

# Tennessee Sierran

SIERRA  
CLUB  
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

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

Volume 55, Number 1 — January/February 2022

## COP26 and TVA

An Interview with Amy Kelly and JoAnn McIntosh

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Masthead photo is a sunset at Cade's Cove ©Ron Shrieves  
Cover photos: Left: Kingston Fossil Plant taken by Todd Waterman  
at the Kingston Memorial on Dec. 20, 2020;  
Right: "Installing solar panels," by OregonDOT, licensed under CC  
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Explore, Enjoy, and Protect



# From Mac Post, State Chair

## Celebrating 2021 Successes

With the arrival of 2022, it's natural to take stock of the previous year's accomplishments, evaluate the pluses and minuses, and look forward to the opportunities and challenges of next year. For the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, 2021 was a good year. Here are a few of the conservation action highlights:



- The Chapter partnered with other organizations to stop an oil pipeline intended to pass through an economically disadvantaged community in Memphis and over the Memphis sand aquifer.
- We successfully engaged local communities and their representatives to hold TVA and local power utilities accountable for safe and proper disposal of coal ash in Memphis and Oak Ridge.
- We promoted the development of clean energy. For example, CareNET members worked with Hawkins County Schools to develop a grant proposal to obtain electric school buses.
- Clarksville and Mountain City members organized lake and river cleanups involving many individuals and partner organizations.
- All five Knoxville City Council candidates endorsed by the Harvey Broome Group were elected, in the first use of the Chapter's newly organized PAC that will see more activity across the state.
- Deepening collaboration between our two Tennessee-based Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign staff members and Chapter volunteers has resulted in organizing opposition to TVA proposals for pipelines to fuel new natural gas plants - instead of new solar and storage - to replace the coal-burning Kingston and Cumberland power plants. In addition, we are training Chapter volunteers to lead campaigns for clean energy, energy efficiency, democratic decision-making, and equitable utility bills from their local power company or co-op.
- Administratively the Chapter has moved forward in significant ways, with a welcomed increase in fundraising to support both our many activities and, importantly, our full-time Conservation Program Coordinator, Scott Banbury. Scott works to empower individuals and communities to address local environmental issues, including protection of clean water, waste (both residential and industrial), responsible management of natural areas, and much more. In addition, receipt of several large donations (including one generous bequest) from long-standing members who have not necessarily been active with the Chapter, indicates a broad awareness and appreciation of our work. We are currently in solid financial condition.
- Members continue to participate effectively and in a variety of ways. We have an excellent news team that develops and produces high quality printed and electronic publications. The conservation subcommittees have been reorganized and populated with dedicated leaders.

Even though in-person activities have largely been prohibited due to Covid-19, we have accomplished so much. Perhaps our effectiveness can partly be attributed to the growing use of virtual meetings that have resulted in an ability to meet more often with a larger number of folks and get more done. As a result of this added flexibility, many more people have become actively involved in Chapter projects. If you are thinking of a New Year's resolution to get more active this year with the Tennessee Sierra Club, opportunities are easier and plentiful. To join our efforts, start with the contacts for the Tennessee Chapter's Groups and Conservation Committees listed in the right column on this page. Also check out the Group websites at [www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/local-groups](http://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/local-groups) (especially the new "Join Our Teams" pages). Or let Cris Corley or Bill Moll know your interests and we'll point you in the right direction.

## A Tribute to Mac Post and Axel Ringe

By Todd Waterman, HBG member

Sadly, Tennessee Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) At-Large Delegates Mac Post, now Chapter Chair, and his fellow long-time stalwart Axel Ringe must step down in 2022 under Sierra Club's recent six-consecutive-year term limit rule. So must Gary Bowers, the subject of an article in an upcoming issue.

Mac says when he was elected Tennessee Chapter Chair in 2018, he hoped to bridge factionalism within our Chapter. He would be "a guide on the side, rather than a sage on a stage." "I enjoyed watching all the various people stepping up and working together. I saw that really blossoming in my time." Distinguished new At-Large Delegates joined the ExCom - one, Mac's fellow retired ORNL climate scientist Virginia Dale, saying she wanted to work with Mac again. Mac's been gratified to see Virginia's Land Use Conservation Committee, five other impactful Bill Moll-initiated Conservation Committees, and four Regional Conservation Committees all flourishing in virtual meetings. Axel Ringe feels Mac "brought peace to the Chapter. He was a unifying influence."

Axel, too, has done much to build the Chapter. He served for many years on the Harvey Broome Group's ExCom, then the Chapter's ExCom, and in 2013 became Chapter Conservation Chair, "my dream job." Mac says Axel brought broad conservation interests to the Chapter, and "worked long and hard to get Chapter conservation issues going." When Axel passed the Conservation Chair torch to Bill Moll in 2019, Bill said he'd never have volunteered without Axel's promise of support.

