



September 2023 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group



An Amberwing dragonfly. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

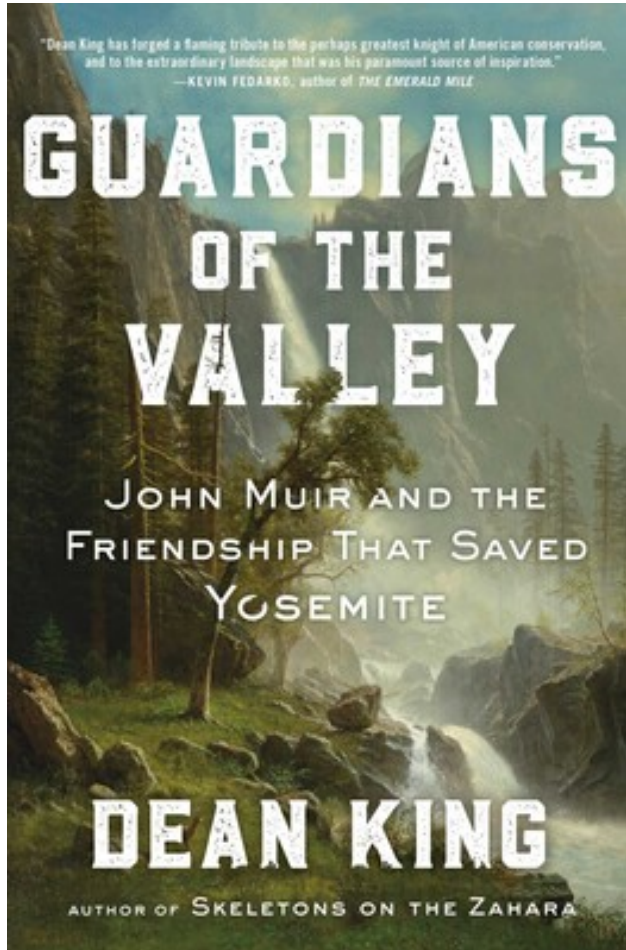
**Send us your exceptional Virginia
flora/fauna/landscape/people enjoying nature
photographs for the FOJG newsletter and Facebook
page!**

We would love to get FOJG Sierra Club members' high quality photos to share in each newsletter. Please send your photos to Shavon Peacock at shavonandrew@verizon.net and you may have the chance to have your photo in the newsletter and posted on our Facebook page ([1](#)) [Sierra Club - Falls of the James | Facebook](#) At the end of the newsletter year (4/24), we plan to have photo awards, so stay tuned! Thanks!

FOJG Programs

**We will be having in-person/virtual hybrid programs
this year. Join us at Congregation Or Ami for our
9/12/23 Program with Richmond author Dean King.**

Attend in-person and you get the chance to win one of two door prizes - Dean's *Guardians of the Valley* book!



Photos of *Guardians of the Valley* book and of Dean King courtesy of Dean King.

9/12/23 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG In-Person and Virtual Program: *Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite* with Dean King. Richmond author Dean King will talk about his new 2023 book *Guardians of the Valley - John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite*. **Following his presentation, participants can buy his book, and Dean will sign books sold by the local book dealer Fountain Bookstore, Inc.** This book is the dramatic and uplifting story of legendary outdoorsman and conservationist John Muir's journey to become the man who saved Yosemite — from the author of the bestselling *Skeletons on the Zahara: A True Story of Survival*. Join us in person at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235. Register here if you want to participate via Zoom. [FOJG In-Person and Virtual Program: *Guardians of the Valley* with Dean King](#).

Advocacy Updates



Richmond City Mayor Stoney and over 40 others protest Governor Youngkin's attempt to repeal the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) on 8/26/23. Photos courtesy of Glen Besa.

Virginians Rally in the Rain to Resist Youngkin's Illegal Efforts to Repeal RGGI by Glen Besa

On Glenn Youngkin's first day in office as Governor, he signed Executive Order 9 setting the wheels in motion to repeal Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a regional cap and trade program for greenhouse gases (GHG) that in less than three years has helped Virginia cut carbon emissions and raised more than \$600 million for low income energy efficiency programs and for funds to adapt to sea level rise and flooding.

