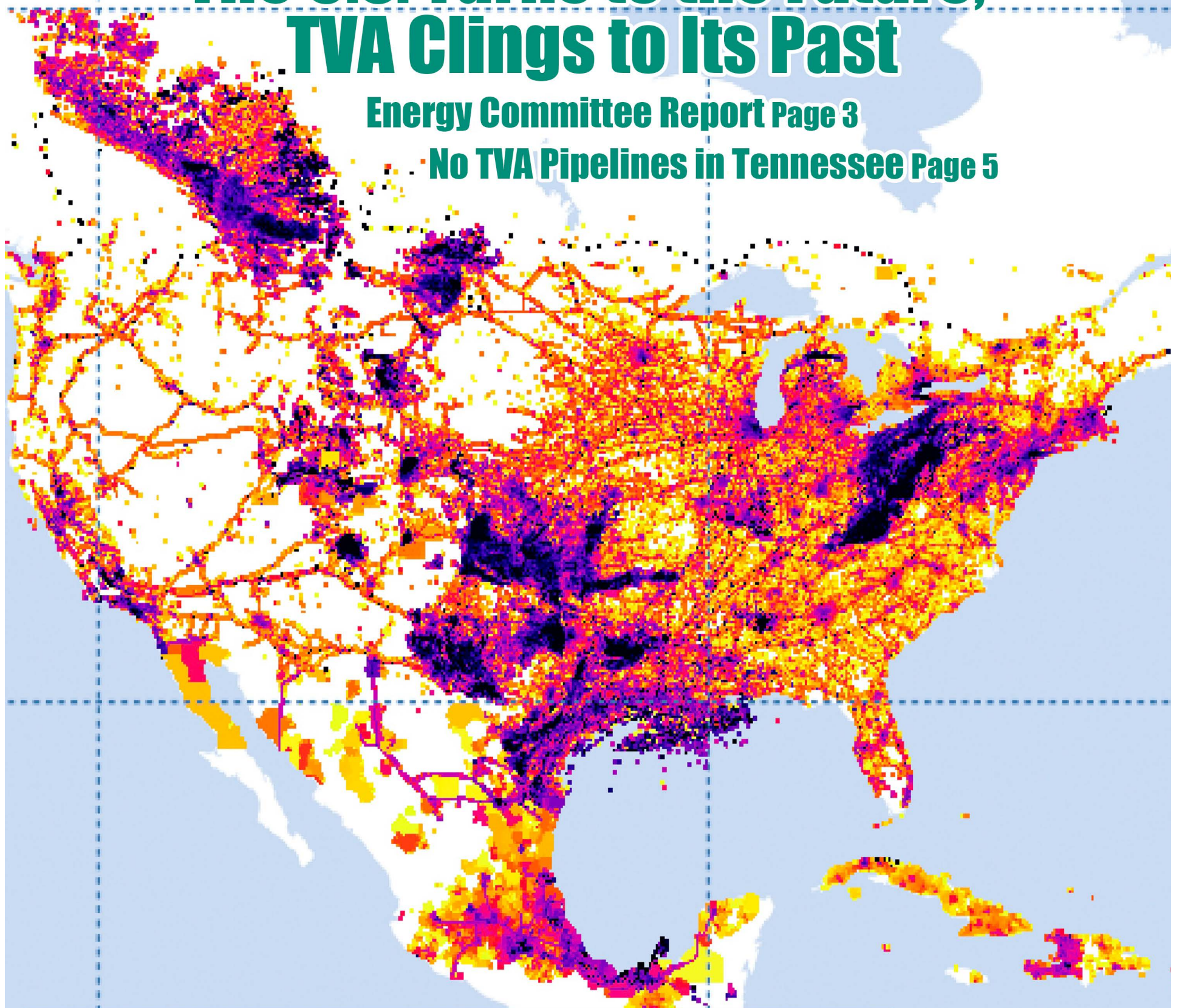
Bi-monthly newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

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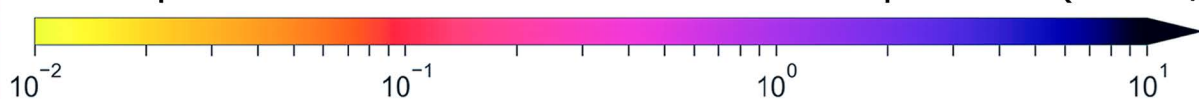
The U.S. Turns to the Future, TVA Clings to Its Past

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2016 Upstream Methane Emissions from Fuel Exploitation (tonnes/year/km²)



TVA's Draft Environmental Impact Statements for two planned new gas pipelines ignore upstream methane leakage, though methane has a warming impact 80 times that of CO₂ over 20 years and has caused about 1/3 of global warming. The U.S. is the worst emitter.

Masthead Photo: Brushy Mountain Trail, Great Smoky Mountains, © Ron Shrieves

MAP (adapted): NASA Goddard Earth Sciences Data and Information Services Center (GES DISC)

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect

From Tennessee Chair Dr. Cris Corley

Lobbyist Scott Banbury Represents You



Scott Banbury is a self proclaimed “woodcutter and rabble rouser.” A lifelong environmentalist/conservationist, he helped form and grow organizations including the Tennessee Clean Water Network, Tennessee Forest Council, Frack-Free Tennessee and the Dogwood Alliance. As the Chapter’s only employee, we are fortunate to have him as our Conservation Program Coordinator and a registered lobbyist.

Scott is one of only two lobbyists at the state legislature who fight for the environment of Tennessee. Our lobbyist allows us to work more effectively towards passage of bills that protect our air, water, land and wildlife, as well as the people of Tennessee, and defeat bills that are damaging.

