

January 2024 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group



Nutcracker with a seed. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

January FOJG Program



Danny Plaughter, Executive Director of both Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR) and the Virginia Transit Association (VTA). Photo courtesy of Danny Plaughter.

1/9/2024 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG program "The Case for Transforming Rail in the Commonwealth: Why it's important, and what it means for our communities" with Danny Plaughter, Executive Director of both Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR) and the Virginia Transit Association (VTA). 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: The Case for Transforming Rail in Virginia](#) ([sierraclub.org](#))

Danny Plaughter serves as the Executive Director of both Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR) Home (VHSR) and the Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Virginia Transit Association - Home Page ([vta.org](#)). He joined VHSR in 2007 where he helped to create the Virginia Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund (IPROC) and make Virginia one of the first states with a dedicated funding source for passenger rail. He joined the Virginia Transit Association (VTA) in 2019 to help lead their policy and outreach efforts.

February FOJG Program



Radhika Barua - Top Photo Courtesy of Radhika Barua and Emily Smith - Bottom Photo Courtesy of Emily Smith.

2/13/24 7:00 - 8:30 pm FOJG program - Workforce Development for a Circular Revolution in Critical Materials Research with Dr. Radhika Barua and Emily Smith. 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: Workforce Development for a Circular Revolution in Critical Materials](#) ([sierraclub.org](#))

The energy transition paradigm is fundamentally changing the global energy sector as the world moves from depletable hydrocarbon resources to cheap and practically inexhaustible renewable energy sources. However, in an ironic twist, the rapid deployment of clean energy technologies demands large amounts of critical raw materials associated with supply chain complexities and energy-intensive extraction and manufacturing processes. Ensuring these materials are available in the required capacities and at their highest value and function will dictate a robust circular economy – a system where products and their constituent raw materials are recovered and regenerated at the end of their service lives. This paradigm shift requires a systemic change, requiring technological (e.g. in the production process and product design) and economic (e.g. secondary raw materials market, new business models, industrial symbiosis) innovations.

Education drives scientific advancements, and there is an urgent need to train a qualified workforce that can effectively design, promote, and implement concepts of sustainable materials development and green manufacturing within the framework of the circular economy system. Effective designs often emerge from those able to think creatively, critically, and collaboratively. This requires us to understand the communities of people and the places impacted by our design, promotion, and implementation. Ultimately, a question arises: how can we generate positive changes for the environment from the classroom? In this talk, we will share information regarding ongoing efforts to teach circular economy concepts supported by citizen science to interdisciplinary students affiliated with the School of Engineering, School of Business, and School of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Advocacy

Hello Falls of the James Group members,

As we enter 2024, there are recent developments on a number of local governing bodies. The largest is the Virginia General Assembly. Both the Senate and House of Delegates begin the year with slight Democratic majorities. As they start the 2024 Session soon in Richmond, we FOJG members could not be better placed to visit them and encourage them in the brand-new building. The 2024 Session runs from January 10th through March 8th.

Next, I will mention the Boards of Supervisors of Henrico and Chesterfield. After last Fall's election, these are venturing with great public servants.

Many of them were endorsed by Falls of the James Group, after forums were held in each county, and questionnaires sent to all candidates. (You can view the questionnaire and responses on our Group website.) These efforts were led by Ex Com (Executive Committee) members Aileen Rivera and Glen Besa.

Speaking of our own Ex Com, it is composed of nine fantastic members (whose email addresses can be found at the end of each edition of this newsletter), namely:

- Glen Besa (Secretary)
- Joe Brancoli (Chair)
- Kevin Cianfarni
- Olivia Jurcisin
- Carliee Ribley
- Aileen Rivera
- Sheri Shannon
- Bruce Tarr
- Lee Williams (Chair of Advocacy Committee)

[Officers are from 2023]

Andrew Peacock returns as Treasurer.

Shavon Peacock is newsletter editor and Chair of Member Engagement Committee.

