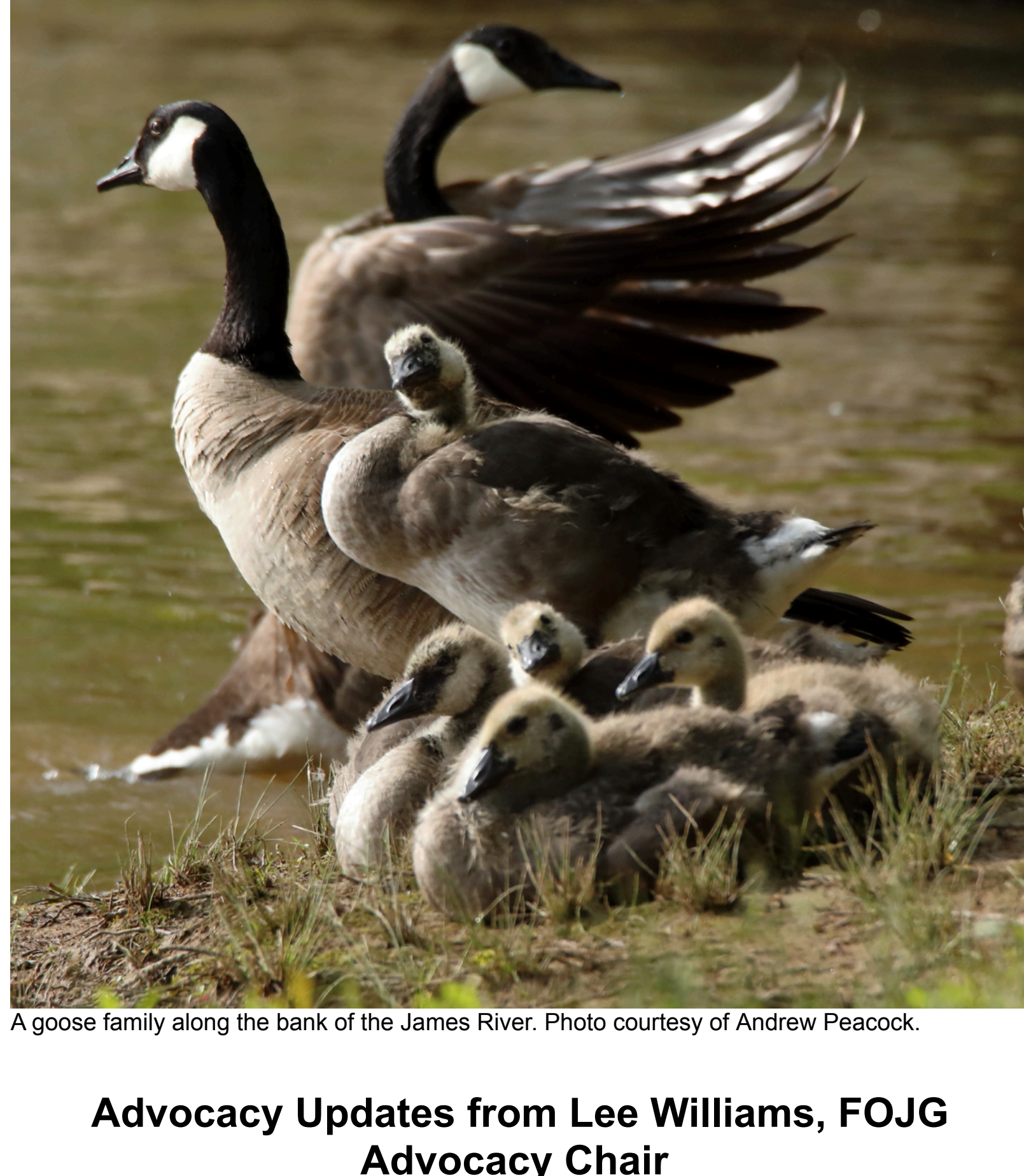


March 2023 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group



A goose family along the bank of the James River. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

