



July - December 2020

## NEWSLETTER

Serving the Residents of  
Culpeper, Orange, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Fredericksburg,  
Caroline, King George



# MEMO FROM THE CHAIR, BILL JOHNSON

What's going on? Well, there's a lot to talk about.

**North Anna Nuclear Power plant operating license renewal application.** Dominion is requesting that their operating permit be extended for another 20 years for both reactors. If approved, they will have operated for 80 years. Read the article by Paula Chow to see what you can do to ensure that, if the license is renewed, it is done with residents' safety as the foremost consideration. Nuclear power is clearly the most expensive and risky energy alternative, with the possibility of a catastrophic meltdown haunting Virginia residents.

The current licenses have already been extended once, and they will expire in 2038 and 2040. So why is Dominion asking for the licenses to be renewed 18 years before they expire? Could it be that they are worried that the political environment will change, making it more and more difficult to continue using the most expensive and dangerous form of energy? True, nuclear power does not generate greenhouse gases (GHGs). But does the build-up of huge quantities of toxic radioactive waste justify that, especially given that there is no long-term solution to safe storage of that waste?

So the real issue is safety. Can the North Anna nuclear power plants be operated safely 38 years into the future, after having been in operation for 40 years? Who knows? Without a thorough analysis, no one will know, unless we find out the hard way.

Nothing in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) guidelines require that, prior to extending operating licenses, shuttered nuclear power plant structures be examined to see how time and wear-and-tear have affected them. NRC could conduct a post-mortem on nuclear power plants that have been closed to analyze how 40-year old cement casings have performed, the condition of miles and miles of buried electrical wiring, the integrity of storage containers, etc. But they are not doing so.

**Election 2020.** As of this writing, we are still awaiting trump's concession speech. The facts are in, but the current President refuses to acknowledge the truth – he lost, and Biden won. But even this isn't the last of this tumultuous election. Georgia will actually have the final say in whether we can move forward with critical changes needed to deal with the climate crisis. Both Senate seats are still up in the air, as a runoff is slated to make this determination. If both seats are won by Democrats, the Senate will have a 50-50 tie, and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris will vote to break any ties. If either seat is won by a Republican, much of what needs to be done will continue to be blocked by Senator McConnell. Do what you can to help prevent this.

**Paris Climate Accord.** We are officially out of the Paris Climate Accord as of November 4th, the day after the election. President-elect Biden has promised to rejoin the accord as soon as he takes office. Perhaps that can restore the world's faith in the US, but maybe not. Over the past few years, we have been driven by "alternate facts" and not science, refusing to acknowledge that GHGs are causing our planet to overheat. If we continue to burn, or leak, fossil fuels, our world will be irreparably damaged, forcing our grandkids to suffer in ways we have not had to. It is up to us to do something, and we need to do it now, not tomorrow.

**Environmental Rollbacks.** Over the past 4 years, trump's administration has rolled back many, many environmental regulations that will exacerbate climate and health problems for the future. We had an intern, Kayli Ottomanelli, analyze the *New York Times* article (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks-list.html>) to see just how bad those changes will be. Her article was published in the Fall Virginia Sierran and can be found on our website. Here's a quote from her article: "What the *New York Times* article will not tell you, however, is that these rollbacks will cause over 79,700 premature deaths annually and put another 73.6 million Americans at risk of serious injury or illness". The *Washington Post*, in an article titled "Trump rolled back more than 125 environmental safeguards," has written about the same impact. You can find that article here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/climate-environment/trump-climate-environment-protections/>.

**Solar Power:** There was an Independent Lens program on distributed solar obstruction from PBS in November. If you didn't get to watch it, you should be able to stream it here: <https://www.pbs.org/video/jonathan-scotts-power-trip-bmrkzf/>.

# MEMO FROM THE CHAIR, BILL JOHNSON CONT.

**Lame-Duck Administration Impact on the Environment:** Trump is attempting to implement as many environmentally damaging changes as he can before he leaves office. He is:

- Fast-tracking Arctic drilling leases, intending to allow the oil and gas industry to despoil our northern-most arctic regions with drilling for the very product that is severely damaging our planet.
- Allowing logging and other forms of development in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.
- Firing scientists and administrators responsible for climate and health issues, installing deniers in their stead. For example, he has fired the scientist responsible for writing the Congressionally-mandated National Climate Assessment, replacing him with a climate change denier.
- Allowing seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean, as prelude to allowing offshore drilling.
- And many more.

