

September 2022 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group



Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

Register for our Upcoming Programs



9/13/2022 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Greening Southside Richmond with Sheri Shannon, Co-Founder of Southside ReLeaf. In Richmond, the history of redlining and urban renewal has shaped the identity of its neighborhoods. For Richmond's Southside, one enduring legacy is extreme urban heat due to fewer trees and more heat-absorbing surfaces. As climate extremes worsen, an increase in heat waves will exacerbate the social vulnerabilities of residents. Learn about Southside ReLeaf's efforts to improve the quality of life and health outcomes for Richmond's Southside residents through tree plantings, hands-on learning, community outreach, and civic engagement. Register for this virtual program [here](#).

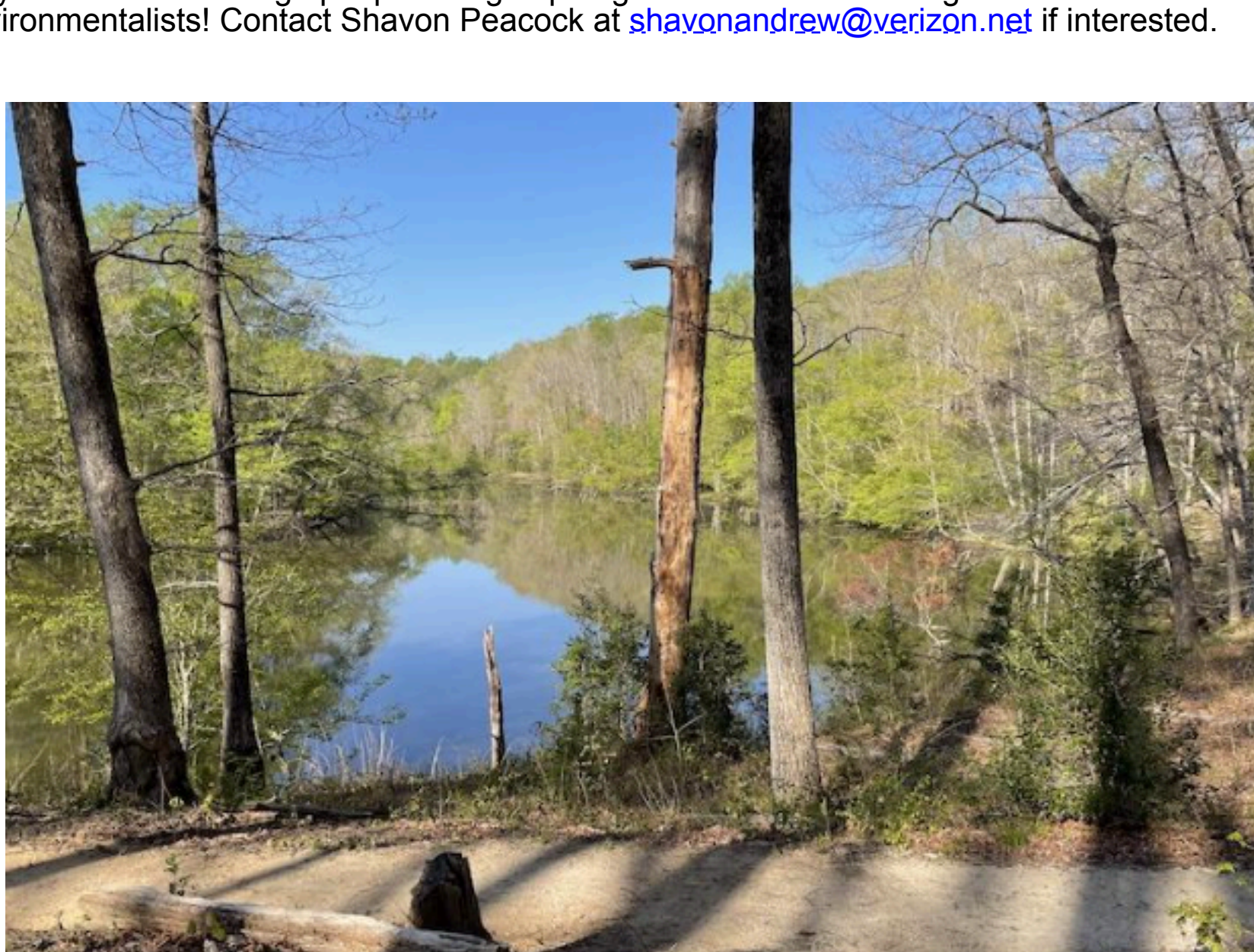
10/11/2022 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Our Air, Food and Water: How Toxic Chemicals are Harming Everyone and Harming People of Color More with Charlotte Brody, Vice-President of Health Initiatives with the Blue/Green Alliance. This will be an in-person/Zoom hybrid program. The in-person program will be at the Libbie Mill Library in the Meeting Room. Masks are required. Register [here](#).

