

Mountain State Sierran

Volume 45, Number 4

sierraclub.org/west-virginia

Winter 2019

Join the WV Political Committee

One of the key activities that separates Sierra Club from other environmental organizations is our role in helping elect pro-environment champions. Sierra Club endorsements are based on thoughtful review of candidate's positions, past voting records, and recommendations of our members. Filing for the 2020 election closes Jan 25, and the Chapter Political Committee needs help. Replacing anti-environment politicians and re-electing our heroes is the single biggest step we can take to achieving environmental protection.

You can help by evaluating candidates, meeting with candidates, and joining your neighbors to help elect candidates. Is this the year we take back our Legislature and our Governor? To learn more about how to help, contact the WV Chapter Political Committee, jkotcon@gmail.com.

E-Day Set for Jan 28, 2020

Join us in Charleston for the West Virginia Environmental Council's annual Environment Lobby Day. There will be information on critical issues, up-to-the-minute tactics, and training on how to be an effective citizen lobbyist. There is simply no substitute for face-to-face discussions with legislators, as much of the information that they actually use to make decisions is communicated orally. Constituents speak with the loudest voice, but only if you show up!

Check <https://wvecouncil.org> for schedules and key details of activities.

Chapter ExCom Ballot

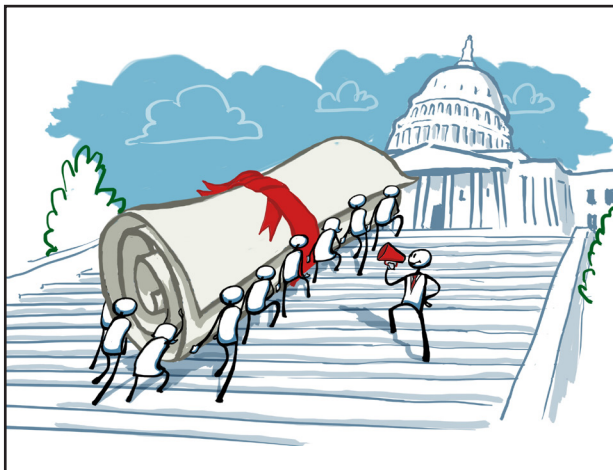
See page 7

Return ballot by Jan 2, 2020

Because this issue contains the Ballot used to elect the Chapter's new ExCom members, a printed copy is being mailed to ALL members in good standing.

We hope to also create the option to vote for your choices online. By Dec 6, an email with a link to vote online will be sent to all active WV members able to receive email. For members who have opted out of receiving email but would still like to vote online, you may obtain the link by contacting celliot2@comcast.net after Dec 6.

2020 WV Legislative Session Begins Jan 8



Jim Kotcon

With the next session of the WV Legislature convening in 2020, the WV Chapter of Sierra Club is seeking passage of key Clean Energy bills:

Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)

West Virginia needs legislation to authorize sale of electricity between private parties to expand market access for renewables. Solar panel owners and/or installers would be allowed to sell on site generated solar power to property owning households and institutions. Currently, WV law gives utilities a monopoly, and prohibits sales by third parties. Several states already allow Power Purchase Agreements so that solar energy providers can achieve the economies of scale needed to make solar more affordable. Utilities can be expected to oppose the effort, but it means a lot of potential jobs for West Virginians.

Modern Jobs Act (MOJO)

This bill encourages redevelopment of mine lands by authorizing the Public Service Commission to approve commercial-scale solar farms or other alternative energy sources. The key stumbling block has been the need to allow transmission systems to carry the electricity from the site to commercial users. Many companies, including Google, Amazon, and even Walmart, want renewable energy supplies, and their absence in West Virginia means that we cannot easily attract those companies and the jobs they bring. Once again, existing utilities may not want the competition from new energy sources, but in many cases, the opportunity to use renewable energy supplies to attract new commercial customers means these might not compete directly for existing utility customers. The bill was introduced by Delegate Evan Hansen in 2019, and is gaining a lot of interest from House leadership.

Local Energy Efficiency Partnerships (LEEP)

The LEEP bill has been introduced for several years and remains a priority for Sierra Club. The purpose is to authorize local governments to provide loans to businesses to install energy efficiency measures. Loans would be guaranteed by property taxes, so there is no risk to local governments, and the program is entirely voluntary, so no unwanted burden is placed on businesses.

More Legislative Issues for 2020:

- Water protection measures may be revisited, including the 2019 efforts to update state water quality standards to EPA-recommended human health criteria.
- Public lands protections, including continuing a ban on logging in state parks, to preserve the original intent of establishing state parks. An effort in 2018 to allow timbering in State parks prompted widespread opposition from both Democrats and Republicans, but we expect other legislative initiatives to privatize public lands.
- Key legislators are discussing legislation to expand use of ATVs in public lands, in spite of widespread acknowledgement of how damaging they are. The bill is expected to get a lot of support for ATV dealers.
- Plugging of abandoned gas wells. An "agreed" bill was vetoed by Gov. Justice in 2019, but the problems with unplugged wells remain. These wells continue to deteriorate and pollute and are getting worse, so this one is likely to be back.
- A constitutional amendment to guarantee every West Virginian the right to clean air and water. Similar amendments have been adopted in several surrounding states. If adopted by the Legislature, the amendment would be placed on the ballot for statewide voter approval.

Finally, we can be sure that the bad guys will be pushing their agenda. Already, the coal and gas industries are talking about rolling back environmental protections and providing other incentives to "save" their industries. The gas industry wants legislation to decrease the mandatory well spacing and to provide "expedited permitting."

Now is the time to begin talking to your local legislators, and asking them to support clean air, breathable air, public lands, a stable climate, and a fair transition to a clean energy future. An in-district meeting before the session starts is a great way to start building a relationship and creating political power. For more information on how you can help, contact the WV Chapter Conservation Committee, jkotcon@gmail.com.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Corner for Success

Celebrating the positive accomplishments of our environmental partners in West Virginia

Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action

Eric Engle

In October 2015, a group of concerned citizens got together at a local café to form a new Parkersburg (WV) chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL). What began with a PowerPoint and acoustic guitar evolved into something truly dynamic, with regional influence and some national — even global — recognition.