You can support Scott’s critical work in 2 ways: 1) Contribute to the Defenders Fund of the Tennessee Chapter. 100% of contributions go to support Scott’s lobbying activities. For those of

you who are already Defenders Fund contributors, your personal donation request letter will be mailed to you in September.

For those that have yet to contribute, this is your invitation to join this important group of donors. You can fill out the form found on page seven of this issue of the *Tennes-Sierran* and mail it in with your check or credit card information. Or you can visit our secure donation webpage especially for the Defenders Fund found at:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/give#defenders>

2) Let your legislators know you care! Sign up for Scott’s Action Alerts. These Action Alerts give us timely notice when bills that impact the environment will be brought up in committee. They provide pertinent information about the bills, including the rationale for our stance, who to contact – either by phone or email – and suggestions about what to say. Contact your legislators, they always need to know where you stand on environmental issues. You can also get Sierra Club’s Tennessee Legislative Updates that Scott sends out weekly.

Please consider giving to the Defenders of Tennessee. Be sure to sign up for Scott’s Action Alerts and Legislative Updates emails on the Defenders Fund form, also on the Defenders Fund donation webpage, or by emailing Scott directly at scott.banbury@sierraclub.org.

Contact Cris at chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org

Good News in Chattanooga

There are exciting new developments in Chattanooga regarding public policy on Climate Change. The Cherokee Group is positioned right in the middle to help influence them to go in the right direction. Meetings with city officials have begun, initiated by our friends at Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light (TIPL). Representatives from TIPL and other area organizations, including Sierra Club Cherokee Group, Chattanooga-based green|spaces, the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy and others, met with Chattanooga city officials on June 30th. A second meeting is scheduled for September 8th.

The climate advocacy group is operating under the banner of Climate Chattanooga, a pre-existing loose affiliation of organizations and people that has been meeting for a number of years. The new group is taking up the name at the suggestion of Dan Joranko, who originally organized Climate Chattanooga.

The purpose of the meetings is to cement Mayor Tim Kelly’s promising climate pledges, made during his campaign, into official policy. Chattanooga lags behind peer cities in the Southeast regarding substantive climate action. One driver of the effort’s push is to have the city adopt the Integrative Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) and Regional Resiliency Plan (RRP) to shape how Chattanooga operates going forward. Those documents can be accessed at www.greenspaceschattanooga.org. Hopefully, this will be accomplished by a Resolution to City Council and integration into Mayor Kelly’s One Chattanooga plan.

Another Climate Chattanooga ask is to have a “Sustainability Council” established from groups outside of the city government. This council would operate to express the climate and environmental justice concerns of Chattanooga’s public to city officials. And it would be a resource and watchdog to ensure government action lines up with these concerns and goals in a timely, effective manner.

Please feel free to direct questions or comments regarding this effort to me anytime.

Dave Hoot, Chair, Cherokee Group
hoot.david@gmail.com 423-503-9482

Tennes-Sierran

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Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club
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Submissions

October Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by September 23

November Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by October 21

November/ December Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by October 31

Chapter News Team

Communications Coordinator: Gary Bowers sierra@totheforest.net

Tennes-Sierran Editor: Emily Ellis tsierran.editor@gmail.com

E-Newsletter Editor: Allie Stafford enews.sierratn@gmail.com

Assistant Editor: Todd Waterman jtoddw@gmail.com

Poetry Editor: Alan May <https://alan-may.com/>

TENNESSEE CHAPTER

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee>

Officers

Chair: Cris Corley 615-477-9090
chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org

Vice Chair: Nancy Bell 423-272-6342
nancywithbell@gmail.com

Secretary: open

Treasurer: Craig Brandt 865-924-0597
brandtcctn@gmail.com

Conservation Chair: Bill Moll 404-401-7899
whmoll@aol.com

Outings Chair: Ron Shrieves 865-924-8973?
ronshrieves@gmail.com

Political Co-Chairs: Rick Herron 731-819-6955
rick.m.herron@gmail.com
Bill Moll 404-401-7899
whmoll@aol.com

Conservation Program Coordinator

Scott Banbury 901-619-8567 scott.banbury@sierraclub.org

Beyond Coal Campaign Staff

Bonnie Swinford, Senior Organizing Representative

bonnie.swinford@sierraclub.org

Amy Kelly, Campaign Representative

amy.kelly@sierraclub.org

GROUPS

Cherokee Group—Chattanooga

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/cherokee>

Chair: David Hoot 423-503-9482

hoot.david@gmail.com

Harvey Broome Group—Knoxville

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/harvey-broome>

Chair: Jerry Thornton 865-719-9742

gatwildcat@aol.com

Chickasaw Group—Memphis

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/chickasaw>

Chair: Carl Richards 218-409-5150

crich555@gmail.com

Middle Tennessee Group—Nashville

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/middle-tennessee>

Chair: Antoinette Olesen 615-498-2778

middle.tn.group.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org

REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

Clarksville-Montgomery County Regional Conservation Committee

Chair: JoAnn McIntosh 931-338-2530 mcijoann@gmail.com

Care NET Regional Conservation Committee (Claiborne, Grainger, Hancock, and Hawkins Counties)

Chair: Bill Kornrich 423-300-8764 bkornrich@gmail.com

Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee

Chair: Dan Firth 423-390-0882 dan.firth.sierraclub@gmail.com

Watauga Regional Conservation Committee (Johnson and Carter Counties)

Chair: Gloria Griffith 423-727-4798 gla4797@embarqmail.com

Energy Committee Report

by JoAnn McIntosh, Chair, Tennessee Chapter Energy Committee



As I write this article in late July, I'm hoping that by the time you read this, the dog days of summer and some of its challenges will be behind us. It has never been more apparent that climate change is affecting us here and now — even electric utility board members have commented that “extreme weather events are no longer anomalies.” Record heat waves, wildfires, and floods in 2022 will likely surpass the environmental and economic costs of previous record-breaking years: 20 or more separate \$1 billion events in both 2020 and 2021 in the United States. The upside is that more Americans are recognizing the need for immediate action; media coverage of events and mitigation measures has increased; pressure has been put on President Biden to declare a national climate emergency; businesses and communities are initiating sustainability and resilience policies. As Senator Everett Dirksen once said, “When I feel the heat, I see the light.”