Neither Mac nor Axel is about to quit volunteering. "Nothing's gonna change," Axel says, "except I'm not gonna be on the ExCom anymore." He'll keep putting his lifetime of scientific and legal experience to good use as Chair of the Chapter's Water Quality Committee and as its coal ash point person. He'll keep working with other environmental organizations, TDEC, and the EPA. He'll continue as HBG's Conservation/Political Co-Chair.

As Chapter Fundraising Chair, Mac hopes to broaden the Chapter donor base and engage more volunteers. As a retired researcher into the role of terrestrial ecosystems in the global climate cycle, he wants to show others how our vital, vulnerable ecosystems interdepend. He'll keep guiding us on hikes through varied ecosystems. And, in his first love: as Chair of Knoxville's Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO), he will lead inner-city kids on expeditions into nature's wondrous realms.

But Mac and Axel would agree it is volunteers, caring and joining together, who make the Tennessee Chapter a mighty force for good. Both endorse ExCom term limits, designed to open up opportunities for volunteers like you. This *Tennes-Sierran* offers many more invitations to satisfy your passion for nature and justice.

## Tennes-Sierran

The bimonthly newsletter of the  
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club  
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### Change of Address

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

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

Snail Mail: Mail new address AND the mailing label on page 1 to:  
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### Submissions

February Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by January 21

March Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by February 18

March/April Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by January 31

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(New officers will be elected in the Jan 30 excom meeting.)

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# Fostering Breadth of Vision: A Long-Term Biocentric Ethic

by John Nolt



Homo sapiens is the most destructive species on Earth. Our emissions have destabilized global climate. Our disruption of Earth's biological systems has caused populations of many species to plummet and some to vanish. Anthropogenic tragedies of wind, fire, drought, and flood are becoming common. More are inevitable. But the inevitability of great tragedies does not justify acquiescence to still greater ones. With hope and effort, we might yet prevent runaway climate change—or the sixth mass extinction that many biologists now fear.

How? In thousands of ways, each by itself insufficient, but maybe in total just enough.

One is to cultivate and disseminate an extraordinarily broad and objective ethic. The Sierra Club, which has from its inception fostered breadth of vision, is well-placed to do this. We see the world from mountain peaks—though what we now see are just remnants of the wildness that once was there. And we value these remnants. Their sublimity awes us. They are an ancient library written in molecular languages that we have just begun to read. They acquaint us with freedom beyond culture; yet they have shaped our history and our cultures. Immersion in them challenges us and builds character. And always again they uplift and renew our spirits.

Elevated though our Club's values are, they are also, as the previous paragraph suggests, directed primarily toward our well-being. They are, in a word, mostly anthropocentric. They therefore do not fully address today's primary challenge: to become less destructive. For this, the Sierra Club's traditional ethic, though a decent start, is insufficient. We must take seriously not only our own well-being, but the well-being of all life on Earth. Our ethic must progress toward biocentrism.

Like us, each living thing has a good of its own—a kind and degree of well-being that is objective and independent of human judgment or evaluation. For the simplest and by far the most populous of living things, from microbes to mushrooms, well-being may amount to nothing more than integrity of bodily function: in a word, health. Health is not a precise idea and the indicators of it vary from species to species. Nevertheless, it is a matter of objective fact. It is a fact, for example, when a tree, or a herd, or a species is healthy and a fact when it has suffered harm. The state of my health or yours is factual, too, but our welfare is more complex: it includes integrity of bodily function, but also the qualities of our conscious experience and social relations. Many of our fellow creatures enjoy these complex forms of welfare too. The welfare of life on Earth includes all of these components of welfare in whatever creatures they are found.

Welfare is not, moreover, limited to the present moment, but extends as far into the future as life remains. That matters, because the harm

we are now doing also extends far into the future. Even if we stopped all greenhouse gas emissions tomorrow, global average temperatures would remain significantly elevated for thousands of years. If we keep emitting, that figure could rise to hundreds of thousands. Much of our CO<sub>2</sub> now dissolves in the oceans, acidifying them with dire consequences for oceanic life. Ocean acidification is irreversible on timescales of at least tens of thousands of years. Species extinction has even more far-reaching consequences. While novel species do eventually evolve in place of those that vanish, the process is slow. Recovery time for biodiversity loss following a mass extinction is on the order of millions of years. Thus, to understand and curtail our destructiveness we need an ethic whose vision is not only biocentric but long-term.

Fundamental to long-term ethics is the principle that moral consideration should not vary with distance from us in space or time. Given that individual people are equally morally considerable, this implies that acting now in a way that unjustifiably harms a person a thousand years from now is just as wrong as inflicting the same unjustified harm on someone today. More generally, beings of the same type are in principle equally morally considerable regardless of when or where they live.

This is not to deny that our greatest responsibilities are usually to individuals close to us in space and time: family, co-workers, friends, companion animals. But that is not because they are objectively more worthy than distant others but because we have special relationships with them. So even though the moral considerability of distant future people equals ours, our responsibilities to those distant people are less than our responsibilities to some of our contemporaries. But this is true only for those contemporaries with whom we have special relationships, not for strangers. For both contemporary and future strangers our responsibilities are the same.