From those humble beginnings, what has now become known as Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action (MOVCA) is no longer an affiliate of CCL, only because we wanted to expand the breadth and scope of our mission. Over the past four years, we developed,

and have followed, the following mission statement: "Inspiring and mobilizing the people of the Mid-Ohio Valley to immediately address the climate crisis through education, activism and coalition-building."

MOVCA is particularly proud to have a 12-person team of educators with science, educational and other relevant backgrounds (though we always emphasize we are NOT climate scientists) who operate in teams of two and speak to middle and high school science classrooms in our area along both sides of the Ohio River. Our presenters give climate change programs that are in compliance with state science standards, are apolitical and teach students about the climate crisis and what they can do to help address it. So far, we've reached more than 4,000 students.

This is but one of our public outreach programs. To find out more, go to our website at: movclimateaction.org.

Longview Power proposes 1200MW gas-fired power plant

Jim Kotcon

Longview Power proposes to construct a 1200-MW gas-fired power plant in Monongalia County on 54 acres adjacent to their existing coal-fired plant near Fort Martin. They also propose adding a 20-MW solar farm to cover 127 acres on lands to the north of that site. Gas would be supplied by a 20-inch diameter pipeline from the TransCanada line in Pennsylvania. New roads, water lines and transmission lines would also be needed.

Longview is requesting a Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement with Monongalia County. The proposed 30-year PILOT has not yet been approved, but would reduce Longview's property taxes by more than \$200 million.

Longview received a PILOT Agreement for the existing coal-fired plant (Longview I) in 2004. That 30-year PILOT provided \$108 million to Monongalia County. The coal-fired Longview I plant is rated at 695 MW, so the proposed 1200-MW plant (Longview II) is almost twice as large. Longview proposes to pay just over \$58 million under the proposed new PILOT for Longview II.

While the air pollution emissions include 282 tons nitrogen oxides, 552 tons VOCs, 175 tons fine particulates, and other pollutants each year, the emissions of over 3 million tons of greenhouse gases will be an important impact that is currently unregulated. Gas-fired power plants often claim that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced; however, this ignores all the upstream emissions of methane associated with well drilling, pipelines, compressors, etc.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommends that, to prevent global temperatures from rising

more than 2 °C, there must be a rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Numerous scenarios are possible, but all involve rapid reductions in emissions of fossil fuel carbon, at least 50% reduction by 2030, and almost all fossil fuel emissions must end by 2050. These scenarios seem fundamentally incompatible with new gas-fired power plants.

Technologies called Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) can capture the carbon dioxide from the ex-haust stream, concentrate it, and pump it deep into the Earth, where it will remain indefinitely. Such technologies are already being used in some areas to enhance oil production.

Our Position

The Monongahela Group of Sierra Club supports renewable energy sources and a rapid phase-out of the burn-ing of fossil fuels. We oppose hydraulic fracturing for natural gas and new fossil fuel infrastructure. If the pro-posed Longview Power II gas-fired power plant is to be constructed it must reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental damage as much as possible by incorporating use of carbon capture and sequestration and biofuels.

What you can do

File a Letter of Protest with the WV Public Service Commission. Ask that the Certificate of Site Approval be denied unless Longview installs carbon capture to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Be sure to include the reference to Case # 19-0890.

Mail letters to:

Connie Graley, Executive Secretary, West Virginia Public Service Commission, 201 Brooks Street, Charleston, WV 25301.

Or file comments on line at:

<http://www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/onlinecomments/default.cfm>

Great Volunteer Opportunity!

The WV Chapter is currently looking for a volunteer to serve as Chapter Treasurer. If you are good with numbers, organized, detail-oriented and able to find your way around a spreadsheet, we could use your help.

Previous treasurer experience is not necessary. Training, including an all-expense paid trip to California, will be provided.

If you've been looking for a way to get involved with the Sierra Club but have limited time to commit or prefer working behind the scenes, this could be your way of providing essential support for those on the front lines. Help protect the environment from the comfort of your own home.

Contact sallywilts@yahoo.com for more details.

New Sierran Team on Board

Beginning with the next issue (Spring 2020) of the *Mountain State Sierran*, our new volunteer Managing Editor for the Chapter newsletter will be **Chris Craig**, currently an outings leader in the E. Panhandle. While Chris has prior experience editing Sierra newsletters for other Chapters, his forté is not in layout or design, so we have also contracted with **Eden Designs**, a graphic design company also in the

E. Panhandle, to handle the actual layout of the newsletter.

Chris's focus will be soliciting and gathering material for each issue. If you have ideas for articles or would like to submit something, please contact him at ccraig@laurellodge.com.

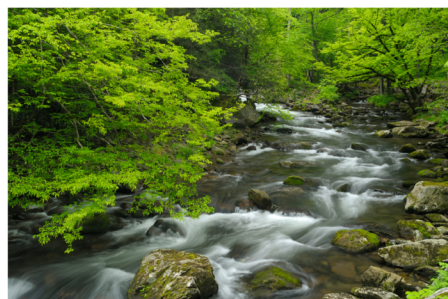
Some features of the newlsetter may change, but we will continue to inform our members of environmental news and events happening in the Mountain State.

2020 Calendars still available

\$13 Wilderness/Wall
\$14 Engagement/Desk

Beautiful nature photos!
Make great gifts!

To arrange delivery and payment, contact celliot2@comcast.net, or leave a message: 304-594-3322



With your help we can clean up our water

Sierra Club Water Sentinels are the first line of defense of America's waters. We live on the water planet. However, water is a finite resource with only about 1 % of the world's water actually being available for human consumption. Water pollution & over-use are threatening both the quality & quantity of our water resources at an alarming rate.

Keep our water safe. Join Sierra Club.

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Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club
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Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____ / ____
Signature _____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 15	N/A
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35



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Enclose a check and mail to:
Sierra Club, PO Box 421041
Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041
or visit our website: www.sierraclub.org

Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates. Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at:

ccraig@laurellodge.com

Deadline for the
2020 Spring issue
February 1

Opinions expressed in the *Mountain State Sierran* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sierra Club. This newsletter is published quarterly by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club and distributed to all paid members. \$1 of each member's annual dues helps offset the cost of producing this newsletter.