Our Chapter Energy Committee is working with Sierra Club National and other allies to shed more light on the responsibility that utilities must take in addressing the climate crisis. Energy and transportation are the two major sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the U.S., and as we move forward with replacing fossil fuels with electrification — in particular, the upsurge in electric vehicles — a revamping of the power sector is clearly necessary and long overdue. Since the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provides over 90% of the electricity in Tennessee, and sells it to your local power company (LPC), our committee has focused on outreach and actions relating to TVA and to LPCs and their customers.

Last December, Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign (BCC) announced the scheduled retirement of 350 coal plants since the BCC's launch in 2010 — over 66% of the nation's 530 coal plants. In Tennessee, TVA announced the scheduled retirement of its remaining coal plants by 2035, the next two in line being the Cumberland and Kingston plants. TVA entered a long process to determine what non-coal sources will replace these plants, including consideration of both gas and renewables. In April, TVA's draft recommendation for Cumberland was gas; in news today, Kinder Morgan applied for permits to begin construction of a 32-mile gas pipeline to the Cumberland site in 2024. Similar plans are expected to be announced for Kingston this fall, with 100+ miles of pipeline; but TVA states that final decisions have not yet been made to replace coal with gas at either plant.

Replacing coal with gas is simply not acceptable. Yes, TVA would be reducing operational GHG emissions by 50% (mostly CO₂), but would be introducing upstream methane emissions potentially 80 times more powerful than CO₂. And as we have seen from global events this past spring, fossil fuel dependence creates economic and political dangers that impact us all.

So why TVA's continued insistence that gas is a “bridge fuel” to the renewables transition? (Perhaps the bridge is to nuclear rather than renewables? That's another article.) The old arguments that the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow have been countered to a great extent with advancements in longer-duration storage technology. There are businesses, communities, and utilities across the country with renewable energy success stories: Iowa produced almost 58% of their electricity last year from renewables, primarily wind; northern Indiana's wind farms have paid over \$50 million to farmers leasing out their land; California has over 35 gigawatts (GW) of solar and Texas has 13 GW — TVA has 2.5 GW. And no, Tennessee can't match these states in having the natural conditions so conducive to such wind and solar production. But our neighbors in North Carolina and Georgia have eight GW and four GW of solar respectively.

TVA continues to lag in its renewables commitment, and instead wants to commit to another 20-30 years of fossil fuel dependence with a potential gas buildout of almost five GW. Their study of the Cumberland replacement reached very different conclusions from the recent Synapse study commissioned by Sierra Club, as might be expected. Synapse modeling results show that “TVA can pursue a portfolio of clean energy resources that maintains reliability, reduces costs, benefits the environment, and supports job creation and new investment.”

TVA is the sixth largest power supplier and the largest public utility in the country; it is largely self-regulated, not answerable to the Tennessee Public Utility Commission or to shareholders, and really not answerable to us as “ratepayers” — TVA's primary customers (90%) are 153 LPCs, 82 of which are in Tennessee.

We need to convince TVA and our LPCs that rapidly deploying renewables is not only the right thing to do, it is the best thing to do. Sierra Club has had some success getting TVA's ear through public comment, working with allied organizations to form the Clean Up TVA Coalition, and initiating meetings with TVA staff as well as with congressional committees and representatives. Our Tennessee Chapter greatly benefits from dedicated national and state staff who have tirelessly monitored and shared breaking news and assisted our grass roots actions. Our volunteers have made great headway building relationships with their LPCs and influencing local energy decisions across the state. We are making a noise, and we are being heard. But we can do more, and the time is right: in July, TVA issued a request for proposals for up to 5 GW of carbon-free energy to be operational by 2029. This does not exclude nuclear, but it does open a door for arguments

Climate Justice Organization and Labor Partner To Organize Community Meetings In West TN

by Marquita Bradshaw, Environmental Justice Chair, Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, and Vonda McDaniel, President, Central Labor Council of Nashville/Middle TN, AFL-CIO



Marquita Bradshaw

All eyes are on Tennessee as the issues of climate, racial justice, and economic opportunity intersect in our state.

Our communities have long suffered from attacks on our well-being that damper our ability to thrive — dangerous jobs that don't offer a living wage, the toxic and long-lasting health impacts of fossil fuel pollution, and a state government that is hostile to unionization, as most Southern states are.

Now, Tennessee has an opportunity to do things right, or risk repeating the mistakes of the past. The electric vehicle industry is taking off nationwide, and Tennessee is gearing up to be a hub for the manufacturing of these vehicles. Ford has announced that Tritium, an Australia-based electric vehicle charger manufacturer, will open its first U.S. facility in Lebanon, a majority Black town, will be at the edge of the 4100-acre megasite of Ford's Blue Oval City, an electric truck and battery plant where construction is expected to start at the end of the year and manufacturing will begin by 2025. These investments mark Tennessee's growth in this arena, helping to reduce pollution and improve public health for communities across the state and country.