## Some good reading material:

- The *Harvard Environmental and Energy Law Program* (Harvard EELP) puts out a periodic update email (I think it's monthly). Here is the November 19th edition:  
<https://mailchi.mp/3d922408004f/legal-analysis-show-congress-can-curb-the-dismantling-of-epa-2310382?e=ef1424c98b>. Go to their website and ask to be included. <https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/>
- *Yale Climate Connections* (<https://yaleclimateconnections.org/>) puts out a weekly email with lots of environmental news. If you don't mind a weekly email, sign up for it. It is worth it.
- *DeSmogBlog* is a site that focuses on climate disinformation, including providing lots of information about climate science deniers. If you want to learn about the people that the soon-to-be-gone administration is placing in positions that affect climate policies, go there and search their climate denier database of individuals and corporate names.
- *Climate Action Alliance of the Valley* (CAAV) sends out a weekly summary of environmental news. It is an excellent, referenced summary of things local and national. Go here to see.  
<https://climateactionallianceofthevalley.org/category/weekly-climate-news-roundup/>

**I leave you with this:** Get involved. Pick a cause. Write letters to newspapers and to politicians. There are many worthwhile causes, and much needs to be done. The future you save will not just be yours; it will be your children's and your grandchildren's.

*Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Socially distance. Be safe out there. The lives you save will be your own, your family, your neighbors, and yes, even those who don't see the world as you do.*

## RGSC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOM)

Chair: Bill Johnson, [billatthelake@comcast.net](mailto:billatthelake@comcast.net)

Vice Chair, Linda C. Muller, [lcmuller@mindspring.com](mailto:lcmuller@mindspring.com)

Program Chair: Paula Chow, [paulachow132@gmail.com](mailto:paulachow132@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Diana Johnson, [dianaatthelake@comcast.net](mailto:dianaatthelake@comcast.net)

Membership & ExCom Member: Michael Johnson, [johnson2000m@aol.com](mailto:johnson2000m@aol.com)

Webmaster & ExCom Member: Doug Ferguson, [dougferg@verizon.net](mailto:dougferg@verizon.net)

Conservation Chair: vacant

Newsletter Editor: Bill Johnson, [billatthelake@comcast.net](mailto:billatthelake@comcast.net)

Hospitality Chair & ExCom Member: Jody Lochmiller, [jody\\_lochmiller@hotmail.com](mailto:jody_lochmiller@hotmail.com)

Outings Leaders & ExCom Members: Suzanne and Richard Eggeling, [rich.sue.sc@gmail.com](mailto:rich.sue.sc@gmail.com)

Interns: Kayli Ottomanelli

# NORTH ANA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WARNING, ACTION NEEDED! PAULA CHOW

*Immediate action is requested. Please sending an email or letter to your federal legislators. Sample letters/emails are at the end of the article.*

Dominion Energy Virginia has applied for the license renewal for their two nuclear reactor plants at North Anna. These reactors were originally designed to operate for 40 years. They began generating electricity in 1978 and 1980. The license was renewed for 20 years and will expire in 2038 & 2040. If the license is renewed another time (this 2020 application), the reactors will be 80 years old before they are retired.

“In response to the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi triple-meltdown accident in Japan, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) ordered nuclear reactor owners to conduct studies to revise and update the seismic hazard profiles at their sites. After nearly a decade, the results are in.” (1)

“On average, there is a one in 15,900 chance per year that an earthquake could cause a meltdown at North Anna.” (1) This is the third most vulnerable reactor after the H.B. Robinson plant in Hartsville, SC and the Callaway plant in Fulton, Missouri. In spite of the reports “the NRC’s Safety Goals\* are non-binding targets and not regulatory requirements.” (1).

“Following the Fukushima accident, the NRC required, among other things, that all US plant owners (1) develop plans and acquire emergency (“FLEX”) equipment to provide backup power and cooling if power is lost for long periods; and (2) reevaluate the earthquake and flooding hazard profiles at their sites based on updated information and methods.” (1)

“The hazard reevaluation studies that plant owners conducted found that nearly all nuclear plants were vulnerable to more severe earthquakes and floods than they were prepared to withstand. However, the NRC, inexplicably, has not required a single plant to upgrade its defenses in response to these findings despite having the regulatory authority and responsibility to do so.” (1)

RGSC maintains that no **generic** Environmental Impact Statement should be allowed, as North Anna became the first operating nuclear station in the U.S. to shut down because of a temblor in 2011 and the first to experience an event that exceeded its design basis. Both reactors sit on top of a known fault line.