2019 SierraFest Highlights

Aileen Curfman

This year's SierraFest proved to be an excellent opportunity to celebrate our unity and learn how to gather our forces for greatest effectiveness. We'd like to thank Eric Engle, Jim Kotcon, Regina Hendrix and Alison McNabb for hosting round table discussions about their work in environmental advocacy and activism in West Virginia and preservation of public lands in Utah. Jocelyn Travis of the "Ready for 100" campaign in Cleveland, OH, got us fired up with her stories of small groups taking on local issues and building momentum.

Before enjoying a wonderful Pipestem Resort buffet dinner, there was a brief live auction of books and backpacks to whet our appetites. After the Chapter Awards were presented, State rep Danielle Walker challenged us to take a stand for environmental justice. She was followed by our keynote performer, Andrew McKnight, who filled our hearts with encouragement and inspiration. He memorialized our good friend and Chapter leader April Pierson-Keating, who was especially dedicated to the thought of pushing communities in West Virginia closer to 100% renewable energy.



Andrew McKnight

2018 and 2019 Chapter Award Recipients

Laura Yokochi

Congratulations to all our awards honorees — we are humbled and inspired by the volunteers in our Chapter, and we are always happy to celebrate your work.

Because no statewide gathering was held in 2018, awards for both 2018 and 2019 were presented at this year's SierraFest. Six individuals who have given exemplary service to the WV Chapter were presented awards by Laura Yokochi, Aileen Curfman, Laura Miller and Jim Kotcon.

The **Founders Award** is given to an individual who has helped the Chapter further our goals of having industry respect the environment and people's health and moving away from fossil fuels and toward a green energy future.

The **2018 Award** recipient was **Doug Wood**. Doug is a former DNR employee who has dedicated his life to protecting our natural environment and educating the public through hikes, tours and historical interpretations. He was instrumental in stopping destructive mining projects and in 2018 worked to defeat the ill-advised plan to allow logging in our state parks.

Evan Hansen accepted the **2019 Award**. He has been the voice of science

in the West Virginia House of Delegates since he was elected in 2018. He sponsored the Modern Jobs Act (MOJO) to give large electricity users the ability to protect and create jobs by purchasing solar electricity generated on former coal mines. His business, Downstream Strategies, helps local governments and organizations diversify the state economy, researches new energy opportunities, and works with water utilities across West Virginia to keep drinking water clean.

The **Mountain Laurel Award** is given to a Volunteer Chapter member who has contributed to the Chapter's success.

The **2018 Award** recipient is **Liira Raines**. Liira is a former chair of the WV Chapter and is currently the Eastern Regional Organizer for the West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition. Liira has organized training workshops for new volunteers and has helped the new Eastern Panhandle Group get up and running.

The **2019 Award** recipient is **Natalie Thiele**. Natalie is currently co-chair of the WV Chapter and also serves on the Chapter's Gas committee. Her organizational and communication skills have become invaluable to our group.

The **Jim Sconyers Memorial Award** is given to a Volunteer Chapter member who has shown leadership in environmental activism.

The **2018 Award** was presented to **Eric Engle**, a passionate activist for climate action and justice who is always ready and willing to speak truth to power. He is Chairman of Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action, a not-for-profit volunteer climate and environmental organization centered around Parkersburg, WV, and Marietta, OH. He is also a member of our Chapter Executive Committee, as well as the WV Rivers Coalition Board.

Regina Hendrix accepted the **2019 Award**. Regina has been a spirited defender of clean air and water for many years. Currently, she is involved in a battle to defeat the proposed Rockwool insulation plant near her home in Jefferson County, but she first became active fighting Mountaintop Removal and preserving Blair Mountain when she lived in Charleston. She is on the Executive Committee of the Eastern Panhandle Group and has also served on the Chapter ExCom, including a term chairing the committee.

(Doug, Liira and Natalie were unable to attend the ceremony.)



Evan Hansen



Eric Engle



Regina Hendrix

View from the Chairs

— Natalie Thiele & Aileen Curfman, Chapter Chairs

Keep Up the Good Fight

Recently, we faced a minor setback in Mason County, where a coal-to-liquids plant in Point Pleasant is threatening the water and air in the community and downstream. After the WV DEP issued the air permit for Domestic Synthetic Fuels, our legal team prepared to file an appeal. Unfortunately, at this time, we have not found someone local who is personally affected and willing to be named in an appeal. Although the period for intervention in the air permit has passed, we will continue to review future developments; as comment periods for other permits are publicized, we will demand denial of the permits if changes are necessary to preserve the [environment / health/air/water/community]. If you will be affected by the DSF facility in Mason County and would like to talk to us about getting

involved, please contact Aileen Curfman (acurfman@gmail.com) or Jim Kotcon (jkotcon@gmail.com).

We now look forward to engaging in an interesting energy project in Monongalia County. Longview Power would like to build one of the largest solar farms in the region, which the Chapter supports. But it also proposes to build a new fracked gas power plant as well. Both would be sited near Longview's existing coal-fired power plant. Although Longview attempts to greenwash their fossil fuel facilities both by proposing a solar farm as well as by claiming their coal facility is among the "cleanest" in the world, we know that even the "cleanest" fossil fuel is disastrous locally and on a global scale because of the CO₂ released when it is burned for energy (not to mention the

harmful gases and water-contaminating chemicals which are released during Marcellus fracking).

Finally, we have high expectations for our upcoming ExCom elections. Natalie has been honored to serve as your state co-chair alongside Aileen for the past year, and she wanted to take a quick moment to thank all our members, volunteers and our current leadership for allowing her to work with you all at this level. She is not seeking re-election to the Executive Committee or re-appointment as co-chair this year but wanted to leave on an extremely optimistic note: "We've got a mighty ExCom and a state full of fighters. I know our Chapter is going to do great things in 2020."

Eastern Panhandle Group

MONONGAHELA GROUP

The Mon Group notifies its members each month by email, listing upcoming events for that month. This is the best way to receive timely notification of the Group's planned activities. If you don't already receive these email reminders on the first of each month, and would like to, please contact John Bird, 412-805-9624, johnbird@frontier.com, or Laura Yokochi, 304-695-1523, lyokochi@aol.com.