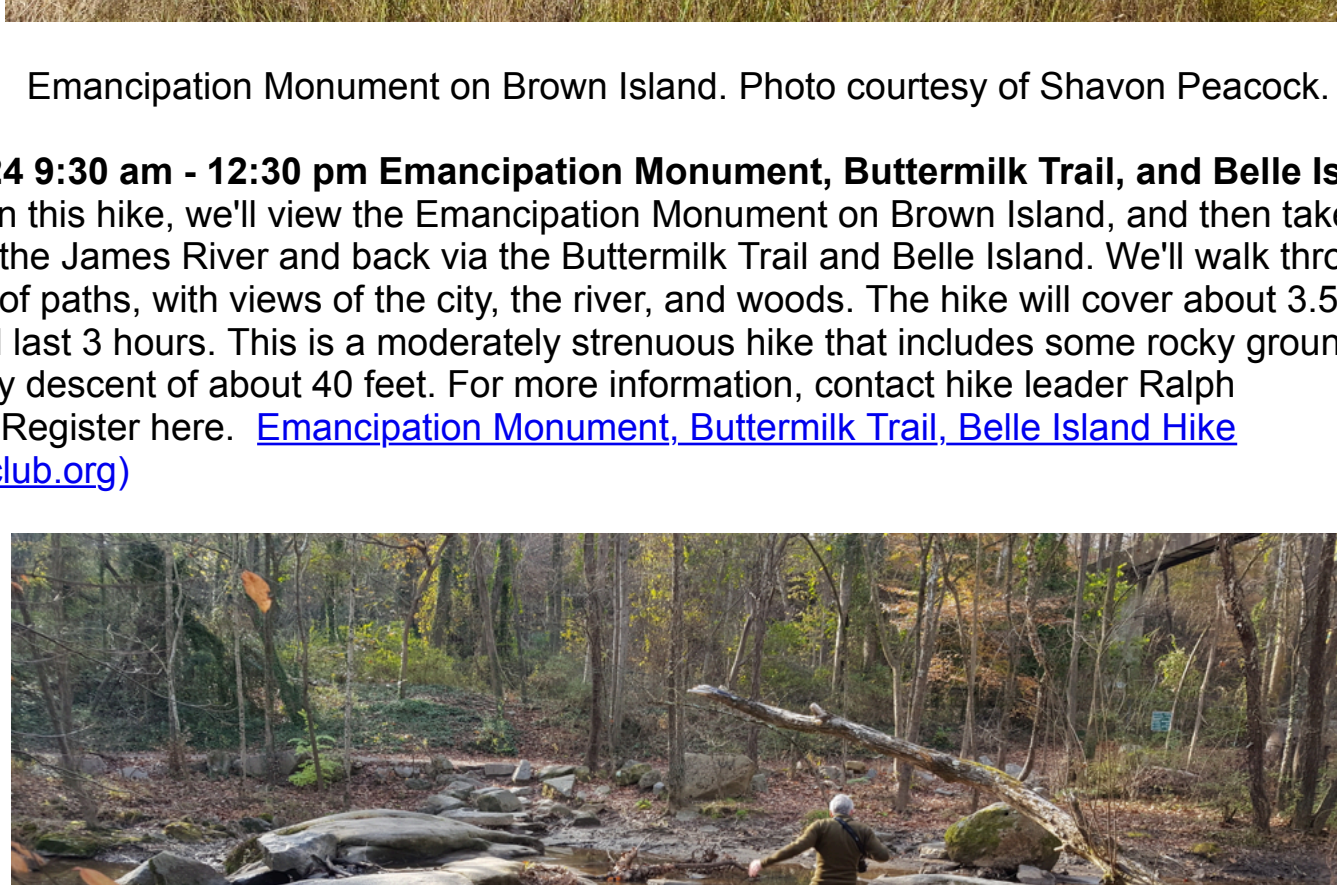
1/18/24 7:30 am - 3 pm Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Lobby Day at the Capitol in Richmond [Here is the landing page to register to attend!](#) [Click here!](#)