Advocacy Updates from Lee Williams, FOJG Advocacy Chair

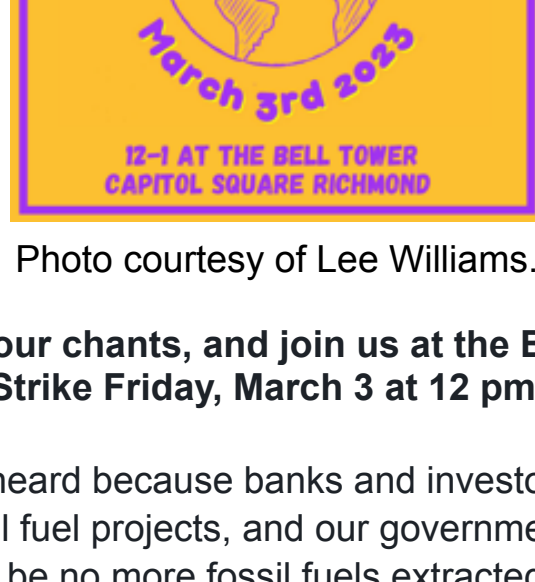


Photo courtesy of Lee Williams.

Make your signs, practice your chants, and join us at the Bell Tower on Capitol Square for the next Global Climate Strike Friday, March 3 at 12 pm.

We need to make our voices heard because banks and investors continue to fuel the climate crisis by investing in new fossil fuel projects, and our governments and institutions are letting it happen! We know there can be no more fossil fuels extracted if we are to limit global temperature rise below 1.5°C.

We will focus on policymakers' allowing the funding of new fossil fuel projects that are incompatible with the Paris Agreement. We will highlight the destructive impacts of new fossil fuel projects on frontline communities affected first and worst by climate change, and the need for a massive shift of funding towards renewables worldwide to enable a just energy transition for the benefit of all.

Six years in the making, Richmond City Council unanimously adopts the 571 page RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Action Plan which will serve as the City's official climate plan. It will serve as a guide to reduce our city governments greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030, allowing the City to achieve their 2020 goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. (Resolution No. 2020-R024)

Initiatives in the Climate Action Plan are expected to create nearly 11,000 new jobs over the next 27 years, save \$231 million in health costs, and bring \$3.6 billion in net benefits to Richmond.

Falls of the James ExCom Chair Joe Brancoli congratulated the Office of Sustainability on their historic work, and he spoke in favor of the resolutions passing to the Council during public comments. Many FOJG members were in attendance in the chamber or online.

Working in coalition with other Richmond community-based groups over the past two years, members of the Falls of the James Group's (FOJG) Advocacy Committee have been engaged in moving the City of Richmond to take more aggressive action on climate change. These efforts contributed to the passage of a non-binding resolution passed by the City Council in Sept. 2021: Declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency and calling for a wide range of actions to address climate change in each subsequent budget proposal. Many of these climate actions relate to electrification and energy efficiency, so we created the "Electrify RVA" working group.

A particular focus of our Electrify RVA group is the municipally owned Richmond Gas Works (RGW) which operates with minimal oversight by either the City Council or Mayor. Our efforts resulted in the climate emergency resolution providing "That the Council hereby commits to working with the City's Administration on an equitable plan to phase out reliance on gas and shift to accelerated investment in City-owned renewable energy and hereby recognizes that the continued operation of the City's gas utility is an obstacle to the City's goal of Net-Zero emissions in accordance Resolution No. 2020-R024, adopted June 8, 2020."

Over the course of our investigation into the operations of RGW, we determined from public records requests that RGW has a significant "lost gas"/methane leak problem that amounts to a 4% loss. That "lost gas" makes the RGW operations as impactful on climate change as burning coal in the City of Richmond.

With the help of a significant grant approved by the National Sierra Club in January, we have begun implementation of a grassroots methane monitoring program we are calling Beyond Methane. Stay tuned for ways you can get involved!