Nearly all forms of ethics agree that our most fundamental responsibility to strangers is non-harm. We may not kill them, injure them, make them ill, render them homeless, etc., without justification. Biocentrism adds only that the strangers in question may be either human or non-human. As members of Homo sapiens and as individuals, we (especially we who are affluent) now violate that moral principle on a scale we can scarcely imagine. Extending moral consideration to more of our fellow creatures now and into the distant future is one way to become something better than we are.

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

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

## Chapter Conservation Committees Reorganized

by Bill Moll, Conservation Chair

This year, the Chapter has revised its Conservation Committees to better support efforts to protect Tennessee's environment. The Chapter has had dedicated members working in all of the conservation areas for years, but the changes have been to get more members involved to expand our capabilities and impact.

Since the July update in the *Tennes-Sierran*, all of the Committees have been initiated, with four fully in operation and the other two active but still developing as committees. To check out our current status and/or volunteer, go to the Chapter website at <https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee>, and click on "Conservation Committees" under the "About Us" tab.

Coal ash continues to be a major problem across Tennessee. Burning coal to generate electricity doesn't just create CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that threaten our climate, but it also creates large amounts of coal ash which contains harmful levels of heavy metals.

Many/most of these ash sites were not properly lined or located. If you leave the coal ash there, it might leak into the ground water or river. Moving it to a properly lined landfill is expensive and can take many years—and the estimates of the lifetime of the liners range from 40 to 500 years.

Moving the ash itself presents real risks to those who move it — the Kingston coal ash spill sickened or killed many of the workers. There is a risk of contamination along the transport route to the new storage site, which is usually in a disadvantaged community.

The Sierra Club does not have a position on what to do with coal ash, since there is no good solution. Yet, TVA continues to create more coal ash. The Chapter Energy Committee continues to work with the Beyond Coal Campaign to get TVA to shut its coal plants. When you get an Action Alert on TVA coal plants, please take the action.

Across the state, developers are building without providing for adequate sewage treatment facilities or stormwater containment. Yet our state legislature is considering bills to reduce regulations for both issues, instead of increasing controls.

Landfill issues and trash in general are costly problems across the state and are endangering the environment. Tennessee is a global leader in micro-plastics in our water. Addressing the many solid waste problems one-by-one is a game of whack-a-mole.

The Chapter will introduce an Extended Producer Responsibility Bill (EPR) in the next legislative session. This will be modeled after bills passed in Maine and Oregon. We do not expect it to be passed this session, but we need to start the conversation on a comprehensive approach to the solid waste problem.

The Conservation Committees are developing an array of specific actions you can take with associated training to help address these sorts of issues in your community. Some should be ready for implementation in January—watch your email for updates.

One action is to participate in Conservation Education Day — our lobby day in Nashville — which will be on Wednesday, February 23, this year. This is jointly sponsored by the Sierra Club, Tennessee Conservation Voters, Tennessee Environmental Council, and Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light. We plan on doing this in person, but this may change. We will also have a Zoom component to accommodate members across our wide state and reduce the carbon footprint of the event. Look for more info on our website and Facebook page.

Contact Bill at [whmoll@aol.com](mailto:whmoll@aol.com)



# Roan Mountain State Park Adds 150 Acres

by Marshall Adesman, Volunteer Writer



Bee balm growing on Heaton Creek in Roan Mountain State Park. Photo courtesy of Monica Johnson

It's good to have friends. And for the Roan Mountain State Park, located in Northeast Tennessee's Carter County, that became especially apparent earlier this year when the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy was finally able to purchase 150 acres of private land, located next to the park, when it was offered to the public. The State of Tennessee then bought the land from the Conservancy in December, thus protecting habitat resources and streams in the Doe River watershed, and also making it possible to expand trails and

create backcountry camping sites.

When the property was listed on the real estate market in the first half of 2020, Roan Mountain State Park Manager Monica Johnson began working to secure the land. A coalition consisting of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (which manages Tennessee's 56 state parks), the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy and its partners, and a conservation-minded lender then came together to raise the necessary funds to acquire this valuable land.

The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy's mission is to work with landowners to determine the best ways to meet their needs, while also encouraging the use of conservation easements. Since 1974, they have helped to protect clean water, farmland, scenic beauty and more than 75,000 acres of unique plant and animal habitat, in Tennessee and North Carolina. This effort with Roan Mountain State Park will help to protect critical habitats for

numerous species, including five state-listed rare plants that have been identified as populating the acreage.