11/15/2022 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm BioBlitzes and Community Science at the Science Museum with Devin Jefferson, Community Science Catalyst at the Science Museum of Virginia. This will be an in-person/Zoom hybrid program. The in-person meeting place is to be determined. Register [here](#).

Check out the [FOJG Calendar](#) for more environmental events in the Richmond area.

FOJG Outings

9/10/22 9:00 am – 12:00 pm – Tabling at Dorey Park Farmer's Market – How would you like to get involved as a FOJG member and share what the Virginia Sierra Club Chapter and FOJG do for our community? You will encourage people to sign up to get our newsletter and get them excited about being active environmentalists! Contact Shavon Peacock at shavonandrew@verizon.net if interested.



Hiking along Swift Creek at Pocahontas State Park. Photo courtesy of Ralph Grove.

9/11/22 9:30 am – 4:00 pm – Forest Bathing at Pocahontas State Park This hike is part of our Virginia Chapter Sierra Club's Wild Weekends fundraiser. The hike will include the Co-Op and Forest Exploration trails. We'll stop along the way to practice the art of Forest Bathing (Shinrin Yoku). The total hiking distance is about 5 miles. There is a \$10 entry fee for the state park. Optional lunch at the shelter afterward. Register [here](#). Donate [here](#) or [here](#).

9/17/22 10:00 am – 5:00 pm – Virginia Chapter Annual Gathering at Pocahontas State Park. The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club invites all members and staff to attend our 2022 Annual Gathering. This is a day for us to get together, make and renew acquaintances, enjoy nature, and learn more about what is happening in our chapter. Pre-registration is required. A link to the registration page will be posted [here](#) soon.

10/2/22 10:00 am – Walk Through Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery. Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery was designed in 1847 by architect John Notman of Philadelphia. Located on the banks of the James River, the cemetery spans 135 acres of valleys, hills, and stately trees. Its natural and architectural beauty has earned it recognition as a registered arboretum. This hike will cover about three miles along roads and pathways through the cemetery. We will enjoy the beautiful landscape as well as views of the James River, and we'll see several notable graves. The total hiking distance will be about three miles, on paved roads and pathways. The total hiking time will be about two hours. The group size is limited and advanced registration for all attendees is required. Please notify us of any cancellations so that others may join. Register [here](#).



The beautiful falls of the Appomattox River from Ferndale Park in Petersburg. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

10/8/22 9:30 am – 11:30 am FOJG Hike on the Lower Appomattox River Trail – Ferndale Park in Petersburg. We will hike the beautiful Lower Appomattox River Trail from Appomattox Riverside/Ferndale Park in Petersburg 1 - 2 miles upriver and then downriver for a total of about 4 miles. We can also explore the canal paralleling the river trail. Bring a picnic lunch if interested to eat after our hike. There is a 15 person limit. Register [here](#).



Walking along the Gambles Mill Corridor on the University of Richmond Campus. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

10/18/22 10:00 am – 11:00 am FOJG Gambles Mill Eco-Corridor Tour at the University of Richmond. Join FOJG in taking a tour of the Gambles Mill Eco-Corridor at the University of Richmond (UR) with Daniel Hart, UR's Associate Director of Sustainability and Environmental Justice. Over the last few years, the Gambles Mill Corridor and Little Westham Creek have undergone Eco-Corridor construction and stream restoration. This project is a prime example of campus stewardship that will improve the health of Little Westham Creek and the surrounding area for years to come. The walking tour will last approximately one hour and will highlight this project's multifunctional benefits to people, place, and local ecology. There's a 20 person limit. Register [here](#).