*We need the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to do a full and thorough Environmental Impact Statement on North Anna which evaluates the plant’s safety standards, including:*

1. *The long-term storage of nuclear waste.*
2. *The condition of the reactor’s 40-year foundation, liners, electrical cables, etc.*
3. *Whether or not these aging reactors can withstand another earthquake.*

We strongly encourage everyone within the 50-mile radius of North Anna take action to compel the NRC to prove that these reactors can operate safely during this extended period of time requested by Dominion.

50-mile radius from North Anna (maximum boundaries) includes:

King George (51 miles) Bear Creek Lake State Park (59 miles)

Aquia Harbor (54 miles) Richmond capitol center (52 miles)

Garrisonville (54 miles) Port Royal (51 miles)

Sperryville (57 miles) Charlottesville (47 miles)

Mechanicsville (49 miles) Standardsville (48 miles) Madison (42 miles) Culpeper (38 miles)

# NORTH ANA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WARNING, ACTION NEEDED! PAULA CHOW CONT.

For further reading on the North Anna issues, go to RGSC's website:

[www.sierraclub.org/virginia/rappahannock](http://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/rappahannock)

Sample Letters to legislators:

A.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: Safety at North Anna

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to you about an urgent issue that is not getting the attention it deserves.

Re-licensure for the North Anna Power Plant is coming up in December. Numerous studies show that the power plant requires upgrades to operate safely. The NRC has failed to require or enforce the necessary safety standards and requirements. Please work to delay the license renewal until upgrades are made and there is an independent evaluation/inspection certifying that the power plant can safely operate. A failure would clearly be disastrous.

Sincerely,

B.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Subject: Safety at North Anna

I am alarmed that the NRC has not used its authority to require nuclear power plants to upgrade their reactors necessary to safely operate. Post-Fukushima Daiishi meltdown and the Mineral, VA earthquake in 2011 generated scientific studies that set forth strong recommendations to prevent future disasters.

As Dominion Energy has requested re-licensure for their already aging power plants, NRC must perform an EIS before any re-licensure is considered for reactors that were meant for a 40-year life.

I urge you to delay the hearing process, set for Dec. 14, 2020 to assure the safety of the residents and environment within the 50-mile radius of North Anna. We cannot afford a nuclear meltdown disaster; denial does not make it go away.

Sincerely,

C.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Subject: Safety at North Anna

I would like you to prioritize the North Anna power plant safety issues. Dominion Energy has applied for re-licensure and the NRC has not to date performed a current EIS. Numerous studies point to the lack of safety with these aging power plants. May I remind you that North Anna sits on an earthquake fault line.

The hearing in December must be postponed to address these issues.

Let's not deny that this is not urgent. A natural disaster can occur at any time – the surprise came in August 2011 when the earthquake occurred in Mineral, VA.

Sincerely,

# NORTH ANA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WARNING, ACTION NEEDED! PAULA CHOW CONT.

\* The NRC considers the highest acceptable frequency of a large near-term ("early") release of radioactivity to be one in 100,000 per year. (These are called the Safety Goals.) But at H.B. Robinson, the risks due to earthquakes *alone* exceed the Safety Goals.

Source: (1) Dr. Edwin Lyman Union of Concerned Scientists Blog

<https://blog.ucsusa.org/edwin-lyman/earthquakes-and-h-b-robinson-plant>

## 2020 ELECTION REVIEW, LINDA MULLER

**"There will come a time when you believe everything is finished; that will be the beginning."**

### Louis L'Amore

Does anyone else recall the knot-in-the-stomach feeling that immediately followed the 2016 Presidential elections? I wrote about it 4 years ago because de-construction of environmental regulations and protections would soon follow. What we did not know in December 2016 was the extent of the Trump Administration's dismantling and rollbacks of major environmental protections. Fast forward 2020 and New York Times offers a listing of over 100 environmental laws, rules and regulations that have been neutralized, rolled back or eliminated over the past 4 years. Interesting to note that the majority of the rollbacks were undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Here is the link to the New York Times article

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks-list.html>

Additionally, the United States was the first country in the world to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement in November 2020 and there is currently a late last ditch effort by the Trump Administration to auction oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic Wildlife Refuge. The year 2020 cannot depart soon enough.