The purchase also has historic significance. In October of 1780, a group of men residing in the Appalachian highlands decided to take up arms against the British during the American colonies' war for independence. Starting at Sycamore Shoals in what is now Tennessee and going some 330 miles "over the mountain," these men picked up supporters along the way until they were a force of some 1,000. Their victory in the Battle of Kings Mountain is considered by historians to be the turning point in the American Revolution, and this new addition to Roan Mountain State Park includes a portion of their route. Says Michelle Pugliese, Land Protection Director for the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, "I can just imagine the Overmountain Men on their way to (their)... battle at Kings Mountain... trekking right by this property, perhaps even stopping to rest and refill their water or maybe even catch some fish."

This new addition will help Roan Mountain State Park in its ongoing mission to protect and preserve unique examples of natural resources, and will provide well-planned interpretive programs, quality outdoor recreational opportunities, and well-maintained facilities for all who visit. Kudos to all those who took part in this cooperative conservation effort.

Contact Marshall at [msadesman@gmail.com](mailto:msadesman@gmail.com)



The beauty of winter is apparent on the 150 acres being acquired by Roan Mountain State Park. Photo courtesy of Monica Johnson

## Cook Recreation Area Threatened by Private Development

by Mary Clark, Steering Committee Member, Friends of Cook Recreation Area

It came as a shock to the local community in 2020 to learn that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) intended to send a private commercial partner a request for proposal for development of Cook Recreation Area (Cook). Cook is a 300-acre treasure, a public-use nature area on the eastern shore of Percy Priest Lake in southeastern Davidson County on the Stones River, and is managed by USACE. This land was acquired by eminent domain for three purposes: flood control, generation of power, and recreation. At the time of the construction of the dam and creation of the lake, USACE designated a protective shoreline buffer around the lake. Part of this area was designated as Cook Public Use Area for the benefit of the general public.

People of all walks of life come to enjoy Cook around the clock. It is common to see fishermen put in at dawn, parents teaching their children to fish in the pond, kayakers, paddleboarders, rock-skipperers, hikers, birders, readers relaxing in hammocks, musicians singing, groups laughing together on the shore. It is one of the best places to take a deep breath, enjoy the wonder of the sunset and see the moon rise in relative peace.

In addition to the biodiversity and importance it has for Nashville's tree canopy, this area has a much-needed ability to sequester carbon, moderate excessive temperatures, provide water filtration during storm events, as well as provide an important wildlife habitat. Notably, some 800+ acres have been cleared within a 3-mile radius of Cook in the last few years and filled with houses and apartment buildings, many of which have little-to-no green space. With its priceless flora and fauna, including 158 species of birds and eight federally listed threatened and endangered species, Cook is a cherished green space. The surrounding community depends on Cook for equitable access to nature now and for generations to come.

Greg Wathen, retired Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Biologist and Secretary of Friends of Cook Recreation Area comments, "It seems that the pressure to develop new residential neighborhoods in the area surrounding Cook will continue to increase as Nashville's population grows. It has a bullseye on it for developers because it has been identified as a 'Suburban Neighborhood Evolving' in the Donelson-Hermitage-Old Hickory Community Plan. This will result in continued clearing of forests, and increased impacts on the wildlife that inhabit this area. Cook Recreation Area is an oasis of forestland in a sea of residential development."



Bird's eye view of Cook Recreation Area. Photo courtesy Andy Merrill

The USACE's initial notice issued in November 2020 offered 3 options:

- 1.) Leasing of the entire area to a private partner to develop;
- 2.) Leasing of the area with restrictions; and
- 3.) Keeping the area under USACE operation and management.

While community responses greatly favored the third option, neither the second nor the third options were discussed before the "Notice of Availability" (NOA) was sent out on September 9, 2021, with the submission deadline for a lease proposal on January 10, 2022, and the viable candidate decision to be made on February 28, 2022.

In response to the proposed commercial development, Friends of Cook Recreation Area, was organized in November; a 501(c)(3) application has been submitted to the IRS. The group's purpose is to be a voice for the community, raising awareness of the potential public access and environmental issues that may arise in a private development at Cook.

"Government leasing of public land is nothing new," said Friends Group Vice Chairperson and Sierra Club member Tim

Weeks. "But the Corps' last lease on Percy Priest Lake included a lakeshore RV park resulting in significant clear-cutting of trees and a reduction in public access." Weeks continued, "They even closed the public boat ramp at Elm Hill Marina/RV Park, so USACE's track record favors private developers and not taxpayers, the general public. It would be a shame to see this repeated at Cook." The same risk exists for Cook since the NOA for Cook does not specify important details such as whether public use is defined as free/low cost, how much space will actually be available for day use, and how much space must remain as a natural habitat. The allowed development including restaurant, swimming pool and expansion of campground to accommodate large campers would require significant clearing of this land and would disturb the current natural ecosystem.

Friends Chairperson Anderson Clark says, "In short, our Friends of Cook Recreation Area wants to maintain the natural habitat of the Cook peninsula and keep it available as free/low-cost use for all socioeconomic groups to enjoy. The USACE proposal to lease invites a commercialization which will radically change forever the nature of this gem."