For the first time since before the pandemic, we are bringing back the Sierra Club lobby day at the Capitol during the General Assembly session. Those that register for the event will receive additional details ahead of the date, but, what you can expect generally speaking is:

- On 1/18, an early morning meeting in Richmond around 7:30 am to get ready for the day.
- Lobbying legislators and staff in the General Assembly Building and Capitol from 8:30 to 11:30.
- A Chapter-provided catered lunch from about 12 to 2 pm!
- Heading home by 3 pm.

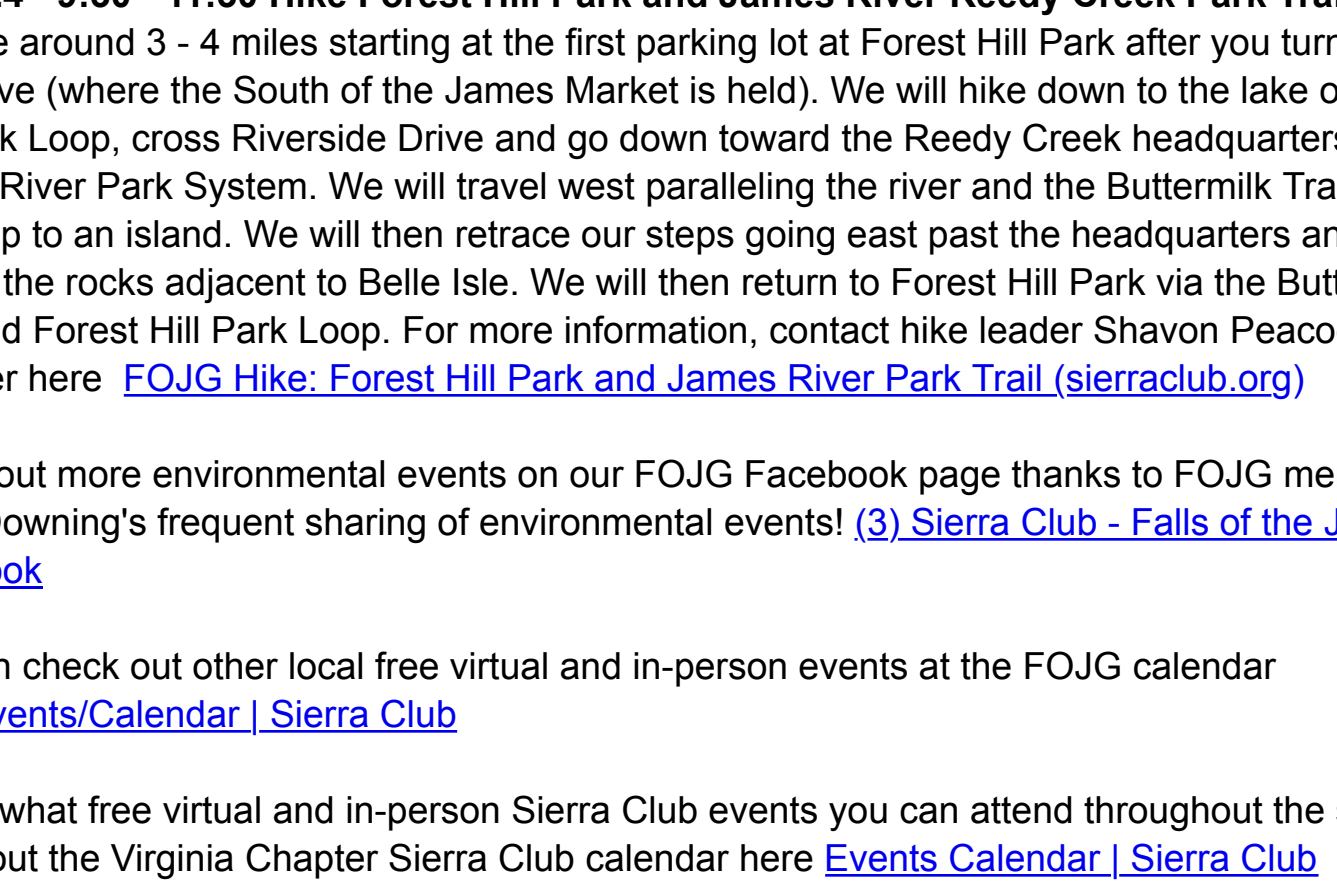
This will be an in-person only event, and we will not be able to accommodate virtual participation on the day of the event. There is no cost to attend the event.