This summer, VA Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the state Air Pollution Control Board took the final steps in the Governor's plan to repeal RGGI, *except they didn't*. They didn't because they don't have the authority. In 2020, the General Assembly passed the Community Flood Preparedness Act that committed Virginia to joining RGGI, and to date, the General Assembly has not repealed that law.

With the Governor's illegal repeal set to take effect on August 30, Falls of the James Group (FOJG) volunteers and others came together to Rally for RGGI on Monday, August 28th outside the entrance to Capital Square, site of the State House and the Governor's Mansion. Joined by Mayor Stoney and Richmond Councilwoman Katherine Jordan, more than 40 of us gathered in the rain to chants of "RGGI is Law" led by Lee Williams, FOJG advocacy chair. Our own Jessica Sims, representing Appalachian Voices, spoke as well.

We continue to keep the pressure on Governor Youngkin, fighting to defend RGGI! On August 21, the Southern Environmental Law Center filed suit to challenge the Governor's illegal action in court. Because the law is clear, we expect to win, but that does not mean Youngkin won't continue to obstruct administration of RGGI--for example, he needs to renew a contract with RGGI in December. Will we have to sue him again to compel his compliance with the law? Stay tuned.

Advocacy Chair Lee Williams says there are three things you need to know about NOW:

1) The March to End Fossil Fuels on Sunday, September 17th in NYC is anticipated to be the largest climate march in years, urging President Biden to stop the expansion of fossil fuels.

 *There are only 3 spots left on the bus from RVA to NYC. [RESERVE YOURS TODAY!](#)* 

From approval of the Willow oil project, to the Alaska LNG project, to the **Mountain Valley Pipeline**, we need bold action to combat the climate crisis and protect communities from climate change and the impacts of fossil fuel infrastructure projects. See more [here](#).

2) Richmond City Council is poised to pass our Beyond Methane RVA PUC "Public Utility Commission" September 25th. This is fundamentally a good governance ordinance that will enhance public awareness and transparency of the important and complex operations of our city managed public utilities.

Richmond public utilities and services, including *water, gas, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste*, are essential public services that are billed directly to most residents and businesses and constitute a significant share of the city's operating and capital budget. A better informed public and city council will be better able to provide oversight of these basic city operations.

 [City Residents: Use this link to send a quick letter to Mayor Stoney and your Richmond City Councilmember supporting the adoption of Councilmember Andreas Addison's Public Utility Commission ordinance](#) 

3) Arbor Day RVA is coming back from Friday, Oct. 20th to Sunday, Oct. 29th. FoJG is organizing a much needed campus beautification project at MLK Middle School. Other Arbor Day events will be posted on the [Reforest Richmond website](#) in October.

Please reach out with any questions and let me know if you are interested in helping out with the MLK Middle School beautification project! Contact Lee Williams at lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com.