Weeding and harvesting vegetables in the Youth Garden at Bellemeade Park. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

Bellemeade Park Conserve and Create Workdays on 10/1/22, 11/5/22, and 12/3/22 from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Bellemeade Park 1800 Krouse Street, Richmond, VA 23224. Join FOJG volunteers in the continued development of this amazing neighborhood park. Bring water and gloves. All tools that are necessary will be provided. Register to volunteer and connect with Friends of Bellemeade Park below for these workdays. [10/1/22](#), [11/5/22](#), [12/3/22](#).

Big Yard Sale 2022 Recap

By Andrew Peacock, Steering Committee Chair



Big Yard Sale shoppers and volunteers sorting through piles of clothes. Photo courtesy of Deborah Hawkins.

On Saturday, July 30, 2022, the Falls of the James Group – Sierra Club held its first Big Yard Sale (BYS), in conjunction with the University of Richmond, since the start of the pandemic.

This was not your typical BYS. We were contacted by the Office of Sustainability at UR in early June to see whether we had any interest in selling student discards, collected by UR staff and stored by them in three fraternity houses. The caveat was that the fraternity houses had to be cleared out by August, in preparation for the student's return. A steering committee comprising Joe Brancoli, Gill Sigmon, Tamara Smith, Steve Yarus and Shavon and Andrew Peacock was formed to assess the potential for the sale and organize it. Having surveyed the contents of the fraternity houses, we settled on a one-day outdoor sale in the parking lot of New Fraternity Row.

There was neither time nor space to conduct the full sorting that we normally perform. Instead, we assembled a group of enthusiastic volunteers for two intense four-hour sorting sessions. In these sessions, we assigned goods to only eight categories: women's clothes, men's clothes, soft goods, refrigerators, microwave ovens, lamps, books, and miscellaneous items. Appliances were all cleaned and tested, as these are some of our hottest sellers. Goods were staged in the fraternity houses ready for quick dispersal to the parking lot on the day of the sale.

Just after dawn on Saturday, July 30th, over thirty Sierrans assembled in the New Fraternity Row parking lot. Once the fraternity houses were opened and UR delivered the sales tables, the site became a hive of rapid and businesslike activity. Each of the steering committee members acted as a team captain, responsible for a specific function. In short order, tables were set up, bags of goods were slid down the grass slope from the fraternity houses on larp, and items were distributed. Another team wheeled appliances down to the sales area. Meanwhile, cashiers and their assistants set up shop ready for the sale opening at 8:00 am.

By opening time, we had a line of UR employees and students stretching down the walkway to the Old Fraternity Row parking lot, where David Donaldson, of UR's Rethink Waste office, was checking IDs. As is customary, we allowed UR employees and students, and Sierra Club volunteers to participate in early-bird shopping for half an hour, prior to general opening. At 8:00 they moved in and fanned out looking for bargains. Women's clothes are always a hot seller, as are mini-refrigerators and microwave ovens. The cashiers and their assistants did a marvelous job keeping the lines moving. A second wave of shoppers arrived when we opened up sales to the general public at 8:30. The sales area remained busy until 10:30, when the last of the sales were completed and the customers departed.

With the customers gone, the clean-up crew, who had been assembling over the previous half-hour set to work. The university provided a truck, which moved through the parking lot, being loaded with unsold goods. These were later taken to Goodwill by the university. Unsold shoes were collected for transportation to Soles for Souls and a volunteer associated with Richmond Animal Care and Control took an SUV load of bedding material for use at the animal shelter. Tables and pop-up tents were taken down and taken away. By 11:30, following a final sweep through the fraternity houses and parking lot, all was clear and the last of the volunteers departed.

All-in-all it was an amazing event. In the space of less than five hours, our hundreds of volunteers gathered together, prepared the sale area, held the sale, cleaned up, and departed. Hundreds of items were diverted from the landfill and sold for re-use. Our partner in all this was the Rethink Waste office at UR, managed by David Donaldson, our principal liaison and supporter. We were also willingly and ably helped by members of the university maintenance crew, particularly Mauricio and Julio.