Vonda McDaniel

Electric vehicles produce no tailpipe pollution. In fact, they have no tailpipes at all! These vehicles are key to making our

transportation systems less polluting. In combination with reliable public transit and safe streets for walking and biking, expanding access to them will help us tackle the climate crisis and improve air quality.

As our state makes this overdue and important transition, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the fossil fuel industry, which has long prioritized profits over people at the expense of our health and our planet. The most impacted communities must be at the forefront of the change, a principle that those of us in the environmental and labor movements call a “Just Transition.” As we shift from fossil fuels to clean renewable energy, it is necessary to ensure we create a circular economy that centers on public health and sustainable communities that economically thrive with great-paying union jobs — where occupational health and our planet's ecology prevail for future generations.

The influx of electric vehicle manufacturing has the potential to secure high-quality, family-sustaining jobs in the automotive industry. It's essential we do this in a way that dismantles the barriers to economic prosperity and social justice experienced by so many underserved populations and communities of color in our region experience.

Our collective liberation depends on a livable planet and strong workers' rights. We must put people first as we move forward with climate solutions. This relationship-building is already underway. Local environmentalists, labor leaders, and community members in Mason are organizing town halls this summer to discuss what's at stake and what we have to gain from this transition that must be community-led. Organizers need a vision commensurate with today's opportunities. That is what these community meetings are designed to do. Be on the lookout for the next meeting scheduled near you.

Contact Marquita at envirodivamarquita@gmail.com

Contact Vonda at president@nashvilleclc.org

showing that renewables ought to be preferable. We need to make more noise. A recent Yale study showed that while 72% of Americans believe global warming is happening and 56% believe it is mostly human-caused, 67% rarely or never talk about it. It's time to talk, and to do so both positively and realistically — nothing destroys our credibility faster than presenting only selective data. But nothing destroys our own momentum more completely than succumbing to helplessness and hopelessness. We have work to do, and Sierra Club can help with fact sheets, talking points, and contacts, as well as with communication to help connect us with each other, with our local media and representatives, and with our LPCs and, of course, TVA.

For more info, contact JoAnn at joann.mcintosh@tennessee.sierraclub.org

Death of Mia Madison is Huge Loss to Memphis

by Charles Belenky, Chickasaw Group

Before Covid, the last Chapter retreat was in the Fall of 2019. Many of us had the opportunity to meet Mia Madison, the Chickasaw Group's Outings Chair. Through her nonprofit organization, Memphis Tilth, Chickasaw sourced much of the food for that weekend.

On a Sunday evening in July, Mia was killed in a one-car accident in Memphis. Mia was so full of life and gave of herself to so many organizations that it is hard to describe the full impact of her loss to the Memphis community. She loved the outdoors and could often be found hiking and kayaking with friends and family; her passion, however, was service.

"Mia was a true friend and ally to many in the Memphis sustainability and environmental arena. Her leadership will be truly missed," said Rita Harris, a Director on the Sierra Club National Board and member of the Chickasaw Group.

Madison was a native Memphian and served in local government, philanthropy and agriculture. She was also an activist and community organizer. She held a master's degree in anthropology and a bachelor's degree in geography, both from the University of Memphis, with concentrations in applied participatory action research of urban environmental affairs and city and regional planning. She was also a Memphis Area Master Gardener and Master Farm Manager through the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture Extension.

Before leading Memphis Tilth, Madison worked as a geographer for the U.S. Census Bureau, as director of community information for the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis and as a geospatial planning analyst for the City of Memphis.

"Mia contributed to Memphis in so many ways — to the community and to the people," said Dennis Lynch, member of the Chickasaw group. "Any listing could hardly reveal the breadth of her involvement and her efforts."

The day before the accident, Mia and I attended a meeting of Food Not Bombs. Although she had not met any of the group before, she was able to recognize that the group had several needs. Without hesitation, she generously offered Tilth's support. Mia offered up viable solutions to every single major hurdle the chapter faced.

Core to her work was reconnecting people to the soil — moving people along the path from homegrown tomatoes to connecting with neighbors, to creating community gardens, to becoming small-scale farmers producing for Farmer's Market and CSAs (community-supported agriculture — a system that closely connects producers and consumers within the food system by allowing the consumer to subscribe to the harvest of a certain farm or group of farms). Upon becoming the director of Memphis Tilth, she took the reins and advanced a very successful soil and education agenda. Mia had an analytical bent and was quick to identify the practicalities and challenges of any proposal under discussion.

As busy as she was with Tilth and her family, she was never too busy to take a meeting or discuss a proposal and was widely respected for her work with philanthropic and community development interests. She was a friend to us all and we will miss her.



Mia Madison, Director of Tilth in Memphis and a member of the Sierra Club's Chickasaw Group, was killed in a car accident, Sunday, July 10, 2022. Photo by Scott Banbury

Through her activism, advocacy, and commitment to being a steward of the land and to her community, Mia Madison reminds us all that having your basic needs met is environmental justice.

"I first met Mia when she attended Chickasaw Group program meetings—always asking important questions about how people would be affected by the current topic," Lynch said. "She was elected to the Chickasaw Group's ExCom, but was pulled away before long when she took a job with the Census Bureau in Washington. She commuted back and forth for a while, but ultimately her focus returned to life and community in Memphis. I will miss Mia and her openness to connecting with people and making Memphis a better place."