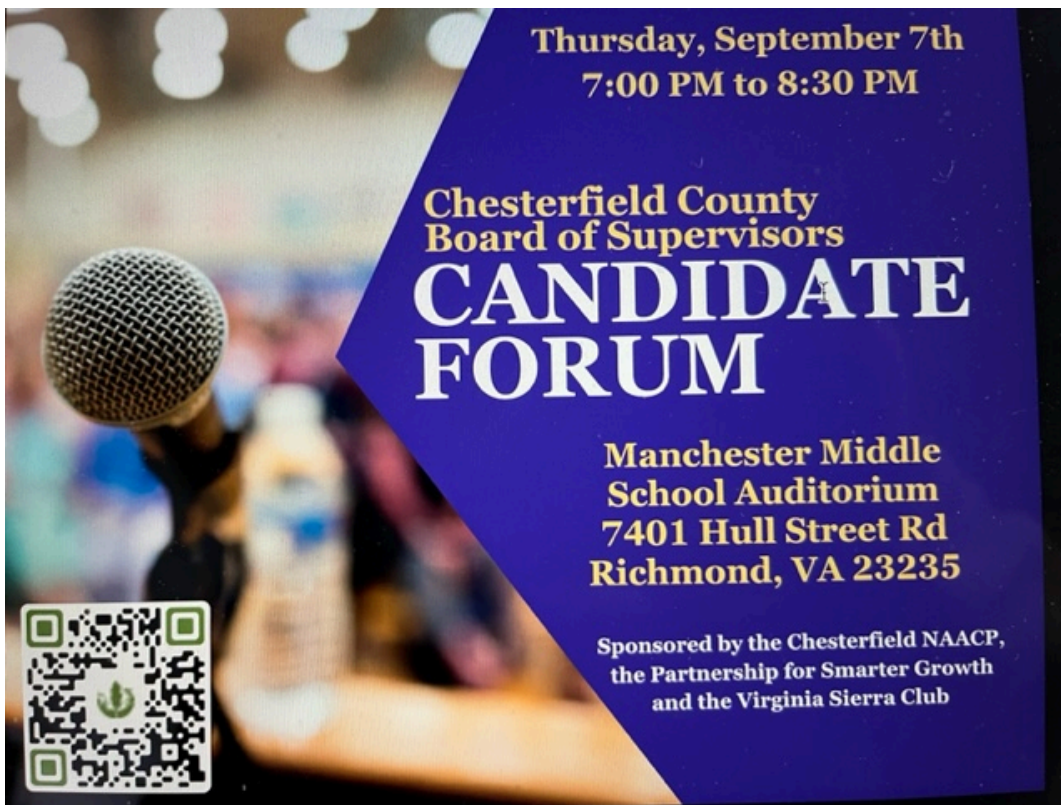


Image courtesy of Lee Williams

9/7/23 7:00 - 8:30 pm Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors Forum, Manchester Middle School Auditorium, 7401 Hull Street Rd N, Richmond, VA 23235.

The Sierra Club Falls of the James Group (FOJG), the Chesterfield NAACP and the Partnership for Smarter Growth are holding a non-partisan candidate forum for all candidates for the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors. Juan Conde, retired news anchor for WRIC, will be the moderator.

The forum is intended to inform the Chesterfield voters on issues related to planning and land use, civil rights, the environment and good government. Our objective is to provide a forum where ideas and positions can be exchanged fairly and in a professional and thoughtful manner that will inform Chesterfield voters on the issues. The forum will have a live audience and live streaming available to all voters. The public is invited to attend.

Signup Instructions: Please RSVP here if you are planning to attend. [FOJG - Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors Forum \(sierraclub.org\)](https://www.sierraclub.org/fojg-chesterfield)



Image courtesy of Lee Williams.

9/13/23 7:00 - 8:30 pm Henrico County Board of Supervisors Candidate Forum at the Lipman Auditorium in the Massey Library Technology Center of the J Sargeant Reynolds Community College Parham Rd campus [1651 E. Parham Rd. Richmond VA 23228](https://www.jrcc.edu/1651-E-Parham-Rd-Richmond-VA-23228).

The Sierra Club Falls of the James Group (FOJG), the Partnership for Smarter Growth and Henrico Conservation Action Network are holding a non-partisan candidate forum for all candidates for Henrico County Board of Supervisors. The forum will take place on **Wednesday, September 13th from 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM**

Tom Lappas, publisher for the Henrico Citizen, will be the moderator. The forum is intended to inform the Henrico voters on issues related to planning and land use, civil rights, the environment and good government. Our objective is to provide a forum where ideas and positions can be exchanged fairly and in a professional and thoughtful manner that will inform Henrico voters on the issues. The forum will have a live audience and live streaming available to all voters.

Signup Instructions: Please RSVP here if you are planning to attend. [FOJG - Henrico County Board of Supervisors Forum \(sierraclub.org\)](https://sierraclub.org/fojg-henrico-county-board-of-supervisors-forum)

9/14/23 at 6:00 - 7:30 pm Effective Advocacy and Civic Engagement at the Richmond Room in the Richmond Main Library, 101 East Franklin Street Richmond, VA 23219

Hosted in partnership with the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Richmond Public Law Library will celebrate Constitution Day with an active, informative workshop on civic engagement featuring **Tim Cywinski, Communications Lead for our Chapter**. The event is designed to equip attendees with knowledge on state government, learn new techniques for effective communication and advocacy with elected officials. Get connected to information and resources to make change in your community! Refreshments will be provided. Register for this empowering event at <https://rvalibrary.libcal.com/event/10821951>.

Henrico Should Adopt a Climate Action Plan Petition

If you are a Henrico County resident, please consider signing this petition asking the Henrico County Board of Supervisors to determine the best policies for the county to significantly reduce local carbon emissions while keeping residents safe from the impacts of climate change. In order to manage this process, the Board should create and fund an Office of Sustainability, and empower it to implement the climate plan policies with the urgency necessary to address the climate challenge. [Petition · Henrico Should Adopt a Climate Action Plan · Change.org](#).