Upcoming Sierra Club Hikes



Emancipation Monument on Brown Island. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

1/7/2024 9:30 am - 12:30 pm Emancipation Monument, Buttermilk Trail, and Belle Island Hike On this hike, we'll view the Emancipation Monument on Brown Island, and then take a walk across the James River and back via the Buttermilk Trail and Belle Island. We'll walk through a variety of paths, with views of the city, the river, and woods. The hike will cover about 3.5 miles and will last 3 hours. This is a moderately strenuous hike that includes some rocky ground and a stairway descent of about 40 feet. For more information, contact hike leader Ralph Grove. Register here: [Emancipation Monument, Buttermilk Trail, Belle Island Hike](#) ([sierraclub.org](#))



Rock hopping from a James River island near Reedy Creek. Photo Courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

01/20/24 - 9:30 - 11:30 Hike Forest Hill Park and James River Reedy Creek Park Trail. We will hike around 3 - 4 miles starting at the first parking lot at Forest Hill Park after you turn off of 42nd Ave (where the South of the James Market is held). We will hike down to the lake on Forest Hill Park Loop, cross Riverside Drive and go down toward the Reedy Creek headquarters of the James River Park System. We will travel west paralleling the river and the Buttermilk Trail and rock hop to an island. We'll then retrace our descent going east past the headquarters and rock hop on the rocks adjacent to Belle Isle. We will then return to Forest Hill Park via the Buttermilk Trail and Forest Hill Park Loop. For more information, contact hike leader Shavon Peacock. Register here: [FOJG Hike: Forest Hill Park and James River Park Trail](#) ([sierraclub.org](#))

Check out more environmental events on our FOJG Facebook page thanks to FOJG member Daryl Downing's frequent sharing of environmental events! (3) [Sierra Club - Falls of the James](#) | [Facebook](#)

You can check out other 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](#)

FOJG's Potluck Dinner on 12/12/23



Sierra Club FOJG and Virginia Chapter members and our Green Giant awardees Rodney Gaines and Anne Kenny-Utman representing Agcroft Hall and Gardens had a beautiful potluck dinner at Congregation Or Ami on Tuesday 12/12/24. Photos courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