For more information, to sign our petition and to join in our efforts go to: <https://keepcookrecreationareapublic.org/>  
For additional information on the USACE NOA (Notice of Availability): [https:// bit.ly/USACE-NOA-COOK](https://bit.ly/USACE-NOA-COOK)

Contact Mary at [keepcookrecreationareapublic@gmail.com](mailto:keepcookrecreationareapublic@gmail.com)



# Bringing COP26 Home: Transitioning TVA to a Livable Future

Todd Waterman interviews Amy Kelly, Tennessee Representative, Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign (BCC), and JoAnn McIntosh, volunteer Tennessee Chapter Energy Committee Chair. Each chose which questions to address. Sierra Club Senior Organizing Representative Bonnie Swinford was regrettably too committed to participate. Todd is the TennesSierran Assistant Editor and a member of the Harvey Broome Group.



JoAnn McIntosh, Tennessee Chapter Energy Committee Chair

*Irreversible Climate Change is an unprecedented, existential test of humans' ability to cooperate effectively on the unprecedentedly urgent, radical changes required to secure a livable future for us all — against an unprecedentedly powerful adversary, the fossil fuel industry. So far, we're failing that test. In Tennessee, the Beyond Coal Campaign is changing that. Amy and JoAnn, what lights you up about working with Beyond Coal?*

**Amy:** My grandfather's family was from a coal-mining community in Appalachia, so I've seen the destruction it leaves in the wake of broken promises of economic advancement. I also had severe asthma as a kid growing up be-

side one of the most polluting coal-fired industrial plants in Tennessee. The Beyond Coal Campaign is now being replicated in other countries because of its success at transitioning utilities away from coal. I love working with other people who want cleaner air and see the promise renewable energy is already bringing to so much of the world. I am constantly amazed at the depth of knowledge and determination Sierra Club members have in Tennessee. The Tennessee Chapter has a reputation as one of the best chapters in the country, and I'm quickly seeing why that's the case.

**JoAnn:** Tennessee volunteers have great support from BCC staff that allows us access to Sierra Club's considerable resources. Amy and Bonnie are dedicated and tireless in their work to move Tennessee and the nation away from climate-warming fossil fuels.

*The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris ended in triumph, with governments agreeing to limit global warming to 1.5 °C - 2 °C (2.7 °F - 3.6 °F). Then, in 2018, the IPCC concluded warming above 1.5 °C would be catastrophic. Yet when the 2021 Conference (COP26) opened in Glasgow, almost no countries had kept their Paris commitments, instead making plans consistent with warming of 2.5 °C (4.5 °F) or more. Was COP26, as Greta Thunberg protested, just more "blah, blah, blah" - all talk and no action?*

**Amy:** The Glasgow Climate Pact did not secure paths to achieving global net zero carbon emissions by 2050 nor to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. It wasn't all talk, though, either. Some important steps were taken internationally, and US commitments were made. Here's a link to some of the amazing new commitments to eliminate coal use and transition from fossil fuels: <https://bit.ly/SC-COP26>. There is also much more to do, and it's time to get climate commitments and real action in our own local communities, states and countries.

**JoAnn:** While the final agreements reached at COP26 were disappointing, they still provide us with reason to hope for global progress. Meanwhile, U.S. citizens have opportunities to push our government and industry leaders to make commitments to sustainability, especially as extreme weather events make it increasingly obvious that the financial and health costs of not making those commitments will soon outweigh any upfront costs incurred now by investing in infrastructure and programs.

*How much progress did COP26 make regarding climate justice?*

**JoAnn:** One of the major disappointments from previous COPs was the lack of follow-through from developed countries, the primary per capita sources of carbon emissions, on delivering their pledged \$100 billion/year to developing countries, those disproportionately affected by climate change. COP26 addressed this issue from the outset, and renewed pledges were made, but actions remain to be seen. Sierra Club offers this good explanation on climate justice and climate finance going forward:

<https://bit.ly/SC-COP26-CJ>

*To limit warming to 1.5 °C, emissions must now be cut in half by 2030. How could that be done?*

**Amy:** The plan is to decarbonize our electric sector as much as possible, and here in Tennessee, for most people that means TVA's coal plants need to retire and be replaced with clean energy, not methane (natural) gas, which is what they are currently considering for the Kingston and Cumberland plants. TVA also needs to commit to shutting down all their remaining coal plants by 2030 - not 2035 - and replacing them with clean energy. As we transition our electric sector, we can reduce emissions through electrification of transportation, buildings, and appliances. TVA's board of directors is their chief

regulator, and Biden has four nominees right now - a changing board means new opportunities, especially if there is public demand. Your local power companies can have an impact because they purchase power from TVA. Right now, local power companies can generate up to 5% of their power on their own - which means renewable energy. We need more local power companies to participate in this program and to ask for more flexibility to generate their own renewable-energy-sourced electricity. They need to incentivize residential solar again, and create working energy efficiency programs. We have more electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing slated in Tennessee, and the state and TVA need to support EV adoption by incentivizing it and eliminating the extra fees. Get involved by signing up to be part of our team by emailing [amy.kelly@sierraclub.org](mailto:amy.kelly@sierraclub.org) or calling me at 865-995-8663.