If you'd like to volunteer to join our Electrify RVA and Beyond Methane RVA Teams, contact Lee Williams at lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com.



Image courtesy of Tim Cywinski.

The Sierra Club Virginia Chapter has launched a podcast that explores Virginia's most pressing issues and explains how we the people can be the difference in securing a livable future. The podcast features difference guests every week and breaks down climate issues in a way that is accessible for anyone to understand. You can listen to "[How 'bout we don't?! the pollution solution show](#)" at <https://vasierra.club/podcast> or anywhere you get to listen to podcasts.

Congratulations to our new Virginia Chapter Sierra Club Director Connor Kish!



Connor Kish. Photo courtesy of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter.

A veteran of many successful political campaigns and policy initiatives in Virginia, Connor served Delegate Betsy Carr as her legislative aide in the House of Delegates for three years and later assisted House Majority Co-Whip Delegate Mike Mullin. In 2018, he was campaign manager for the Late Congressman Donald McEachin's successful bid for a second term in Congress. Connor last served as Sierra Club VA Chapter Legislative and Political Director. Connor graduated from Randolph-Macon College with a B.A. in Political Science and Communications Studies and currently resides in Richmond.

August FOJG Outings and Tabling Events



York River State Park hikers. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

FOJG York River State Park Hike - The Falls of the James Group (FOJG) had a hot but fun hike to the fossil beach along the York River and on the Taskinas Creek Trail Saturday August 26th. Eight of us found a few fossil shell fragments along the beach in addition to marooned Common Moon Jellyfish. We then hiked the Taskinas Creek Trail which parallels Taskinas Creek, the site of a 17th and 18th century public tobacco warehouse where local planters stored their crops to be shipped to England. Taskinas Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve supports research and monitoring of this moderately brakish tidal habitat. 10,000-year-old Paleo-Indian activities are documented at York River State Park, and Werowocomoco, Powhatan's principal residence where he and Pocahontas met John Smith, is just across the York River from the visitor center.



FOJG members Lisa Thompson and Tom Beach speak with hundreds of incoming freshmen at University of Richmond new students tabling event August 26th, 2023. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.



Tabling at St. Stephens Farmers Market on 9/2/23. FOJG Executive Committee Members (from left to right) Glen Besa, Sheri Shannon, and Joe Brancoli. Photo courtesy of Lee Williams and Sheri Shannon.

Falls of the James ExCom members spent Saturday morning this Labor Day weekend tabling at the Farmers Market at St Stephens on Grove Avenue. We shared a wide variety of information about our activities including our meeting schedule, outings, and ways to get involved advocating for communities green spaces and clean air and water. Thank you to market manager Anna Jones for her gracious welcome. In keeping with their commitment to environmental stewardship, St. Stephen's Church hosts a year-round farmers market every Saturday that offers locally produced seasonal vegetables, fruit, eggs, poultry, beef, pork, flowers, bread, cheese, pasta, and other foods and handmade goods. For more information and a list of weekly vendors, please visit www.ststephensrva.org/community/farmers-market/
Lee Williams, FOJG Advocacy Chair



Hikers at Dutch Gap Conservation Area Saturday 9/2/2023 led by Chapter Outings Leader Ralph Grove second on left. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

October-December FOJG Programs



WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.

And it's not too late for concerted,
collective action for change.



Mark Deutsch and The Carbon Almanac. Photos courtesy of Mark Deutsch.

10/10/23 – 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG In-Person and Virtual Program: The Carbon Almanac: Facts. Connection. Action. Presented by Mark Deutsch, co-author and contributor to the Carbon Almanac. Released in the summer of 2022, The Carbon Almanac is a global, best-selling book and source of reliable and easily understandable knowledge on climate change that you can share to create meaningful impact. Mark, one of the lead contributors to The Carbon Almanac project, will share more about what The Carbon Almanac is, who is behind it, and how it can provide ways to talk about climate change and help drive systemic change. Two in-person participants have the chance to win The Carbon Almanac as a door prize! Join us in person at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235. Register here if you want to participate via Zoom. [FOJG In-Person & Virtual Program: The Carbon Almanac: Facts. Connection. Action.](#)



Photo of the Appomattox River taken from The Capital Region Land Conservancy's property in Colonial Heights looking back at Campbell's Bridge. Photo courtesy of Parker Agelasto.