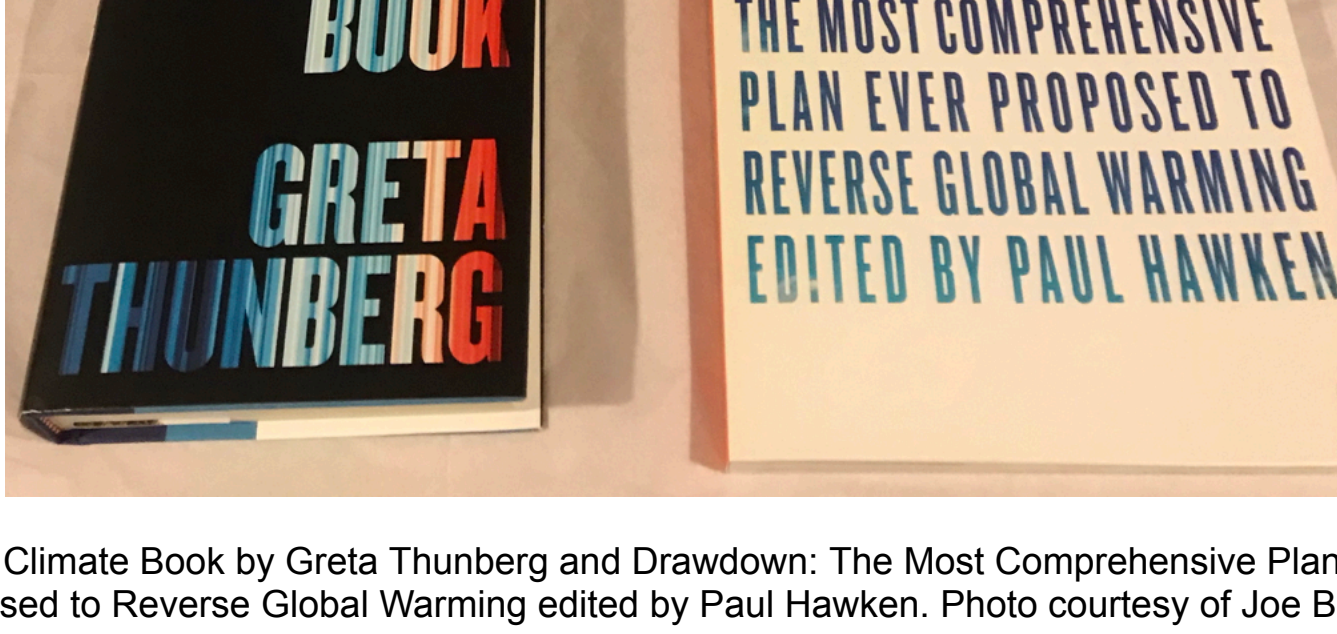
Electrified Holiday Cheer!



Top photo, two electric Hyundai Ioniq 5's. Bottom photo, Big Toy Christmas parade participants. Photos courtesy of Charles Gerena.

Drive Electric RVA brought some electrified holiday cheer to Varina. Two Sierra Club members — Charles Gerena and Andrew Peacock — were among the electric vehicle owners who participated in the Big Toy Christmas Parade on Dec. 2. Afterwards, they stuck around to tell residents about the advantages of going electric. By Charles Gerena, lead organizer of Drive Electric RVA [Home](#) | [home](#) ([driveelectricrva.wixsite.com](#))

Joe's Book Nook



The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg and Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming edited by Paul Hawken. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

Hopelo eager readers,

Let's start the new year with a clear look at where we are and what we need to do, in two excellent works:

The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg
Drawdown by Paul Hawken

Each of these is an effort of compilation and editing by the named author, and each falls into the current trope of "it ain't too late yet (but close)" books.

Greta is trying to put it all into one package for us, from the life cycle of CO₂ through a beautiful, moving final essay of hope. In 440 pages, every aspect of the climate crisis is explained and assessed, sometimes more than once. Some of the best writing are her pieces which stitch together different sections of the book, so impressive again from this young activist. This is the kind of book that I tend to binge read, then hide from myself for a while. It is that compelling and that frightening. Thanks to Tyle Matteson for encouraging me not to overlook this essential work.

Hawken's effort, "Drawdown", copyrighted in 2017, is similarly a compendium of short two - page articles that pack much information into their modest space. Subtitled "a Plan to Reverse Global Warming", the book can be dipped into for knowledge on subjects from family planning and education of girls through the more familiar, like buildings, power sources and trees. Again, everything we need to do seems to be here, in a more glossy format.

The question, six years later (during COP 28 as I write this), is when does the will power emerge. Hopeful new year,

Joe Brancoli

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
Membership Engagement Committee Chair, Outings Leader, and Newsletter Editor

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