For December, the Mon Group is planning a social event with a birding presentation, and we will begin planning in January for our 50th Anniversary Earth Day Celebration. The monthly email from the Group will include dates, locations, and times. Please join us.

If you have questions or wish to be added to the monthly email list, please contact John or Laura.

The Eastern Panhandle Group of the WV Sierra Club (EPSC) continues to work to make a difference in our region, joining the efforts of like-minded people and nearby neighbors and offering monthly alternating Conservation and Public meetings, as well as regular Outings led by Chris Craig.

Our first election of an Executive Committee (ExCom) is currently underway. The Election Committee — Gerry Hatcher, Mandy Staff, and Ed Wheelless — solicited members in the Eastern Panhandle and provided a slate of candidates comprising Chris Craig, Aileen Curfman, Roz Eiler, Aaron Hackett, Regina Hendrix, Gail Kohlhurst, and Maggie Loudon. A mailing party was held, and ballots were sent to all Sierrans in the Eastern Panhandle. (If anyone did not receive their ballot, contact Maggie Loudon, maglouden@gmail.com.)

Updates – Actions, Outings & Programs

- Aug 24, EPSC co-sponsored, with West Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, a showing of the film *Paris to Pittsburgh* which celebrates how Americans are demanding and developing real solutions in the face of climate change. Sierran Than Hitt led a discussion afterward on how we can help create solutions.

- Sept 21, many Sierrans from the Eastern Panhandle participated in the second annual **National Drive Electric Week**, held in Martinsburg. Area EV owners showed their electric vehicles

and answered questions on what it's like to own an EV.

- Oct 13, EPSC was a cosponsor of the rally and action event, **Hands Across the Potomac 2.0**. (See write up below.)

- Chris Craig led some great hikes this past fall. (See photos elsewhere in this newsletter.)

- Aug 27, EPSC celebrated our formation with its inaugural group picnic at Poor House Farm Park, Martinsburg. We got down to the serious business of socializing and picnicking ... A fun time was had by all!

- Sept 24, Valerie Chaney, the Park Activities Coordinator and Naturalist for Cacapon State Park presented a program on West Virginia State Parks. She shared some of the fun things to do at Cacapon, a state park in our own back yard.

- Nov 19, Alex Cole, a Community Organizer for the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), presented at our last general meeting for 2019. He spoke on the battle against and the dangers of the Appalachian Storage Hub.

For more timely access to information about EPSC activities and outings, visit our Group website (<https://www.easternpanhandlewvsierraclub.org>), the calendar on the WV Chapter's website (<https://www.sierraclub.org/west-virginia>), or our Meetup page ([meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Eastern-Panhandle/events](https://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Eastern-Panhandle/events)). You may also visit us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/easternpanhandlesierraclub/>).

WVU SSC

Abby Minihan

On Sept 20, the WVU chapter of Sierra Student Coalition, along with the Student Government Association, hosted a Climate Strike at Woodburn Circle. Inspired by Greta Thunberg's Fridays for the Future, SSC encouraged different environmental groups and activists to protest, sign petitions, and call their representatives.

One of the petitions circulating the event was against the tax break for the Longview power plant, a petition SSC has continued circulating. The Longview petition inspired SSC to join other community environmental groups and speak out at the Mon County Commission's Nov 7 meeting, asking Commissioners to deny the projected \$200 million tax break for the expansion of the power plant.



Photo: Aileen Curfman

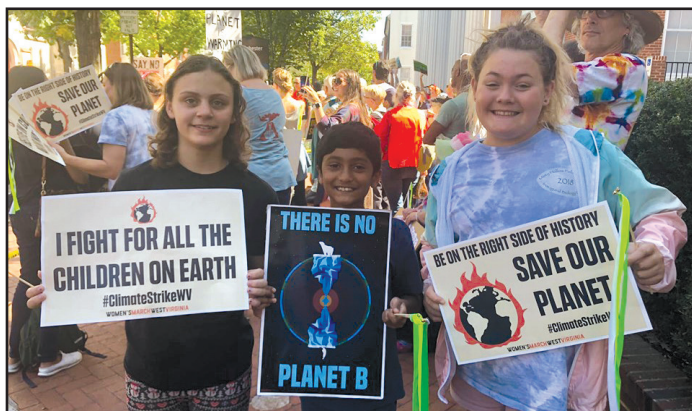


Photo: Aileen Curfman



<-- Hands Across the Potomac 2.0

On Oct 13, the EPSC came together with Maryland Sierra Club, E. Panhandle Protectors, E. Panhandle Green Coalition, Potomac Riverkeepers, and Chesapeake Climate Action Network, to reaffirm unity in the fight to keep West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle free of gas pipelines and heavy industry.

Modeled after the first Hands Across the Potomac event in 2017, the afternoon began with speakers who encouraged the crowd to remember that progress is incremental and that the results are worth the struggle.

Participants then made their way to the bridge across the Potomac River, where they formed a human chain that extended from West Virginia into Maryland. While on the bridge, the crowd chanted, "We know! Pipelines blow!" and "Hey, hey, ho, ho! Toxic Rockwool's got to go!" A Blessing for Water followed, with flowers cast into the Potomac.

<-- EPSC Joins Climate Strike

Inspired by 16-year-old environmental activist Greta Thunberg, young people worldwide staged a strike on Oct 20, seeking to raise awareness of climate change challenges that will need urgent solutions during their lifetimes.

About 75 West Virginians, including several members of EPSC, traveled to a rally in Frederick, MD, joining forces with Maryland Sierra Club and several other environmental organizations from Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

A rally on the campus of Shepherd College was also well attended. After the rally, Mary Anne Hitt, Senior Campaign Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign, commented, "Behold! The beautiful young people of the Shepherdstown, West Virginia, climate strike! I'm thrilled that the kids of our small town could join with millions around the world today. So inspired and grateful to them for waking up the world."