11/14/23 – 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG In-Person and Virtual Program: What's Happening in the Richmond Region? The Land Conservation View by Parker Agelasto, Executive Director of the Capital Region Land Conservancy. "With only about 6% of the land protected in the Richmond region, the small but mighty Capital Region Land Conservancy is making its best effort to conserve land for future generations. That includes working lands like forests and farms, important natural habitats, and equitable public access to nature for all our residents. Learn how CRLC has contributed to the ambitious goals outlined in President Biden's 2021 Executive Order committing to the conservation of 30% of the land in the United States before 2030. How has the Richmond region been doing and what might a path forward look like to support these efforts?" Join us in person at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235. Register here if you want to participate via Zoom. [FOJG Program:What's Happening in the Richmond Region?The Land Conservation View](#)

12/12/23 – 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm Pot Luck Dinner and Green Giant Awards. This program will only be an in-person program at Congregation Or Ami at 9400 W. Huguenot Rd Richmond VA 23235.

You can check out other local free virtual and in-person events at the FOJG calendar here [Events/Calendar | Sierra Club](#) Stay tuned for September and October FOJG outings.

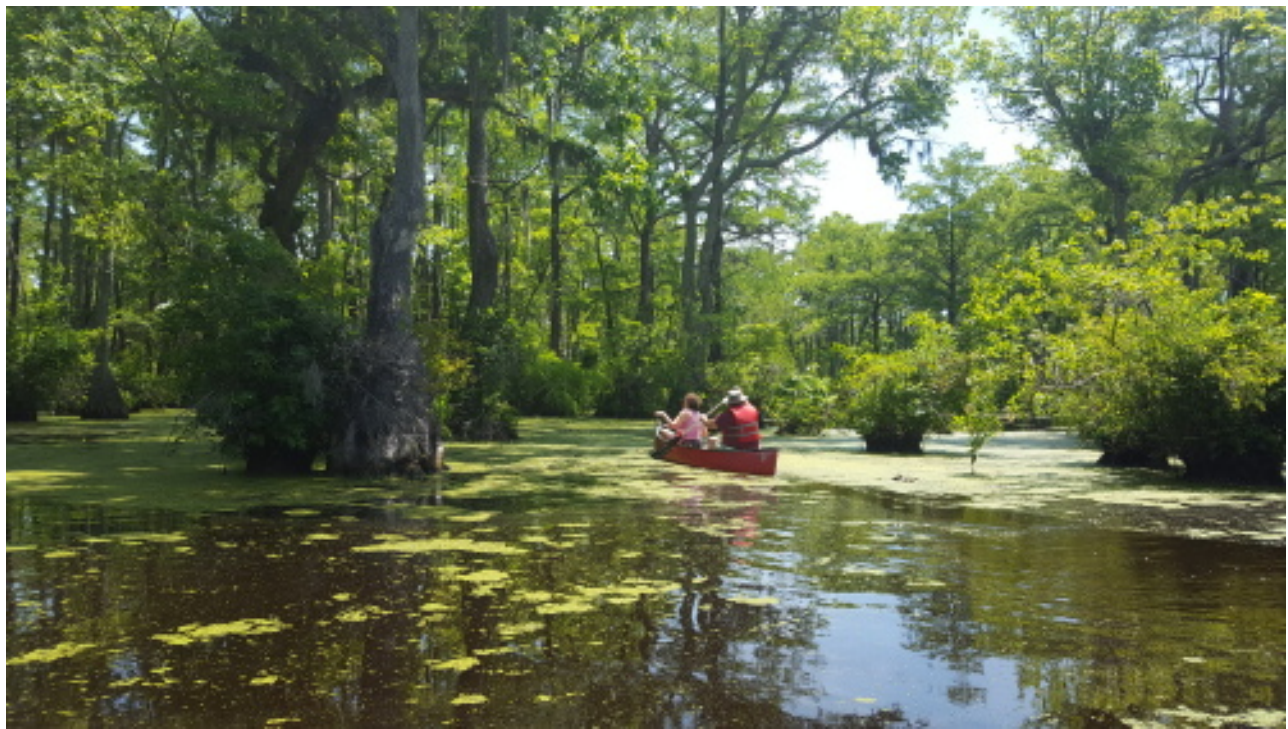
To see what free virtual and in-person Sierra Club events you can attend throughout the state, check out the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club calendar here [Events Calendar | Sierra Club](#)

Upcoming FOJG Outings



Beaver Lake at Pocahontas State Park. Photo courtesy of Ralph Grove.