At the end of the day, the sale proceeds amounted to over \$6,000. Once expenses have been subtracted, the net proceeds will be split evenly between Rethink Waste at UR and the Falls of the James Group. The Sierra Club portion of the proceeds will be used to fund our outreach in the form of grants, Green Giant Awards, and stipends to the presenters at our monthly meetings.

In summary, the Big Yard Sale met its three objectives: many hundreds of pounds of student discards were diverted from the landfill, the Falls of the James Group funds were replenished and volunteers met and worked with each other in a fun environment!

Trees, Please



Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

By Joe Brancoli, Executive Committee Chair

Greetings, Falls of the James Group members. I recall some years ago that FOJG leaders bent our brains trying to think of a hands-on activity that could take place each Fall and bring volunteers together the way the Big Yard Sale does in Spring. I'm not sure why we didn't grasp this earlier but now tree planting has risen on our consciousness, as a way to improve air quality, alleviate heat, and sequester carbon.

This Fall, that can take three shapes:

- We can recruit members to help with other group's tree planting events on on October 15th and 22nd
- We can conduct our own planting event
- We could find privately owned land on which to grow trees for future disbursement

If you would be interested in volunteering for such efforts, please call Steve Yarus (804) 240-9749 or Joe Brancoli (804) 502-9502, or write scojg@gmail.com.

So, What Do FOJG Board Members Do Anyway?!

By Carille Greenberg Ribley, Executive Committee Member

So your FOJG ExCom (i.e. Board) gets together each month and sings songs to the water, fire, sun, and moon gods. Next, we report on the number of native plants in our backyards (Whoever has the most natives wins a free ice cream cone.) Lastly, we play bird songs and see who identifies the most correctly!

You guessed it – no, we don't do any of those things but it's a pretty safe bet that most of us love chocolate ice cream and singing birds!

So is serving on the FOJG board a great experience? Before I decided to take the leap, my biggest worry was that I wouldn't have as much time as was expected to devote to the group because of the demands of my consulting practice. Would I be considered a slacker if I didn't attend every meeting? Ahhh – there was a big sigh of relief when I was told that attending every session was not a prerequisite. I let the enthusiasm and dedication of the group draw me in and hoped the gang wouldn't change their mind! I can honestly say that they've been true to their word.

A big reason to consider joining ExCom is that they're a remarkably impressive group to see in action. You'll have an opportunity to help with other group's tree planting events and work with elected officials (and join in if you like). You'll help choose which deserving individuals and organizations should receive FOJG grants. You'll see first-hand what goes into the planning of rallies, area hikes, paddles, Bioblitzes, magical firefly mating rituals, the Big Yard Sale, the RVA Environmental Film Festival, and monthly meetings. Who knows? You might discover that you want to be a trip leader! The group even found it in their hearts to encourage me to pursue my fledgling interests for building a path for young environmentalists and inspiring restaurateurs to switch to compostable take-out ware. Even the tiniest of efforts can make a difference!

Joe's Book Nook



Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

By Joe Brancoli, Executive Committee Chair

This Fall, Falls of the James is thinking about trees, and I recommend two books on that subject that I read over the Summer.

The first, I think, is quite well known: *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben is a popular, exhaustive, and sometimes repetitive look at every detail of tree biology, habits, and lifestyles. His perspective as a forest manager in Germany gives him great insight, and he writes engagingly about his growth of knowledge over the years. You will watch trees more closely and see them differently after reading this book.

The second is titled *Rainforest, Dispatches from Earth's most vital Frontlines*. Author Tony Juniper (a tree name, come on!) describes his career from 1990 to the mid-20-teens with the British group, Friends of the Earth. He includes trips to Costa Rica, Indonesia, and Africa, with fascinating detail about indigenous peoples, local farming, and campaigns to pressure banks and multinational companies.

The takeaway for me is that most of the planet's rainforests go, but up in part, Brazil and West Africa, is already gone. This is strangely comforting in a nowhere to forest, except in way, especially as one reads the book's stories of local efforts at re-forestation, non-profit successes (limited), and even corporate enlightenment.

2022 Executive Committee Contacts

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Thanks for all you do for the environment,
Veronica Hayes
Newsletter Editor
Sierra Club Falls of the James Group