<-- Hike at Catoctin Mountain

Ten Sierrans closed out August 2019 with a great hike around Catoctin Mountain Park (MD). The originally intended route had to be altered due to an unusual visit to Camp David (which is in the Park) by President Trump. But our flexibility allowed us to discover one lesser-used trail section, including this hemlock-forested area along Big Hunting Creek.

Photo: Ed Wheelless

OUTINGS

For additional details about any outing, or to RSVP your intent to participate, please contact the designated leader ahead of time. To view Sierra Club's Liability Policy for Outings, go to sierraclub.org/west-virginia under Events.

Perspectives on Outings

— Laura Miller, Outings Chair

Rewards of Leading in the Outdoors

On a beautiful, chilly fall afternoon, a group of SierraFest attendees got their hiking gear ready to participate in a couple of hikes organized by the Outings Leaders, at Pipestem Resort State Park. We started both hikes together near the arboretum on an easy, wide path that would take us to the Lake Shore Trail, a mostly leisurely route with beautiful vistas of Long Branch Lake. After about a mile, one part of the group split off to go onto a longer and moderately strenuous hike that would encompass a 5.5-mile circuit around the Park. The remainder of the group continued on the easier 3.8-mile loop around the lake.

As the slower group went along the trail, making nature observations and taking in the beautiful fall colors and lake vistas beneath a clear blue sky, one of the participants, Don, expressed his appreciation for our having organized this SierraFest at Pipestem Resort. He is a resident of the nearby town of Pipestem, where he and his wife moved after retirement. Because Don can no longer drive long distances, he has been impeded from attending previous Sierra Club

retreats. He was also recuperating from a recent illness and, though he walks every day near his home, he had not been able to hike in the woods for some time.

Even so, he pushed on through the end of our hike, not knowing its full length until I told him that he had hiked nearly four miles. The surprise, joy and gratitude that I saw on his face at that moment will stay in my memory as an example that no matter how little it may seem sometimes, we can make a difference in someone's life by offering them the opportunity to be in the forests enjoying the magic of nature.

Sharing such opportunities with a few individuals — or even just one — is so very rewarding. By providing a time of fellowship with other Sierra Club members, our Chapter Outings program allows small groups and people like Don, who are restricted by physical limitations, to experience the outdoors on such days as the delightful and colorful autumn one we all enjoyed at SierraFest.

If you, too, would like to experience the rewards of being an Outings Leader, please contact me for more information. [See Directory on back page for contact info.]



On a perfect autumn day at Pipestem Resort SP, eight SierraFest hikers pause for a photo before splitting into two groups for differently paced explorations of the area.

Photo: Chris Craig

Sun, Dec 15

Day Hike: Camp Hill/Virginus Island, Harpers Ferry NHP

Distance/Difficulty: 2.5 miles/MODERATE

Duration: 2 hours

Description: This hike will give us a chance to enjoy the park and the town on the last day of Olde Tyme Christmas. We will meet at the Park Visitor Center off US340 and ride the Park shuttle* to the lower town. From there we will walk the stone steps to Jefferson Rock and continue on the Cliff Trail to Virginus Island for an easy return to the shuttle station. Winter always offers expansive and rocky views in Harpers Ferry and occasional chances to see some wildlife. We'll also view some of the history along the way, including the remains of mills that once bustled along the Shenandoah River. Changes in the weather have the potential to alter or shorten our plans. Gathering for an early supper at one of the local restaurants will be an option after the hike. This hike is free and open to anyone able to handle uneven footing on varied terrain, but Park admission is required.

Meet: 10 am in front of Visitor Center, Harpers Ferry NHP, 171 Shoreline Dr, Harpers Ferry (Just off US340, opposite the towns of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar).

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurelodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest town: Harpers Ferry, WV

Additional notes: Park admission for 2019 is \$15/car or \$7.50/pedestrian or bicyclist or free with Park Pass.

*Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.

Wed, Jan 1, 2020

Day Hike: C&O Towpath, Antietam Aqueduct to Pack Horse Ford

Distance/Difficulty: 4 miles/EASY

Duration: 2 hours

Description: Welcome the New Year in a healthy and cheery fashion with a walk along the C&O Canal Towpath. Starting at Antietam Aqueduct, we will walk upstream to Pack Horse Ford and return. There will be time to share some thoughts of the Canal heritage and Civil War history along the way, but mainly it will be a time to enjoy winter views along the Potomac and appreciate nature's gifts with friends new and old. This hike is free and open to anyone able to walk a few miles on a flat, dirt path. Cold and light snow or rain will not stop us, but we will cancel in ice or heavy precipitation.

Meet: 10 am, Antietam Aqueduct, mile 69.4 on the C&O Towpath, near Sharpsburg, MD. There is parking nearby on Canal Road or in a NPS parking lot.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurelodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Sharpsburg, MD, and Shepherdstown, WV

Cancellation policy: We will cancel in ice or heavy precipitation but continue on with light snow or rain.

Sat, Jan 18, 2020

Day Hike: AT — Keys Gap, VA/WV, to Blackburn Center, VA

Distance/Difficulty: 6.5 miles/MODERATE

Duration: 3.5 hours

Description: Our exploration of the AT leaves Maryland and heads into Virginia on this hike from the WV/VA border to the Blackburn Center, a shelter and volunteer work center of Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. Along the way we will gradually climb 700 feet, have great views from Buzzard Rock, and pass an old house site. We'll walk on a ridge crest with occasional rocky footing. The hike will involve a car shuttle* back from the Blackburn Center to Keys Gap, so please allow extra time and reserve your space with the trip leader. The hike is open to any adult or child (accompanied by an adult) capable of a rugged

multi-hour hike. Bring along a bagged lunch, water, snacks if desired, and dress appropriately for a mid-winter hike. There is no charge for this hike, though contributions are welcome.

Bring: a bagged lunch, water, snacks if desired. Dress appropriately for a mid-winter hike.

Meet: 10 am, Keys Gap AT Parking area, on the north side of VA/WV Route 9 at the State line and near the top of the ridge. Parking is limited, so park near your neighbor and carpool if possible.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurelodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Hillsboro, VA, and Charles Town, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in light precipitation but cancel if there is ice, slush or heavy snow.

Additional notes: *Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.