Amy Kelly, Tennessee Representative, Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign (BCC)

*The International Energy Agency (IEA) says new investments in fossil energy must end immediately to meet the 1.5 °C target, saying that's both doable and cost-effective. The Biden administration plans for a fossil-free energy sector by 2035. Are TVA's plans in line with those goals?*

**Amy:** TVA says they are committed to an 80% reduction in carbon emissions from 2005 levels by 2035. The Biden Administration's goal is 100% carbon free by 2035. So currently, TVA, the nation's largest public utility and our power provider, is not in line with the direction set for the nation and supported by a majority of the public.

*The Trump-appointed TVA Board just voted unanimously to let CEO Jeff Lyash decide if replacement power from retiring TVA coal plants will be from new fossil gas plants or solar plus storage. What changes might we see as Biden appointees are approved by the Senate?*

**Amy:** By the time you read this article, hopefully the new appointees will be confirmed. If not, TVA's board of directors will be at quorum with just 5 members starting the new year. Some of the current nominees have demonstrated commitment to renewable energy, and it is likely that a board changeover can bring about a new responsiveness to the public's demand for a new clean energy economy.

*How might volunteers help influence TVA to choose renewables and storage instead of polluting natural gas? Are there actions we can take right now?*

**Amy:** Besides what I already pointed to, there is a crucial comment period coming up for TVA's Cumberland plant retirement and the environmental impact study to determine if methane gas or solar will be more beneficial replacements for power generation. We need everyone to get involved in any capacity they can. We have a media team, local power company teams, and fossil fuel-specific groups. Please get involved today for this big push in the new year.

**JoAnn:** TVA lags behind the Biden administration timetable by continuing to ignore the urgency of climate action - their proposed new fossil fuel investments in gas plants show that carbon-free is not high in their priorities. Sierra Club (SC) volunteers can communicate their concerns directly to TVA by attending public hearings (virtually and/or in-person), submitting comments to TVA Board members and to their meetings, etc. SC staff regularly emails info and action alerts to volunteers about timely opportunities for such communication and participation. But volunteers can be even more effective by communicating directly with our local power companies (LPCs.) This is because we are not considered TVA customers: we are customers of our LPC, and our LPC is TVA's customer. The Tennessee Chapter is currently working to help volunteers reach out individually and in groups to their LPCs; fact sheets, talking points, and training sessions are available to facilitate discussions with LPCs about renewable energy (RE), including what means the LPC has to self-generate RE as well as how they can influence TVA to expedite deployment of more RE across the grid.

Contact Amy at [amy.kelly@sierraclub.org](mailto:amy.kelly@sierraclub.org)  
Contact JoAnn at [joann.mcintosh@tennessee.sierraclub.org](mailto:joann.mcintosh@tennessee.sierraclub.org)  
Contact Todd at [jtoddw@gmail.com](mailto:jtoddw@gmail.com)

# Reports from Across the State

by Scott Banbury, Conservation Program Coordinator



The Chapter's work with locals to stop the destruction of mature hardwood forests in the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA) section of the Bridgestone/Firestone Centennial Wildlife Management Area has now grown to include the Catoosa Wildlife Management area, where TWRA has also been heavily harvesting the timber we've placed in their trust. We are working to schedule legislative hearings on why TWRA has made these management decisions over the objections of local hikers and hunters.

The Nashville Metropolitan Council thwarted the attempt to turn the old Hutton Quarry on McCrory Lane in Bellevue, Tennessee, into a landfill by rezoning the property to preclude any use of the property for commercial landfill operations. State legislation is pending that would strip local government of powers over using inactive quarries as landfills, but it would not override the base zoning adopted for the Bellevue property.

As a result of our partnership with Memphis Community Against Pollution, Protect Our Aquifer and the Southern Environmental Law Center, we were successful in passing a city ordinance that gives the Memphis City Council the final say over pipeline projects crossing municipal properties and easements. This will help ensure no more proposals for oil pipelines that might threaten the drinking water and safety of Memphis neighborhoods.

We continue to organize against the new gas pipelines across Middle Tennessee that have been proposed to fuel new TVA power plants to replace the Kingston and Cumberland coal plants that TVA has decided to close. The Chapter is working with partners across the state to advocate for replacement of these plants with renewable energy and storage batteries rather than more fossil fuels. We're also working with property owners along the proposed pipeline routes to protect their property rights from the pipeline companies.

As you read this, the second year of the 112th Tennessee General Assembly will be underway, where we'll be working to protect our streams and groundwater from a rapidly expanding land application sewer industry, promoting the adoption of an Extended Producer Responsibility bill, as well as legislation to strengthen local communities' rights to say no to new or expanding landfills and quarries.