9/23/2023 9:30 am - 12:00 pm. Hike Beaver Lake at Pocahontas State Park. This hike will cover the Beaver Lake trail and part of the Ground Pine trail at Pocahontas State Park. The trails go around Beaver Lake, through woods and over hills, with views of the lake. The hike is easy to moderate, with a few hills. Total hiking distance will be about 3.5 miles, total time about 2.5 hours. Afterwards, you may want to visit the Civilian Conservation Corps museum, which is located at the trailhead. Register here for the hike. [Hike - Beaver Lake at Pocahontas S.P.](#)



Paddling at Merchants Millpond State Park among tupelo and cypress trees. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

10/14/23 9:00 am - 1:00 pm FOJG Canoe Paddle at NC's Merchants Millpond State Park. Join us for this beautiful paddle in a tupelo and cypress swamp at Merchants Millpond State Park. The park is 2 hours south of Richmond VA in Gatesville NC. We will meet at 9 am at the Visitor Center and rent canoes, paddles and life jackets from the park ranger there. Each canoe is \$25 for up to 4 hours. The paddle will be about 3 hours. Limit is 9 people so sign up now! [FOJG Canoe Paddle at NC Merchants Millpond State Park \(sierraclub.org\)](https://sierraclub.org)

Sierra Club Outings Leaders Wanted!

If you are interested in becoming a Sierra Club outings leader, please contact Ralph Grove, Virginia Chapter Outings Chair, for more information. Leader training includes a course on Sierra Club practices for outings, and separate first aid certification. Following that, prospective leaders must organize a hike, bike, or kayak trip (if getting certified in that area) under supervision of a certified leader. Ben Jealous, Executive Director of the National Sierra Club, met with FOJG and state chapter leaders this summer and emphasized his goal of getting more people out in nature. If interested in becoming an outings leader, contact Ralph Grove at rfgrove@icloud.com.

Environment at Risk 9/14-11/5/2023



Environment at Risk Art Exhibit at Glen Allen Cultural Arts Center. Photo courtesy of Jess Sims.

Other Environmental Activities

9/14/23 6:00 - 8:00 pm Environment at Risk Art Exhibit Opening Reception at the Glen Allen Cultural Arts Center 2880 Mountain Road Glen Allen, VA. Environment at Risk is a group exhibition featuring artists addressing the topic of the environment and the risks to the outdoor places and communities they love. Hosted by Appalachian Voices, the exhibit features painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture and installation, and a live music performance from Holy River. Environment at Risk is on display in the Gumenick Family Gallery from September 14 - November 5, 2023 and uses visual language to communicate the various environmental harms occurring within Virginia and the region, and the impacts to people and ecosystems. [The Cultural Arts Center At Glen Allen - Glen Allen, Virginia \(artsglenallen.com\)](https://artsglenallen.com)

9/21/23 RVA Green Drinks [Rivercity Roll](#) | [Jeremy Hoffman, PhD](#) Check out the Facebook page for more details [\(1\) Facebook](#)

9/28/23 7:00 pm "Coloring the Conservation Conversation" with Dr. J. Drew Lanham. VCU Social Justice Lecture 2023: Ornithologist and wildlife ecologist J. Drew Lanham will address racism and the great outdoors at VCU James Branch Cabell Lecture Hall and remotely via Zoom. [2023 News](#) | [Social Justice Lecture 2023](#) | [VCU Libraries](#) Register here. [VCU Libraries](#)