Sat, Feb 15, 2020

Day Hike: Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, Shannondale, WV

Distance/Difficulty: 3 miles/MODERATE

Duration: 2 hours

Description: Tucked away in West Virginia's little pocket of land east of the Shenandoah River, Rolling Ridge Foundation is a retreat center that maintains an extensive system of trails, including links to the Appalachian Trail. We will make a circuit around the center on rolling trails and possibly a few back roads. Expect some good views and a good winter workout. Bring along water and a snack, and dress appropriately for the weather. The hike is open to any adult or child (accompanied by an adult) capable of a moderate winter walk.

Bring: Water and a snack. Dress appropriately for the weather.

Meet: 10 am, at a kiosk at the end of Mission Road (at Jubilee Lane and Tupelo Lane), Bluemont, WV (39.2450975,-77.8607595). From WV 115 near the WV/VA border turn onto Mission Road. Drive 6.3 miles and make a sharp left to stay on Mission Road, which becomes Tupelo Lane. Drive to kiosk at Jubilee Lane.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurelodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Charles Town, WV, and Hillsboro, VA

Cancellation policy: The hike may be shortened or postponed in marginal weather or if parking is limited by snow or ice.

Additional notes: There is no charge for this hike, though Rolling Ridge welcomes contributions to help maintain their trails and grounds.

Sat, Mar. 28, 2020

Day Hike: Murphy Farm, Trail to Lower Town, Harpers Ferry NHP

Distance/Difficulty: 3.5 miles (with option to add 1.5)/MODERATELY EASY

Duration: 2.5 hours (for shorter option)

Description: A complete description can be found on the Chapter website and will be printed in the next newsletter.

Meet: 10 am, in front of Visitor Center, Harpers Ferry NHP, 171 Shoreline Dr., Harpers Ferry (Just off US340, opposite the towns of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar).

Bring: Water

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurelodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Bolivar and Harpers Ferry, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour.

Additional notes:*Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.



Remembering April Pierson-Keating

April 27, 1967 – September 28, 2019, Buckhannon, WV

We all have a unique role to play in this resistance family that moves our work forward and ensures we have a fighting chance at necessary victory: the phenomenal notetaker for conference calls, the great public speaker, the one who checks in on folks who've had a hard day. April filled a lot of these roles, but one in particular stands out to me. She made sure that West Virginians, and particularly directly impacted communities in northern West Virginia, were never forgotten or left out of the conversations to stop fracking and fossil fuel use. ... I will always be looking at who's at the table because of you.

April belonged to or worked with almost every environmental organization in West Virginia. She touched many lives, and her loss is greatly felt. Included on this page are just a few of the tributes written for her in the days and weeks after her passing.

Cindy Rank

WV Highlands Conservancy

Excerpted from wvhighlands.org/article/April/

She was a challenge to the sleeping and unaware.... A conscience to those who might want to ignore uncomfortable realities.... A warrior sister with a twinkle in her eye.

April fanned the flames of enthusiasm in those already involved in protecting the earth and she lit more than a few new flames in folks along the way.

Known mostly for her concern about water and clean energy, her presence was felt at home in Upshur County, WV, and throughout the state and region.

Michael M. Barrick

Appalachian Chronicle

Excerpted from appalachianchronicle.com/2019/09/29/

The first time I met April Pierson-Keating in 2014, I immediately knew I had met a woman that had no time to waste when it came to fighting the natural gas companies that are damaging public health and destroying the environment throughout much of West Virginia through fracking and related pipeline development. ...

We must keep April's voice alive. Nobody, of course, can replace her. Our hearts are heavy. But those of us who knew April know one thing for sure — she expects us to keep fighting for justice for the people of West Virginia and all of Appalachia. ...

April — though gone in the physical body — remains influential and even present today so long as we honor her life by fighting for justice with the same vigor with which she did. Let us live her example — fight until the very end. It is what, I believe, she expects of us.

Laura Mack

Appalachian Voices

Excerpted from appvoices.org/2019/10/17/

The pipelines resistance and environmental movement lost a beloved and important member of our family on September 28. Despite being diagnosed with cancer four years ago and fighting it vigorously, April continually worked to stop fracking and protect her West Virginia community and water up until the very end.

Aileen Curfman, WV Sierra Club

When I attended my first ExCom meeting in Buckhannon last January, I went to lunch with a group that include a petite, intense young woman, who immediately impressed me with her passionate opposition to the fracking and pipeline development in the region. A few months later, one of her Gasland tours opened my eyes to the devastation she was battling in her community. She'd mentioned her illness quite casually, as if it were no big deal. To April, the big deal was the devastation caused by fossil fuels. As she told me, "Other issues are secondary. If we destroy the place where we live, nothing else will matter." A few months after that, she was gone.

April has been my teacher. She has shown me what fierce dedication and fearlessness look like. I will do my best with what she has taught me. I can follow her example, but I could never fill her shoes.

Natalie Thiele, WV Sierra Club

Our keynote performer at SierraFest, Andrew McKnight, filled our hearts with encouragement and inspiration. He memorialized our good friend and Chapter leader, April Pierson-Keating, who was especially dedicated to the thought of pushing communities in West Virginia closer to 100% renewable energy.

We want to take a moment to keep April in our hearts, honor her, and feel our loss. She meant a great deal to protectors and fighters all over the region, nation, and world. She always seemed so upbeat and tireless, smart and tough, and deeply caring. One thing we really admire about her is that she staked out a patch of territory to defend, and she got to work. April led so many of us into this work, and we are proud to have known her. We are so sorry she is gone, and we are sending our love to the people who feel her loss the keenest.

Kevin Campbell

Friend and companion

Excerpts from a taped reminiscence on 11/5/19

A.P. was born in Charleston, on April 27, 1967, just five years after her mother, Iris Bell, wrote the state Centennial Song "This is My West Virginia." Her parents were two-thirds of the Iris Bell trio. Her father, Derek Pierson, was a base player and sound engineer. Mom was the composer and the keyboardist.

April wasn't afraid of anything or anyone, and feeling always out of place, she kind of gravitated towards the unique people in the room. April was unique, and she gravitated towards very unique people.

At the age of 21, she married Bernard Keating, "Chip," and she continued her journey with him. He was definitely a stabilizing force in her life, and they soon had three kids, and she turned into supermom.