Contact Charles at cbelenky@gmail.com

Celebration: The Defeat of a Pipeline



Left to right: Some who attended the Byhalia Pipeline defeat anniversary celebration were Amanda Garcia from the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC); Clyde Robinson, a longtime resident and landowner in Boxtown who refused to sell his land in the face of eminent domain from the pipeline company; Justin Pearson of Memphis Community Against Pollution (MCAP) who organized strong local community opposition to the pipeline in Southwestern Memphis; and George Nolan, also from the SELC. Both Garcia and Nolan helped develop strategic approaches to stopping the pipeline. Photo courtesy of Protect Our Aquifer.

by Charles Belenky, Chair, Chickasaw Group

This July, those involved in the defeat of the Byhalia pipeline came together to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the announcement that Plains All American Pipeline, L.P., had abandoned plans to build in Memphis. The proposed pipeline would have connected another one that crosses the Mississippi to the Capstone (a large north-south facility), bypassing wealthier communities in hopes of avoiding opposition. Fortunately, what Plains All American dubbed the path of least resistance had plenty. The targeted community, Boxtown, came together with national environmental organizations and some homegrown activists to resist. The celebratory event, organized by Memphis Community Against Pollution (MCAP), took place on July 2 at the Withers Collection Museum & Gallery on Beale St. Upwards of a hundred people in attendance enjoyed a buffet dinner and a presentation emceed by one of MCAP's founders, Justin J. Pearson.

In attendance were representatives of the Sierra Club, Protect Our Aquifer, the Climate Reality Project, Memphis Tilth, the Southern Environmental Law Center, the local law firm of Burch Porter & Johnson, and many others. Recollections were shared by Boxtown residents and others who rallied week after week in last year's summer heat to hear local leaders, Vice-President Al Gore, and the Reverend William Barber II. For this attendee, the most heartwarming aspect was that Mr. Pearson had prepared certificates of appreciation, not just for the leaders, but for almost everyone who had a role in the campaign.

Contact Charles at cbelenky@gmail.com

No TVA Pipelines in Tennessee

by Amy Kelly, Tennessee Beyond Coal Campaign Representative

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)'s proposal for enormous gas plants (totalling some 3,000 megawatts (MW)) to replace its retiring Cumberland and Kingston coal plants would bring over 150 miles of huge methane gas pipelines ripping across Tennessee century farms and fragile streams. These aren't your small residential pipelines. These are 30 inches in diameter, requiring blasting and stream alterations with permanent easements carrying a highly flammable fracked gas – and with it the dangers of ruptures and explosions.

Tennesseans unfortunately have already recently experienced failing pipelines. In June, Chester County saw over 200,000 gallons of oil spill from the ruptured Energy Transfer Partner's Mid Valley Pipeline – caused by a mower. Equally as frightening is that the very companies who would run pipelines to TVA's plants have had horrendous failures. In 2018, Enbridge had a rupture in Smith County resulting in an explosion; thankfully no one was hurt. In 1992, recently enough so that everyone in the community remembers it, Tennessee Gas Pipeline had an explosion resulting in permanent injuries and several houses lost. This is the very same pipeline they want to extend to feed TVA's proposed gas plant in Cumberland City.

The resistance to these pipelines is building and Sierra Club is helping lead the way. Nashville passed a unanimous resolution against the gas plants and pipelines in favor of renewable energy. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) just commented in TVA's federally required National Environmental

Tennessee Gas Pipeline, a subsidiary of Kinder Morgan, based in Texas, is planning a 30" diameter pipeline to extend to TVA's proposed Cumberland gas plant. The pipeline would plow through 30 miles across Stewart, Houston, and Dickson Counties in Middle Tennessee.

Policy Act (NEPA) process, asking TVA to do further analysis, release its data, and strongly consider replacing the coal plant with renewable energy. Meanwhile thousands of comments from Sierra Club members in the TVA service area have been submitted against the gas plans and pipelines. While we await the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Cumberland plant and a Draft EIS for Kingston, a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) process is underway for both pipelines as well. They must get approval to move forward.

EPA also commented in the initial review called scoping for FERC's pipeline process saying, "this project has the potential to significantly affect the quality of human environment"; and that FERC delay the pipeline approval because it is dependent on TVA's decision to replace the Cumberland coal plant with a combined cycle gas plant and this is still in review – or seemingly so. Depending on the intended meeting, TVA has as shipper already entered precedent agreements with both pipeline companies for the gas. prior to any public comment period, and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) had to sue to get full access to those agreements. You have until 5:00pm Eastern Time on October 20, 2022, to submit comments to FERC opposing the Kingston pipeline. Go here to write your comment, and we will submit it: sc.org/noTVApipelines

Sierra Club fully supports the swift retirement of dirty coal plants and their replacement with clean, renewable energy. TVA's move to replace coal

East TN Gas Pipeline, a subsidiary of Enbridge, based in Canada, is planning over 120 miles of pipeline, permanently disturbing over 800 acres across eight Middle and East Tennessee Counties, from Trousdale to Roane. This "Ridgeline Expansion Project," as the company calls it, was flagged as one of six key US pipeline projects by a national publication.

plants with gas plants now will either lock us into decades of fossil fuel use or abandoned plants, weighing us down in debt called "stranded assets". The latter would leave residents footing the bill for a poor decision, making us solely reliant on short-term thinking and a calculus that ignores climate change and the forward-thinking policies trying to address it nationally and around the world. Sierra Club's commissioned report by the renowned Synapse Energy firm analyzes just this and finds that TVA would save \$9 billion for ratepayers with a clean energy portfolio by 2042. See more here: <https://bit.ly/TVA-clean-energy>. These pipeline projects harm our rural communities and natural resources. The construction of added pipeline miles threatens beloved natural destinations, like the Harpeth River and its tributaries, which are extremely popular and a staple of Middle Tennessee's outdoor recreation industry. Also in danger are the Obed Scenic River, Emory River, and many other treasured waterways. The pipeline will have a substantial impact on communities along its route, many of which are low-wealth. Rural residents will have land taken from them by the pipeline company through eminent domain. A recent study found a strong correlation between existing



The existing Tennessee gas pipeline runs just a few hundred feet from Flynn Impact Crater. It is critical that larger, more impactful pipelines are not approved in this unique terrain, or elsewhere in Tennessee.

methane gas pipeline infrastructure and social vulnerability. Communities burdened by new methane gas pipeline infrastructure will suffer both air and water pollution, and public health and safety concerns, among other burdens.