Conservation Education Day, our state lobbying event, will be on March 2, 2022. If you'd to participate, be added to our weekly legislative reports and alerts, or get involved in any of the issues addressed above, contact me at [scott.banbury@sierraclub.org](mailto:scott.banbury@sierraclub.org) or 901-619-8567.

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## Good News from Defenders Fund Chair: Half Way There!



Your contribution to the Defenders Fund makes our work in the Tennessee General Assembly possible.

I had a most welcome slew of checks come in after my column that was published with the donor form in the September/October issue. What fun to add all those numbers to our spreadsheet where we keep track of contributions.

But YIKES. We are only halfway to the total amount that you sent us last year. And yet our outstanding lobbyist Scott Banbury is needed more urgently than ever. I hope if it has slipped your mind, you will consider adding your name to this list by filling out the form below and mailing it

in with your contribution.

Or if you prefer, you may contact me with your credit card info either by phone or by email:

Susan Johnston 270-991-6575  
[susan.johnston2011@gmail.com](mailto:susan.johnston2011@gmail.com)

And many, many thanks to all donors, past and future!

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





Dr. Richard Harris is the Maintenance Director for the Benton MacKaye Trail through Tennessee and North Carolina. Photo courtesy Dr. Harris

## Stepping Up: Be A Trail Maintainer!

by Jerry Thornton, Harvey Broome Group

When you are hiking a trail in the Cherokee National Forest (CNF), do you ever wonder how the pathway is so clear of tree blowdowns, bushes, and briars....or not? Some trails are clear and easy, while others are a mess. You can usually thank one or more of several dozen volunteers who work tirelessly to keep the trails open and clear. The United States Forest Service does have trail technicians, but they are few and far between and cannot possibly maintain all the trails in the CNF on a regular basis. As a result, some trails may go for two or three years without any maintenance, resulting in a trail choked with blowdowns and overgrown with briars and all kinds of vegetation. This is particularly true in designated Wilderness areas where, by law, power tools cannot be used. In these areas, treefalls must be cut out using crosscut saws instead of chainsaws and other vegetation must be cut using hand tools rather than power brushcutters.

Dr. Richard Harris, a retired pediatric oncologist who lives near Tellico Plains, Tennessee, serves as the Maintenance Director for the Benton MacKaye Trail through Tennessee and North Carolina. He is also a member of the Tellico/Ocoee Volunteer Trail Crew, which maintains the hiking and horse trails in the South Zone of the CNF in partnership with the Southern Appalachian Backcountry Horsemen. Maintenance includes cutting out fallen trees, clearing brush from the trail corridor, installing and cleaning out water diversions, repairing the treadway where needed, installing or replacing trail signs, and restoring blazes where they are allowed. These hard-working volunteers have been maintaining the hundreds of miles of CNF trails over the last 20 years and have developed a great camaraderie, often getting together for refreshments or dinner after maintenance trips.

The Crew, together with the USFS, offers training and certification in how to use chainsaws, crosscut saws, and other tools, as well as First Aid/CPR training. The USFS and the trail crew provide personal protection equipment (PPE) and tools for all volunteers.

If this sounds like something that might put a spring in your step, you too can become a trail volunteer. Contact Richard Harris at [harrisri@aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com) or call him at (423) 253-6358.

### Which of the Following Issues Most Concerns You?

- ✓ *Park Overflight Noise Impacts*
- ✓ *Accessible Recreation*
- ✓ *Recreation Fees Charged on Public Lands*
- ✓ *Commercialization and Privatization of Recreation on Public Lands*
- ✓ *Off-Road Vehicles Creating Noise, Conflict with Hikers, and Impacts to Ecosystems*

The Sierra Club's Wildlands and Wilderness Team's newly created **Recreation Issues Subteam** is addressing these issues.

For more information or to join the Recreation Issues Subteam, contact: Subteam Chair Karl Forsgaard at: [karlforsgaard@comcast.net](mailto:karlforsgaard@comcast.net)

## Dear Eartha: Advice from An Eco-Guru

Dear Eartha,  
Some of my goddess/therapist/feminist friends say that, even now as the world burns and Delta variant flourishes, we're ushering in the dawning of a new, gentler Age. But my rabbi says, "Don't be Pollyanna!" I don't even know who Pollyanna is, but I take it he thinks nothing post-pandemic will be any different. I feel a shift, or am I just...

—Another Pollyanna

Dear Polly,

If you are, then you aren't alone. Sometimes when people can't see positive change, it's easier to get others to question their vision of the future. And yes, it's true that droughts, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes occur with more frequency and intensity, arriving earlier and leaving later than they used to. Siberia, Russia, for example, is reporting 250 fires burning across 8.6 million acres. And it's not just the loss of human and animal lives, homes, and timber— it's the air quality from the dense smoke and its assault on lungs, especially those of children and the elderly (Claudia Dehn - Deutsche Welle - 8/9/21]).