If you are a Richmond City resident and would like to support our efforts influencing City Council and Mayor Stoney to significantly address climate change by investing in emission free, clean energy initiatives in their fy2024 budget proposal, use this link: sierraclub.org/RVA2024budget to send your council member and the Mayor a letter today!

Contact Lee Williams, FOJG Advocacy Chair to get involved with Advocacy efforts!
lee.sierraclub.greennewdeala@gmail.com

RVA Environmental Film Festival

Please mark your calendars for the return of the **RVA Environmental Film Festival** from **March 10th through 21st**, with all events **free and in person**. Opening night at the Science Museum of Virginia will feature a reception and screening of the highly acclaimed new film **"Wildcat"** by local filmmaker Melissa Lesh. [Wildcat - Official Trailer | Prime Video - Bing video](#)

On Saturday and Sunday March 11th and 12th multiple films will be shown at the beautiful Byrd Theater in Carytown, including the Local Film Contest on Sunday. Please go to [Richmond Environmental Film Festival \(RVAEFF\)](#) for schedule and information.



FOJG Pony Pasture Rapids Park hikers on 2/19/23. Photo Courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

FOJG members and supporters had a great 3 - mile hike in the Pony Pasture Rapids Park on a beautiful winter day in February. Ralph White, former director of the James River Park System, gave a brief history of the development of the park. The river was high and at one point we had to turn around and backtrack a bit, otherwise we would have gotten wet feet fording a normally dry streambed. We were lucky to see one of the two breeding barred owls roosting high up in a tree. Check out this beautiful, urban park on your own!

Shavon Peacock - FOJG Sierra Club Outings Leader

What's Your Executive Committee (ExCom) Up To? Joe Brancoli, FOJG Chair

Hello Falls of the James Group members,

We want to bring you information on a regular basis about what the leadership of the group is working on.

The top thing on my mind right now is a major effort in which we hope to partner with citizens and community groups of all types. This began with our winning a grant from the National Sierra Club. With the money, we have purchased a methane detector, or "sniffer". We will take readings of this greenhouse gas throughout the Richmond area to find and highlight leaks from the many pipes which bring methane to customers of Richmond Gasworks. We will then map significant leaks in partnership with the University of Richmond. The goal is to raise awareness regarding the methane delivery system and provide information to help advocate for an energy transition.

We spoke to City Council on February 13th, when they adopted the RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Plan. We are appreciative of the work which went into this plan over the past several years but want the city to move into actions now.

We are actively searching for a meeting place to hold our monthly program meetings in person, now that it seems that we may not be able to go back to the Science Museum of Virginia. While we will continue to offer a virtual option, we feel that holding meetings at the same centrally located space regularly is important.

Looking further ahead, we're about to begin planning meetings with the University of Richmond on a Big Yard Sale back on its usual date, in May.

We will be watering the trees that we planted last Fall.

We plan to make endorsements in the Supervisor races in Henrico and Chesterfield this Fall.

This has been a snapshot of happenings as we enter March 2023, provided by Joe Brancoli, Chair of the Executive Committee.

Register for our FOJG Outings and Programs

3/4/2023 9 am - 12 pm Volunteer at Bellemeade Park Join FOJG members at Bellemeade Community Center to help spread wood chips in a no mow area and work in the Youth Garden. 1800 Lynnhaven Ave. Richmond, VA and follow signs into the park.