The election of President Elect Joe Biden and Vice President Elect Kamala Harris is an exciting opportunity to refresh and repair our national commitment to clean air, clear water, clean energy, reducing carbon emissions, protecting our wild and open spaces, and to re-commit to the Paris Climate Agreement.

### 2020 Virginia's Environmental Community Steps Up-In A Pandemic

Whether it was concern over clean air, clean water, climate change, or clean energy, Virginia's environmental community and supporters were engaged in supporting and voting for pro-environmental candidates up and down the 2020 ballot. Despite the challenges of working through a pandemic, which called for new digital ways and methods to connect with voters, we elected Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and re-elected Senator Mark Warner (received a 100% score in the League of Conservation Voters 2019 scorecard). Virginia's Congressional races remained unchanged: all incumbents won re-election. We are fortunate to retain 7 Congressional incumbents who scored 97% or higher on the League of Conservation Voters Score Card 2019: Luria (2nd District), Scott (3rd District), McEachin **scored 100%** (4th District) Spanberger (7th District), Beyer (8th District), Wexton (10th District), and Connolly (11th District). Use this link to review the League of Conservation Voter scorecard:

<https://scorecard.lcv.org/members-of-congress>

### The Real Work Begins 2021

While we prepare for our "post-election" Thanksgiving and December Holiday Festivities, we can all take time to relax and reflect on the truly amazing accomplishments in 2020. We participated in an historic election under the most exigent of circumstances. Yes We Did! We understand that winning an election is just the beginning. The real work begins in 2021 when it will be time to flex our "green muscles" and advocate for policies that ensure clean air, water, and energy, protect and preserve wild spaces, reduce greenhouse emissions, ensure the safety of our food supply, and more. Elections have consequences. Thank-you for making it happen!

# RGSC MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, RICHARD & SUZANNE EGGELING

We would like to update you of our efforts to connect with current members in the Rappahannock Group (RGSC). Working with Tim Cywinski, Chapter IT, we developed a survey which he then submitted to Sierra Club members in our region. To encourage replies, respondents were offered a free Sierra Club t-shirt.

The survey was formatted as a questionnaire broken down into three specific categories: a list of environmental interests, an activities list, and a volunteering list. The primary objective was to find and engage with existing members, willing to participate and contribute to RGSC initiatives.

We received 38 replies from a total of 278 members, which, with Tim's expert help, were collated and summarized as follows:

Respondents showed greatest interest in clean air and water, clean renewable energy, and climate change. Other areas of interest include recycling and zero waste, carbon footprint, electric vehicles, and organic food.

The top three activities respondents would like Sierra Club to arrange were nature hikes, clean-up's (roads, rivers etc.), and community events such as Earth Day. Interest was also shown in expert speaker presentations, facility tours, and newsletters.

Activities respondents expressed interest in supporting included committee planning, writing letters to the editor, and website/social media management.

We thank all members who responded to the survey, as your feedback is vital to planning and prioritizing RGSC activities. We encourage anyone reading this report to contact Richard or Suzanne Eggeling. If interested in reviewing and responding to the survey, you will receive a free Sierra Club t-shirt.

While we all miss those hikes and get-togethers, at last there is light at the end of the tunnel, 2021 cannot come soon enough!

A special 'Thank You' to Tim Cywinski for his patient, professional, input and assistance throughout this exercise. We sincerely appreciate the time he set aside.

## EMAIL NEWS GROUP SIGN UP

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## OTHER LINKS

Virginia Conservation Network  
[www.vcnva.org](http://www.vcnva.org)

Center  
[www.southernenvironment.org](http://www.southernenvironment.org)

Virginia League of Conservation  
Voters  
[www.valcv.org](http://www.valcv.org)

Friends of the Rappahannock  
[www.riverfriends.org](http://www.riverfriends.org)

Southern Environmental Law

Tree Fredericksburg  
[www.treefredericksburg.org](http://www.treefredericksburg.org)