One lesser-known phenomenon along the route is the Flynn Impact Crater, an approximately two-mile wide crater formed by a meteor impact some 360 million years ago, and the Hawkins Impact Cave (HIC), one of the few caves in the world developed in a central uplift of such a crater. The existing pipeline route runs just a few hundred feet from the cave and within the crater. Since the current, smaller pipeline existed before EPA and many other groups like ours scored environmental victories, we need to ensure that additional, larger, and more impactful pipelines are not approved in this unique terrain – or anywhere in our state.

For more pipeline reading recommended by Amy, follow this link: <https://bit.ly/PipelineReading>

Editor's Update: After decades of congressional climate failures, and amid escalating floods, drought, heatwaves, and wildfires, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) appears poised to transform U.S. energy policy. Analysts agree the compromise bill's popular, fully-funded clean energy tax credits, consumer rebates, loans, and investments should reduce U.S. carbon emissions by forty percent within just seven and a half years. Though more is urgently needed, Sierra Club stated, "We're urging Congress to pass this bill, despite its shortcomings, because it may represent our last opportunity to pass transformative climate legislation within this decade. We cannot wait any longer for climate action." And though TVA denies it will change course, the IRA's billions in clean-energy tax credits offered to utilities specifically including TVA, will make TVA's planned new gas plants even worse investments.

Sierra Club IRA analysis: <https://bit.ly/SC-IRA>
Contact Amy at amy.kelly@sierraclub.org

State Chapter Works for “Extended Producer Responsibility”

by Lisa Luck, Volunteer Writer

“A tsunami of packaging is filling Tennessee landfills with valuable resources,” said Dan Firth, Chair of the Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee. “Consumers have little-to-no leverage on packaging choices, but companies do.” It is time for waste producers to step up to their responsibilities for their part in this environmental problem. Many other states are doing much more than Tennessee by developing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Laws for packaging and plastics. The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club is working to introduce an EPR bill to the Tennessee State Legislature in 2023 to address the problem of too much garbage. “Extended Producer Responsibility” incentivizes companies to reduce or reuse packaging; or to pay for the recycling and disposal of their packaging.

EPR shifts responsibility for the disposal of packaging to the companies producing the packaging. Encyclopedia Britannica defines EPR as “a practice and a policy approach in which producers take responsibility for management of the disposal of products they produce once those products are designated as no longer useful by consumers. Responsibility for disposal may be fiscal, physical, or a combination of the two.” EPR provides incentives to use less packaging, safer and less toxic packaging, and packaging that is readily recyclable or compostable. After all, we as consumers do not have the leverage to make these packaging decisions.

Currently, Tennessee state law requires that all counties manage solid waste, aka garbage, generated by residents. We all participate in the collection of garbage curbside by our municipalities or through a provision of convenience centers, and the garbage finally lands in the landfill. Recycling, of course, is encouraged. Garbage is expensive to collect and transport, and tipping fees (paid by anyone dumping garbage in a landfill) increase regularly. Recycling can create a revenue stream for the county or municipality and keeps raw materials in the economy instead of discarding them. Producing new materials takes energy and clean water, and uses the earth’s resources.

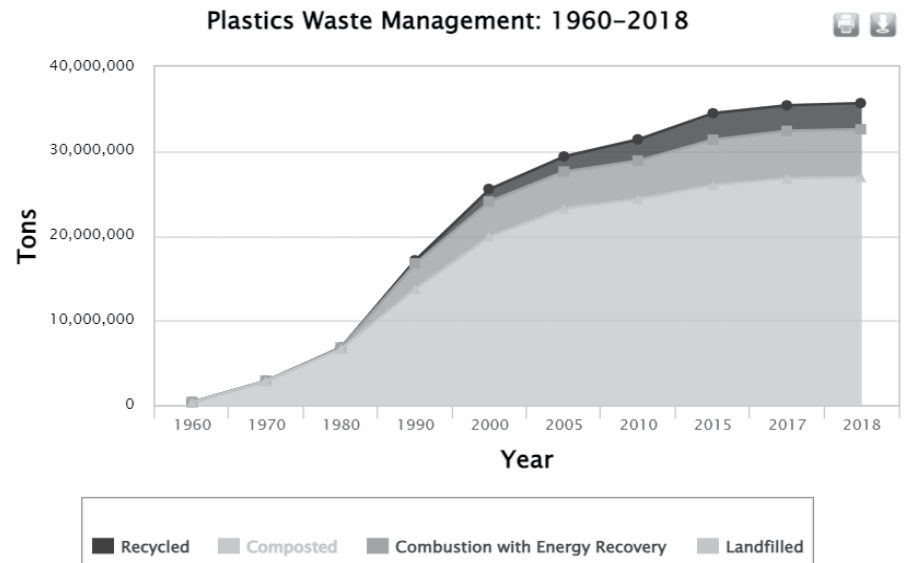
But just how effective is recycling? Mac Post, former Sierra Club State Chair, talked about the problems with recycling in his column in a past issue of this paper. He said, “To date, litter clean-up programs and recycling have largely been marketing methods to pass responsibility [for waste disposal] to consumers and the public.” Consumers experience confusion about what can be recycled because every county or municipality recycles differently and collects different materials. There is little to no continuity across county lines. Adding to the confusion is the packaging that companies use to market their products. Some is recyclable, some is not, depending on where one lives. Contamination is also a problem when materials that cannot be recycled are mixed in with materials that can.