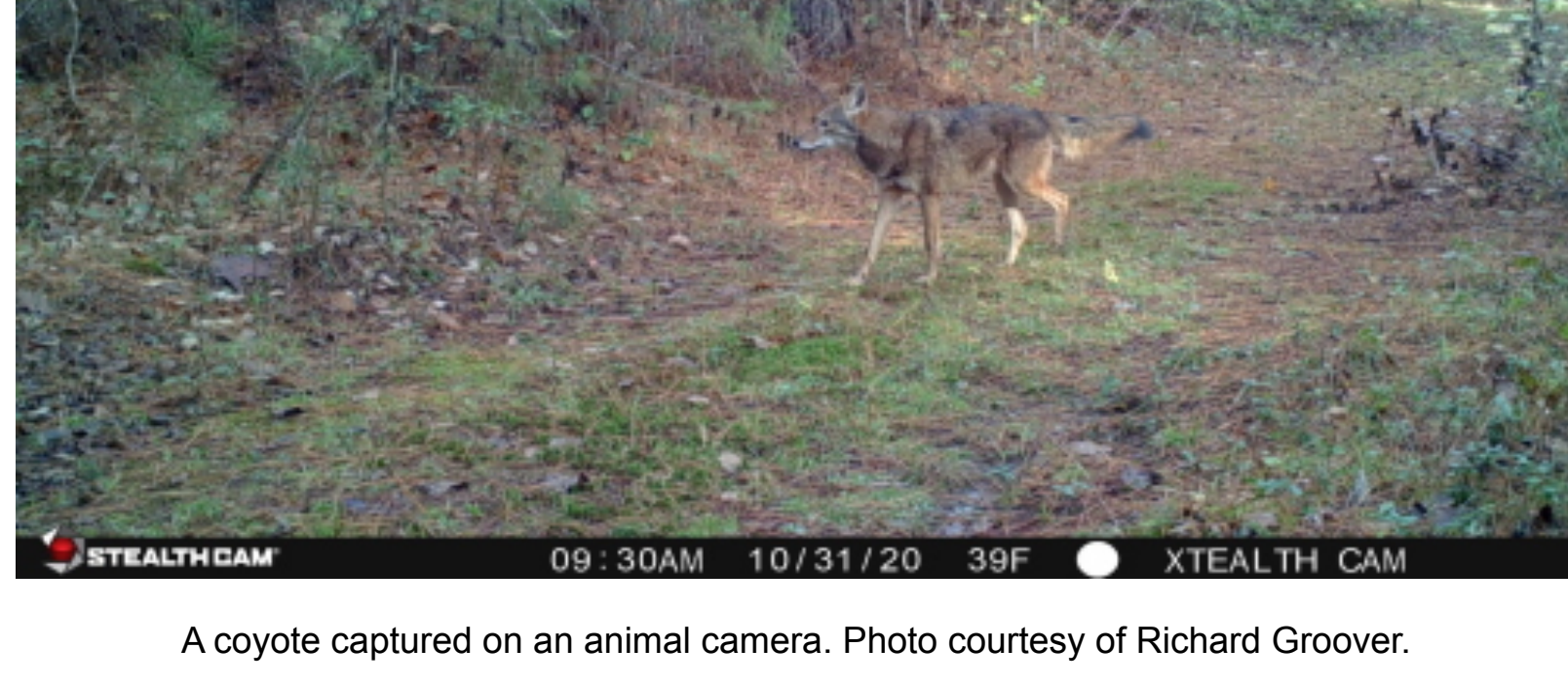


Courtney Hayes with salamander. Photo courtesy of Courtney Hayes.

3/14/23 7 pm FOJG Virtual Program - The Importance of Habitat Connectivity and Protecting VA's Wildlife Corridors with Courtney Hayes. Preserving habitat connectivity helps keep ecosystems healthy and intact. Specifically, preserving wildlife corridors, or connections between patches of important habitat, protects public health, reduces wildlife-vehicle collisions, allows wildlife to move to more suitable habitats, and makes our state more resilient in the face of a changing climate. We will discuss the importance of wildlife corridors, what work is being done to protect them in Virginia, and what work still needs to be done. Courtney Hayes is the Habitat Connectivity Program Director at Wild Virginia. Register here for the Zoom link. [The Importance of Habitat Connectivity & Protecting VA's Wildlife Corridors \(sierraclub.org\)](#)

3/25/23 9:30 am - 12:30 pm Hike at High Bridge State Park Register here [High Bridge Hike \(sierraclub.org\)](#) We will hike along the High Bridge trail near Farmville starting at the Rochelle parking lot, to Camp Paradise and along the Spur Line trail. We'll also follow the trail below the bridge to see the historic bridge structure from below. Afterwards, those who wish to can stop in Farmville for lunch.