... When the water crisis started because of the spill in Charleston, we dove into it headlong. She was already involved with Friends of Water, and we started pushing that around the state. We got down to candlelight vigils in Charleston, we hooked up with West Virginia Rivers, OVEC, Highlands Conservancy ... every environmental group,

Robin Blakeman, OVEC

Excerpted from ohvec.org/goodbye-april/

We've lost a great warrior in the West Virginia environmental activist family.

April Pierson-Keating passed from our midst September 28; she was 52 years old.

She lived those years to the fullest, however, and many of us were lucky enough to call her a friend and colleague.

April was the founder and director of Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance, and a founding member of POWHR (Preserve Our Water Heritage and Rights). She was a board member of the Buckhannon River Watershed Association, a board member of ICARE, a cancer research group, a board member of the WV Environmental Council, and a member of the Sierra Club, the WV Highlands Conservancy, and OVEC.

One of her last acts on this earth was to organize the "2019 Buckhannon Riverfest" — a festival honoring the water systems she and her family depend upon; the event was held in late August this year.

We are in awe of April's relentless work, even in her last days. In the last email we received from her, on September 24, four days before her death, she was definitely still working for environmental justice, related to the Antero "Clearwater" fracking waste water processing plant, which is now being shut down.

I'm sure April's powerful spirit will be with us in our ongoing efforts to ensure clean water and air for future generations in our state and region. Let's rise up and follow her example. ... There is a hashtag trending, and we encourage adopting it as a slogan for your life: #BeLikeApril

Laura Yokochi, WV Sierra Club

(9/29/19) April died yesterday morning. Even though she talked about her cancer, it was a shock. She never looked or acted sick but was still advocating for environmental justice until the very end. I was honored to work with her on several committees and went on one of her frack tours with Kevin. I was always impressed with the vast amount of knowledge she had about gas issues and her seemingly endless energy.

(11/4/19) I count myself fortunate to have known and worked with April over the past five years. Her relentless determination, energy, and dedication were remarkable, especially in one who was privately suffering from a deadly illness. She was always ready and willing to volunteer when needed for any committee or event. She was a pleasure to work with and her life was an inspiration.

environmental council. ... She started Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance.

[At one meeting,] I watched April moving around that room with that cordless mike, getting people's questions, like she was an expert at this stuff ... And she wasn't. She was just the homeschool mom, fiercely — as Cindy Rank said earlier today — fiercely going after everything, and usually smiling.

The April I met eight years ago was the healthiest, strongest female I have ever met. She taught yoga, she did aerobics, she danced, she rode her bike to school in the summer. For 10 of the last 12 years, she mentored students at the college level. There's kids out there that have their degrees because she took the time to read 'em every question on a test.

She's been changing lives for a long time. She had a husband for 31 years, and me as a partner for the last eight, which became very, very fortunate, because if you have a terminal illness in this country, you need way more support than you have. Chip worked until he was 70 years old, just so she would have insurance for her cancer treatment. I quit doing everything to be at her disposal, to take her to every appointment. ... And we travelled. Over 100 thousand miles in the last four years. A lot of that was medical.

[In between chemo treatments], she had to detox for three weeks before doing anything else, and during that three weeks, we got to Oakland [Calif.] to represent West Virginia [at the national Sierra Club's annual meeting of the Council of Club Leaders]. We had an opportunity to tell them some of what we have done here and let them know how much we need help. We were able to attend the awards ceremony, do a little bit of sight-seeing, and spend three days with her son down in L.A. before flying home. ... So, we got back from California, which was the trip of a lifetime for her.

Anyway, the environmental people know April from her work. The college people know April from that work. There's restaurants that will never forget April. There are scores of students from Gifted that'll never forget April. There's her family; there's my family, my extended family. My grandkids are used to seeing her every Christmas. I'm used to seeing her sisters every summer. Our common denominator was a very unique individual.

Dominion Energy will never forget April. That's for damn sure. The people that told her, "You'll never stop the pipeline" or, "They'll never overturn a permit once it's been issued."

She'll be remembered for many things, and maybe the environmental stuff is only a small part of her life. It was a huge life, and an even bigger loss.



2020 WV Chapter Ballot

ExCom Candidates (vote for up to 3)

Selah Raines
Eric Engle
Amanda Marple
Neal Laferriere
Andrea Bruncis

Write-in
Write-in
Write-in

Voting Instructions:

Each individual member may vote for up to three (3) candidates. Single members should use only one column; Joint members may use both columns. The address label on the reverse side of this ballot shows your membership number and type. To count as a valid ballot, the membership data must remain visible. (You may blacken out your name and address, if desired.)

BALLOT MUST BE MAILED BY JANUARY 2, 2020!

Fold Here



Sierra Club Elections Committee
c/o Candice Elliott
414 Tyrone Avery Road
MORGANTOWN WV 26508

Fold Here

MAIL BY JANUARY 2, 2020

2020 WV Chapter ExCom Ballot & Candidate Statements

Andrea Brunais Bluefield (Mercer County)

Mountaintop removal, fracking, pipeline construction and other environmental threats plague West Virginia, with most of the big money on the side of those who would despoil our state. The Sierra Club plays a vital role in making sure opposing views are heard by the public and in the halls of the Capitol. I would be glad for the opportunity to help the organization continue its great mission. I've lived in Bluefield for more than a decade as a transplant, and most of my career was spent as a journalist in Florida. Working at newspapers, I registered to vote as an Independent and refrained from joining any organizations such as the Sierra Club, even though environmental matters were close to my heart. As I'm retiring from higher-ed communications next year, I'm free to spend time advocating for causes I believe in! Attributes I would bring to the position are a working knowledge of government processes, insight into the news media, familiarity with public perceptions, and some grounding in public policy as well as the ability to research issues and explore them from various viewpoints.