But while this devastation overcomes our planet, and a global viral pandemic mutates, decreasing the population worldwide, human beings make changes, align priorities, and stand up for their rights and the rights of non-human species as well. I'm not sure what constitutes a "new, gentler Age" according to your homies, but I think we're all safe in proclaiming a shift is happening. Here are a few examples:

- **The Great Resignation.** Millions of workers (four million in April 2021, according to National Public Radio(NPR)) are downsizing by voluntarily reducing work hours to emphasize other energy-enhancing (not draining) work ("Why Are So Many Knowledge Workers Quitting?" by Cal Newport - *The New Yorker* - 8/16/21 online at <https://bit.ly/NYer-WorkersQuitting>). Post-pandemic, "the way we think about time and space has changed," says professor and author, Tsedal Neeley, from Harvard Business School. From now on, work will accommodate life. For Americans, this is a huge shift, and will affect everything—less time in a car, less time away from kids and family life, with more time noticing the way schools, playgrounds, and grocery stores operate will change Americans' attention to policy implementation.
- **Education's Inequities: Mask Off.** After a year of sub-par education for kids with strained access to technology and internet, the necessary changes seem crystal clear. Governments know the value of teachers, schools, and learning and must make changes to address inequities now, as reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).
- **75 actions in 36 states demanding bold climate action, jobs & justice:** Today's headline from Morissa Zuckerman, Senior Online Organizer for the Sierra Club referred to #SealtheDeal to demand Congress pass the 3.5 trillion reconciliation budget to pay for climate, care workers, jobs, and justice, those elements left out of the infrastructure bill drafted with Republican input.

So, Polly, I agree that a shift is happening. As someone once said, it isn't that we have to do things differently—including welcoming in a new Age—we GET to! As the Brits say, hang on to your arse!

Warmly, in more ways than one,

Eartha

*This column was written by Rita Bullinger.*

Submit your question for Eartha to: [SierraTNNews@gmail.com](mailto:SierraTNNews@gmail.com)

## FIND YOUR CALLING FROM YOUR SOFA

**If you believe in climate justice and are good with social media like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, this just may be your calling. The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club needs a volunteer Social Media Lead. Contact Joanne Logan for more details. [loganjolo@gmail.com](mailto:loganjolo@gmail.com)**



## In Tall Grass

by Carl Sandburg

Bees and a honeycomb in the dried head of a horse in a pasture corner—a skull in the tall grass and a buzz and a buzz of the yellow honey-hunters.

And I ask no better a winding sheet  
(over the earth and under the sun.)

Let the bees go honey-hunting with yellow blur of wings in the dome of my head, in the rumbling, singing arch of my skull.

Let there be wings and yellow dust and the drone of dreams of honey—who loses and remembers?—who keeps and forgets?

In a blue sheen of moon over the bones and under the hanging honeycomb the bees come home and the bees sleep.

*This poem is in the public domain.*



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### RETREAT SCHEDULE

|             | LOCATION                     | DATES                    |
|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Winter 2022 | Cancelled due to Covid-19    | ---                      |
| Spring 2022 | Fall Creek Falls State Park  | April 29-May 1           |
| Fall 2022   | Pickett State Park           | October 7-9 (new dates!) |
| Winter 2023 | Cedars of Lebanon State Park | January 22-24            |

### 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 1/24, 2/28, 3/28 | 7:00 PM |
| Chickasaw (Memphis)       | Thu 1/20, 2/17, 3/17 | 6:00 PM |
| Harvey Broome (Knoxville) | Tue 1/11, 2/8, 3/8   | 7:00 PM |
| Middle TN (Nashville)     | Thu 1/13, 2/10, 3/10 | 7:00 PM |

#### Group Business Meetings

| Group                     | Date                 | Time    |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Cherokee (Chattanooga)    | Mon 1/3, 2/7, 3/7    | 7:00 PM |
| Chickasaw (Memphis)       | Wed 1/5, 2/2, 3/2    | 6:30 PM |
| Harvey Broome (Knoxville) | Tue 1/25, 2/22, 3/22 | 7:00 PM |
| Middle TN (Nashville)     | Mon 1/17, 2/21, 3/21 | 6:30 PM |

#### Regional Conservation Committee Program Meetings

| Committee      | Date               | Time    |
|----------------|--------------------|---------|
| Holston Valley | Tue 1/11, 2/8, 3/8 | 7:00 PM |

#### Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

| Committee               | Date                 | Time    |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| CareNET (Rogersville)   | Thu 1/27, 2/24, 3/24 | 6:00 PM |
| Clarksville             | Tue 1/18, 2/15, 3/15 | 6:00 PM |
| Holston Valley          | Wed 1/26, 2/23, 3/23 | 6:00 PM |
| Watauga (Mountain City) | Tue 1/11, 2/8, 3/8   | 5:00 PM |