Also problematic is that markets that purchase recyclables are not reliable. Counties sometimes must pay to get rid of collected recyclables. Even if they can find a buyer, less revenue results from the sale of recyclables than in past years. It is frequently cheaper to take materials to a landfill than to recycle them. For decades, tax dollars have managed the waste created by packaging companies. Currently, companies are not legally required to continue to market products in packaging that is not recyclable or is difficult to recycle, and consumers absorb the costs of disposal. Legally, companies are not required to provide packaging that decomposes, is non-toxic, or can be recycled.

Further, companies have no incentive to reduce the amount of packaging. They prefer packaging which is inexpensive, which often includes plastic. Only nine percent of all plastic has been recycled and most of the rest is now in a landfill or in the ocean. The State of Tennessee spends \$19+ million annually to address the inevitable litter problems. Our current system for recycling is broken and must be fixed.

Several states, including California, Colorado, Maine and Oregon, have already passed EPR legislation to manage waste created by packaging. Requirements provide incentives for companies to reduce and simplify packaging to make it easier to recycle correctly. The proposed Tennessee legislation would result in a ban on toxic substances and standardization of packaging. In addition, the bill would shift the responsibility for funding from counties, municipalities and, ultimately, taxpayers, to the companies who are currently using packaging that cannot be recycled, doesn’t decompose and persists indefinitely in the environment. Development of new markets for recycled material would be incentivized. The new system would be funded through the companies with control over the packaging, enabling consumers to recycle more and recycle correctly.

There are many benefits to adopting EPR. It would reduce toxins that are cur-



Graph representing plastics waste management, 1960-2018. Image compliments of epa.gov

rently found in packaging. This would improve the health of the consumer and decrease the amount of toxins in the environment. EPR would help reduce the number of plastics that continue to enter the waste stream by providing incentives for manufacturers to choose more environmentally friendly products. Keeping packaging out of waterways will improve the health of marine animals. Nobody is currently responsible for cleaning plastic out of the ocean. This bill would be the first step in establishing accountability and assuring that less plastic is discarded in a landfill or as litter. Packaging will truly be recyclable and extend the life of the landfills we have now.

“For years now, industry has been unwilling to do its part designing recyclability into packaging,” said Martin Kohl, a retired geologist and member of the Solid Waste Committee. “EPR is a step in changing this situation, making good on dishonest claims about the recyclability of plastics, and making dreams of ‘wish-cycling’ come true.”

Watch for more information about this important legislation and actions you can take to help improve recycling in Tennessee.

Contact Lisa at lisaluck.work@gmail.com

Wilderness Act’s 60th Anniversary

by Vicky Hoover, Sierra Club Conservation Editor

The 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act that established America’s National Wilderness Preservation System is just around the corner!

Wait a minute: didn’t we just celebrate the fiftieth?

Our gala events in 2014 may seem like “just” passed, but it’s eight years later; and on September 3, 2022, we hail the 58th anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson’s signing of the Wilderness Act of 1964. That gives us about two years to prepare for the big six-oh. How will we take advantage of public attention to a big round number anniversary to get the word out broadly on how vital wilderness protection for wild nature is?

During 2014, for the 50th, many Chapters conducted outings in honor of wilderness, held joint events with one or more federal wilderness-managing agencies, or with in-state wilderness organizations, and wrote up descriptions of trips to wilderness areas in their state. They got speakers to talk about the history of wilderness.

The six states that have no federal wilderness can promote their wild natural places — in many

cases state lands. States without federal wilderness can also schedule hikes into neighboring states with wilderness.

Now we have 10 more years to reflect how far we have come since 1964 — the original act brought into being 54 wilderness areas in 13 states — places that had already been administratively protected by the Forest Service.

But administrative protection was temporary and haphazard, and defenders of wildlands saw that a strong national law was needed to protect wild, natural land from development — by law.

New awareness that preserving nature can combat the climate crisis and fight the world’s species extinction crisis gives us even more reason to fight to protect nature — in our national 30-by-30 campaign. Let’s start by celebrating what we have achieved! Today, our country has 803 wilderness areas in 44 states plus Puerto Rico — with stewardship by all four federal land agencies. Plenty of reason to celebrate — and to work for even more. To join the Sierra Club’s nationwide effort in YOUR chapter, contact me, Vicky Hoover, Wildlands Team Sixtieth Co-Coordinator:

vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.



President Lyndon Johnson signing the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Dear Eartha: Advice from An Eco-Guru

Good afternoon, Eartha,

This year my neighbors behind and across the street from me started growing dead evergreen lawns. At the beginning of spring this year, I noticed that lawn company truck tankers were dousing my neighbors' lawns with what I think were weed killers and pesticides. I have lived here for 16 years and every spring I look forward to seeing all types of butterflies, frogs, and turtles in my yard. So far this year (June 20th), I have seen only one yellow butterfly, just a few frogs, and no turtles. Very sad. Will the butterflies ever come back in this neighborhood?