Selah Raines Walkersville (Lewis County)

As a lifelong advocate for West Virginia's biodiversity, I started out as a mountaintop-removal activist in the late 1990s, when I directed my own student environmental organization, SAFE (Student Activism For the Environment), at Marshall University. Huntington is one of the most polluted areas of the state, and we had our hands full dealing with the chemical and coal industries. More recently, I participated in multiple rounds of Violation-blitzing on the Mountain Valley and Stonewall Pipelines this summer. I am deeply committed to holding industry accountable, as the

Mountain Valley Pipeline surrounds me in all four directions. To be more effective at helping others, I am a trained facilitator and member of the WV Trainers Project through Training for Change, and also certified in Mental Health First Aid.

I am passionate about WV History and cultural attachment and am blessed to live in the center of the state. Not long after graduating from Marshall, I moved to Braxton County and fell in love with the lush mountains and the enchanting lakes. I spent several years as a middle school English teacher and participate in several organizations that focus on protecting people and the environment. I look forward to helping WV Sierra Club protect and uplift our natural resources, and I would appreciate your vote.

Eric Engle Parkersburg (Wood County)

I am currently serving my first term on the WV Chapter ExCom and would be honored to be reelected to the committee. I am a strong supporter of the Sierra Club's mission to explore, enjoy and protect the planet, having received the Chapter's 2018 Jim Sconyers Award for Environmental Activism. Since 2015, I have chaired the Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action (MOVCA), a not-for-profit volunteer organization dedicated to addressing the climate crisis in WV and OH. I graduated from Marshall University with a B.A. in Political Science and received a certificate in Legal Studies from West Virginia University at Parkersburg. In addition to my duties on the ExCom this past year, I have taken on the responsibility of co-chairing the Chapter's Gas Committee, first alongside April Pierson-Keating, and now with Selah Raines. I would be deeply honored to continue my work with the Sierra Club for another term as one of your Chapter leaders.

Neal Laferriere Alderson (Greenbrier/Monroe)

As an affected landowner, I will bring down-to-earth strategies that connect folks with the movement and continue to bring justice and accountability to both the corporations and government agencies that continue to abuse our resources and citizens.

My activism came alive when Mountain Valley Pipeline and their subcontractors dropped erosion-control pellets on me and my children, striking us multiple times. Since then, I have been heavily involved in documenting pipeline construction violations, and I have organized violation blitzes (where citizens travel along the path of pipelines documenting and reporting violations) across the two Virginias. I have filed over 100 violations.

As a member of the ExCom, I would bring to the table my knowledge of conservation, organizing, fieldwork, and engaging volunteers. I'm interested in helping WVSC execute successful earned-media events like the #WhatsAtStake campaign I planned in my area.

In addition, I will bring practical knowledge and useful connections to the committee. I have a good relationship with DEP inspectors and a knack for identifying pipeline issues and holding pipeline companies accountable. I've worked closely with West Virginia Rivers and landowners along both the MVP and ACP, and I've presented to FERC commissioners in D.C. regarding the issues landowners face with the current regulations.

My passion for the environment and West Virginia comes from a strong belief that every person should be treated with respect and that corporate greed should not come first. I would appreciate your vote.

Amanda Marple Morgantown (Monongalia County)

Born and raised in West Virginia, I made the conscious choice to stay in the Mountain State and work to support actions and initiatives related to food, economic, and land justice in West Virginia communities.

My background is in cooperative business development, particularly working to incorporate social and racial justice dynamics within cooperative food spaces. I have experience working within Board of Director settings, having been elected as BoD President of Mountain People's Cooperative, a community owned food cooperative in Morgantown, and working as a research and strategy consultant with the BoD of the Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive, a QTPOC-led organization that partners with young folks of color from poor and working-class backgrounds to meet our communities' needs through food and land co-ops. I'm also a worker-owner of a small coffee company based in West Virginia, providing financial management to the organization.

I am committed to bringing true environmental justice to the Mountain State; rooted in equity for our most marginalized and vulnerable communities.

IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

The Sierra Club prides itself on being a democratically run organization. By voting for the leaders who make decisions for our Chapter, you have a voice in helping guide our policies. The candidates' statements above, while brief, indicate their priorities. If you share them, please make your choices and return your ballot by the deadline.

Questions: Elections Committee,
celliot2@comcast.net, 304-594-3322



**SIERRA
CLUB**

Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter
PO Box 4142
Morgantown, WV 26504
sierraclub.org/west-virginia



Change Service Requested

Winter 2019

**Chapter ExCom Ballot on p. 7
Please mail by Jan 2, 2020!**

West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

Chapter Executive Committee (term ends at first ExCom meeting of indicated year)

Co-Chair, Natalie Thiele ('20), 630-926-8988, natalie.a.a.thiele@gmail.com

Co-Chair, Aileen Curfman ('21), 304-433-5321, acurfman@gmail.com

CCL Delegate, Kevin Campbell ('21), 304-613-4099, kevincampbell0@gmail.com

Ciera Pennington ('21), cnpennington17@gmail.com

Dan Taylor ('21), 304-521-9865, danotbob@gmail.com

Eric Engle ('20), 304-488-4384, ericengle85@yahoo.com

Laura Miller ('20), 304-776-4677, aepicysta@gmail.com

Monongahela Group ExCom (term ends at first ExCom meeting of indicated year)

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Mark Tauger ('20), 304-599-4268, mbtauger@gmail.com

David Sturm ('21), 304-363-7160, davidsturm@ymail.com

Adrienne Epley ('21), adrienne_epley@yahoo.com

Eastern Panhandle Group ExCom (Interim ExCom, elections held this fall)

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Deputy Chair, Gail Kohlhorst, 304-885-0733, kohlhorst@comcast.net

Treasurer, Aileen Curfman, 304-433-5321, acurfman@gmail.com

Secretary, Maggie Loudon, maglouden@gmail.com

Outings, Chris Craig, 304-433-1260, ccraig@laurellodge.com

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Energy Efficiency — Laura Yokochi, 304-695-1523, lyokochi@aol.com

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Secretary — Mel Waggy, melwaggy@gmail.com

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Wilderness Coalition — Karen Yarnell, 304-657-0812, karen.yarnell@fairmontstate.edu

Regional Sierra Club Staff

Chapter Organizing Rep — (in transition)

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

A Will is a Way

Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature

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85 Second St, Second Floor • San Francisco, CA 94105
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Charleston, WV 25305

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