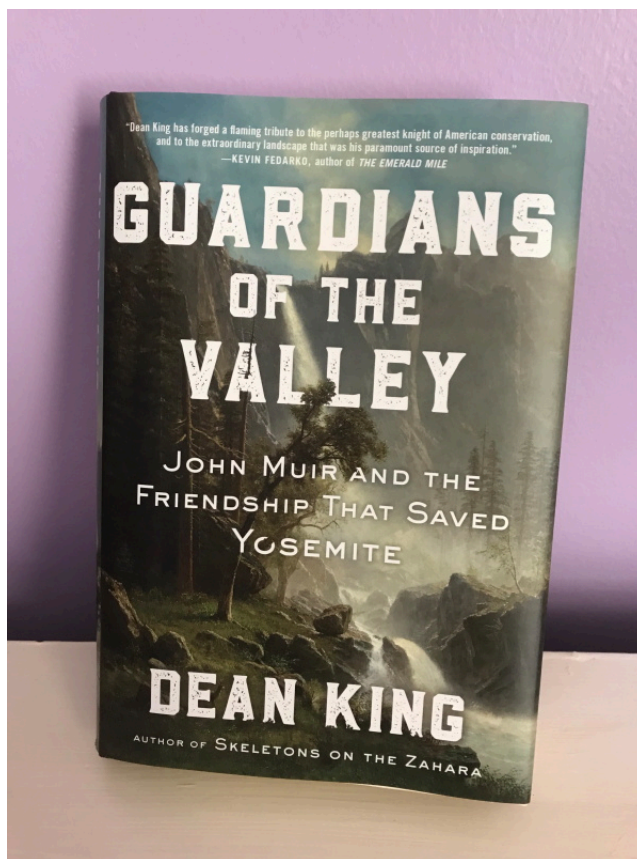
9/30/23 9:00 am - 12 pm National Drive Electric Week Electricarpalooza 2023 Dorey Park Farmers Market, 2999 Darbytown Road Henrico, VA 23231 Share your experience and/or show your Electric Vehicle (EV). Register here to attend. [National Drive Electric Week • Electricarpalooza 2023 • Henrico, VA • Sep 30, 2023](#)

10/7/23 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Conserve and Create First Saturday of each month at Bellemeade Park at 1800 Krouse St. Richmond VA. [Bellemeade Park – Giving Bellemeade its Roots and Wings \(bellemeadeparkva.com\)](https://bellemeadeparkva.com) Help with garden chores in creating an outdoor campus for the children and families of this Southside Richmond community. This beautiful outdoor learning campus is dedicated to the outdoor education of the community. Register here via HandsOn Richmond. [HandsOn is now cfENGAGE](#) | [Conserve and Create -clean up](#)

10/21/23 10:00 am - 3:30 pm Plant Native Festival sponsored by Keep Henrico Beautiful. Crump Park at 3400 Mountain Road Glen Allen, VA 23060. Native Plant sale from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. At 2:30 pm, keynote speaker Nancy Lawson will talk. She is the author of *The Humane Gardener* and *Wildscape*. [Plant Native! Festival - Henrico County, Virginia](#)

FOJG FACEBOOK UPDATE

Please follow us/like us on the Sierra Club - Falls of the James Group ([5](#)) [Sierra Club - Falls of the James | Facebook](#) as we are phasing out this page Sierra Club-Falls of the James Group [Facebook](#).



Guardians of the Valley by Dean King. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

Joe's Book Nook

Hello fellow Sierra readers,

Do we have a tie-in this month! A local author, who has received national attention for previous non-fiction works, has written a book about John Muir, the origins of Sierra Club, and the effort to preserve Yosemite National Park, will be our September speaker, inaugurating in person meetings to continue through the year at Congregation Or Ami, 9400 Huguenot Road 23235.

'Guardians of the Valley' by Dean King explores in meticulous detail the creation of Yosemite National Park, and the machinations which led to the building of a reservoir to supply water for San Francisco within the Park. The book also takes us to a time when Muir, leader of the nascent Sierra Club for its first two decades, met with U.S. Presidents, and famously led them on camping trips. Or in advertising poster style:

Witness the birth of a great environmental organization!

Hobnob with Presidents and leaders of State in pristine Nature!!

Thrill to the enduring struggle between preservation and despoliation!!!

Usually, I suggest that you purchase at local independent booksellers, however, this time, I have a better plan: come to our meeting on Tuesday September 12th at 7:00 pm. See old friends, hear from Dean, and buy the book there-how perfect!

Note that this will be the place we hold in person meetings through at least January.

Joe B

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. \(sierraclub.org\)](https://www.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
Membership Engagement Committee Chair, Outings Leader, and Newsletter Editor

2023 Executive Committee Contacts

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