— Yozefu Rugina, Hixson, TN

Dear Yozefu,

Thanks for asking this question; I learned a lot in my research and what I found out is the tip of the iceberg of pesticide use, laws, regulations, and unregulated proliferation. Pesticides, according to Oxford Language online, are substances used for destroying insects or other organisms harmful to cultivated plants or animals. The three main types of pesticides are fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides.

Most of us know the name Agent Orange (dioxin), an herbicide sprayed from American military planes over Vietnam (1962-1971) to kill the jungle grass that Tim O'Brien described so graphically in *The Things They Carried*. It took a long time and much protest to get this herbicide off the market, but finally in 1980 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned the production and use of dioxin (see Rebecca Harrington's article in Insider: <https://bit.ly/InsiderArticleHarrington>). However, herbicides considered dangerous to human and animal life are still produced and widely used in the United States (epa.gov). Greg Seaman, EarthEasy founder, wrote, "In the US, over 4.5 billion pounds of pesticides are used each year, with 75% used in agriculture and 25% in homes and gardens. The prevalence and widespread use of pesticides has increased our exposure to a variety of chemicals, while the long-term health implications are still being studied" (<https://bit.ly/EarthEasy-Pesticides>).

Yozefu, during our phone conversation, you mentioned the name of the Hixson, Tenn. lawn company used by your neighbors. I called that lawn company to ask what general insecticides and herbicides are used in the spraying of lawns. After being put on hold and transferred multiple times, I was told they couldn't really answer my question. The representative stressed his inability to give me even a general herbicide name. He referred me to a national franchise.

So, I called the national franchise. At this point I was beginning to feel like Erin Brockovich. I spoke to a representative who also told me he "can't comment" on any possible herbicides used by his company. I pressed for just a general herbicide that his company uses in lawn care. Again, he said, "I don't know the situation and I can't make any comment. I really cannot comment on this." He referred me to the State of Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

I scouted around and came up with some information from the Harvard School of Public Health that links the neonicotinoid (there are a few of them) insecticides to the collapse of honeybee colonies (2014). Of the 4.5 billion pounds of pesticide cited above, "100 million pounds of pesticides are used each year by US homeowners and gardeners" (for comparison, 19 million gallons of various "rainbow" herbicides were sprayed over Vietnam). Chemicals drift to contaminate indoor air, sort of like that smoking section in airplanes back in the day. The Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA) reports this finding: "Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention measure pesticides and other chemicals in the bodies of Americans every few years. In the most recent study, CDC tested for 212 chemicals, including 44 pesticides — and found most of them. DDT breakdown products were found in more than 85 percent of Americans tested, though the chemical hasn't been widely used here since 1972" ([PANNA.org](http://panna.org)).

The common herbicide glyphosate (RoundUp) developed by Monsanto has not been banned by the EPA, but its production is set to be discontinued by Bayer (who acquired Monsanto in 2018) by 2023. Glyphosate is the most widely used pesticide in the U.S. (National Pesticide Information Center <http://npic.orst.edu/>). "In one report from California, scientists and the World Health Organization, 43 of 45 oat-based products tested had [glyphosate]. Popular breakfast foods like Quaker Old Fashioned Oats and Cheerios had above-average levels. It's also in grain and bean products like pasta, buckwheat, barley, kidney beans, and chickpeas" (webmd.com). While Bayer plans to discontinue its use, there are other companies still making glyphosate.

I'm figuring, Yozefu, that whatever was sprayed by the truckful onto your neighbors' lawns may have had a deleterious effect upon the lifeblood of the fauna and flora you have been used to seeing each spring in your neighborhood. Yep, this is very sad. Good thing we are activists connected to a network of activists!

Thank you for educating me, my friend.

Yours till the Rockies crumble,
Eartha

Don't forget: you can still share your opinion of 'What Matters Now.' Send your brief passage of about 100 words to the Sierra E-News Editor [Enews.sierratn@gmail.com], and keep submitting your environmental questions and comments as usual!

This column was written by Rita Bullinger.

Submit your question for Eartha to: SierraTNNews@gmail.com

Please read our Chapter Chair's column on page 2 about the critical work of our State Lobbyist.

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The Lake Isle of Innisfree

by William Butler Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

2022 Tennessee Valley Solar Conference + Storage

Wednesday, October 26th, 2022 and Thursday, October 27th, 2022
Hilton Knoxville Downtown, right off Market Square!
501 West Church Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee 37902-2591, USA

The focus of the Tennessee Valley Solar Conference is to bring together people who are interested in growing solar business opportunities in the Tennessee Valley to discuss strategies, market trends, and policies that impact the solar industry. Attendees will participate in in-depth and forward-looking discussions on TVA policy and processes and evolving technical opportunities facing the industry in the Tennessee Valley region.

<https://tenneseiasolar.com/conference/>

UPCOMING MEETINGS

COVID-19 NOTICE

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

Group Program Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 9/26, 10/24, 11/28	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Thu 9/15, 10/20, 11/17	6:00 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 9/13, 10/11, 11/8	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Thu 9/8, 10/13, 11/10	7:00 PM

Group Business Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 9/12, 10/3, 11/7	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Wed 9/7, 10/5, 11/2	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 9/27, 10/25, 11/22	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Mon 9/19, 10/17, 11/21	6:30 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Program Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
Holston Valley	Tue 9/20, 10/18, 11/15, 12/20	7:00 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
CareNET (Rogersville)	Thu 9/22, 10/27, 11/24	6:00 PM
Clarksville	Tue 9/20, 10/18, 11/15	6:00 PM
Holston Valley	Wed 9/28, 10/26, 11/23	6:00 PM
Watauga (Mountain City)	Tue 9/13, 10/11, 11/8	5:00 PM



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

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