Total hiking distance will be about 5.5 miles, total time about three hours. The trail will include gravel, wood, and dirt sections. Rain date: Sunday, March 26th.



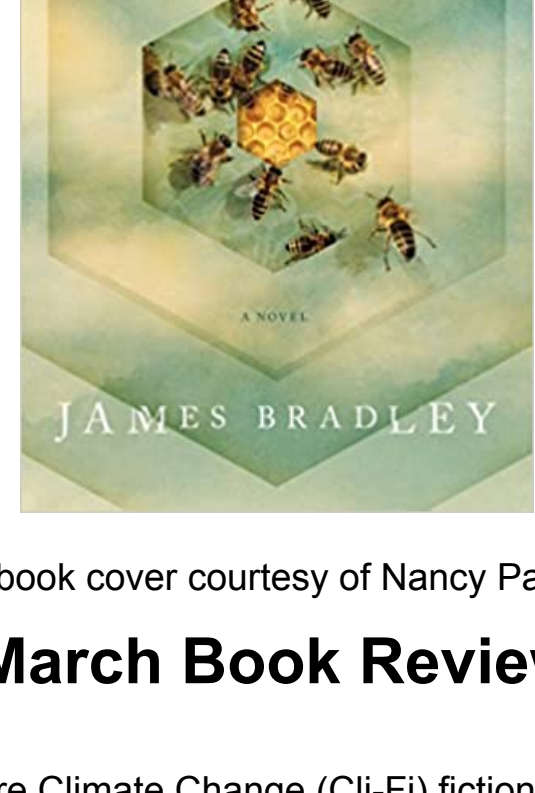
A coyote captured on an animal camera. Photo courtesy of Richard Groover.

4/11/23 7 pm FOJG Virtual Program - The Amazing Coyotes are Everywhere with Dr. Richard Groover. The Eastern Coyote has now settled in all of North America and is present in every county and city in Virginia. This presentation will provide information about their behavior, especially in the urban environment. Also included are strategies to mitigate their presence. Register here for the Zoom link. [FOJG Virtual Program: The Amazing Coyotes are Everywhere \(sierraclub.org\)](#)

If you missed our virtual 2/21/24 virtual Sierra Club Falls of the James Group (FOJG) program on Student Environmental Advocacy and Research at the University of Richmond (UR), you can see the program at this YouTube link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SurfY2YXgM>

You can check out our local free virtual and in-person events at the FOJG calendar here [Events/Calendar | Sierra Club](#)

To see what free virtual and in-person Sierra Club events you can attend throughout the state, check out the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club calendar here [Events/Calendar | Sierra Club](#)



Clade book cover courtesy of Nancy Patterson.

March Book Review

Clade by **James Bradley**, where Climate Change (Cli-Fi) fiction meets Sci-Fi, follows a family through years and generations, starting in the distant near future. The story opens as Adam, a climate scientist, studies changes in Antarctica, while his wife, at home in Sydney, awaits the results of IVF. While the plot primarily follows Adam as he traverses the world in his studies and his extended family, its most engaging feature is the setting. It offers a view of a dramatically changing world that alters every aspect of daily life as we know it. Realistic? You be the judge. 324 pages.

Nancy Patterson is a member of the FOJG Membership Engagement Committee. Nancy gave Joe a break from his Book Nook book review this month!

Join the Sierra Club

If you are not a member and are interested in joining the oldest, largest grassroots environmental organization in the country, you can join for as little as \$15 here. [Join Today, Become a champion. \(sierraclub.org\)](#) Once you join the national Sierra Club, you are automatically a member of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Falls of the James Group Sierra Club.

Add your voice to the hundreds of thousands of Americans committed to leaving our children a living legacy — clean air, safe drinking water, and natural grandeur. From Yosemite National Park to the Grand Canyon, since 1892 the Sierra Club has been instrumental in preserving nature's most splendid wild places. Thank You!

Shavon Peacock
Sierra Club Falls of the James Group Newsletter Editor

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