



January and February 2016

NEWSLETTER

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



Earth Day 2016

April 23, at Old Mill Park,
Fredericksburg, VA

April 21, at Fort A.P. Hill

Stafford County School Board Meeting

Solar Initiative Presentation

January 26th, 2016 at 7 PM

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

RGSC is one of the several organizations (or individuals) volunteering with the City of Fredericksburg Dept. of Parks & Recreation to plan the annual Earth Day on the Rappahannock every April. The planning meetings are chaired by Linda Bailey who coordinates the ever growing Earth Day event. Meetings are held once a month on a Friday at 9:00am beginning in October through April at Eileen's Cafe and Bakery on Caroline Street in Fredericksburg. Volunteers need not commit to major amounts of time, rather, whatever capacity a volunteer can serve will be helpful. If you are interested in helping out for even a

Memo from the Chair January 2016

by **Linda C. Muller, Chair Rappahannock Group**

"One of the key components in environmental justice is getting people to the table to speak for themselves ... they need to be in the room where policy is being made." Dr. Robert Bullard, "father of the Environmental Justice Movement"

As a New Year unfolds in Virginia, another session of the Virginia General Assembly is underway and more opportunities for concerned citizens to contact their state elected officials on important environmental legislation. This year, the Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) will hold a two day "Citizen Lobbyist Training & Lobby" Event on Sunday January 25 and Monday January 26, 2016, to be held at

Hilton Richmond Downtown - 501 East Broad Street Richmond, VA 23219.

Sierra Club members can get a special sign up rate using this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/conservation-lobby-day-sierra-club-tickets-20699591034>

and enter password: **SClobbyday**

Sunday's session will include environmental briefings and effective lobbying. If you cannot attend the Sunday session, there will be an online webstream available .

Monday's session will include breakfast, remarks by Lt. Governor Ralph Northram, and appointments with legislators.

If you cannot attend this year lobby day events, your legislators still need to hear from you! Here are some links to keep you informed

few hours, contact Paula Chow at paulachow132@gmail.com and enter "Earth Day" on the subject line.

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and involved through-out the 2016 General Assembly Session.

Who is my state representative? Find out here: <http://whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov>

How can I learn more about proposed environmental legislation?
Environmental Briefing 2016 (pdf) link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8yjmtv3xktx56du/BriefingBook2016%20PDF.pdf?dl=0>

How can I keep track of proposed legislation? Sign up for free:
<https://lis.virginia.gov/ho15.htm>

How can I search bills/status by number , topic, or sponsor?
Richmond Sunlight offers easy reference page: <https://www.richmondsunlight.com>

Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) includes in-depth review
of VA General Assembly <http://www.vpap.org>

Its been said that "elections have consequences" and its up to
citizens to speak with their elected officials and have their voices
heard. If you make one New Years Resolution this year, make it "be
engaged".

Yours in Exploring, Enjoying and Protecting the Planet

Linda C. Muller, Chair Rappahannock Group

Conservation Chair Update

By Bill Johnson

My report for the Conservation Chair of the Rappahannock Group
of the Sierra Club:

RGSC attended a King George (KG) County Board of Supervisors
(BOS) meeting in September to listen to and speak at a discussion of
the proposed changes to the KG Zoning Regulations and
Comprehensive Plan. Despite BOS member Ruby Brabo's best
efforts, oil and gas lobbyists scared the Board into not voting on any
of the suggested changes. Since then, the head of the KG BOS
decided not to bring the changes up for the foreseeable future. The
proposed changes are now in limbo. The good news is that Ms.
Brabo was re-elected, but this time to a county-wide at-large seat.
She is an excellent voice for common-sense fracking regulations.

RGSC Email News Group send an email to sign-up

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RGSC Mailing Address:

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OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/ LINKS

Virginia Conservation Network
www.vcnva.org

Virginia League of Conservation
Voters
www.valcv.org

Southern Environmental Law Center
www.southernenvironment.org

Friends of the Rappahannock
www.riverfriends.org

Tree Fredericksburg
www.treefredericksburg.org

RGSC attended and spoke at the DQE listening session in Lorton in September to discuss how Virginia should reduce its carbon pollution to better comply with the Clean Power Plan. There were a lot of people there and most are in favor of a strong implementation of the Plan.

Recycling has taken a turn for the worse at the Stafford/Fredericksburg landfill. When you go to the landfill you no longer have to sort plastic, bottles, and cans separately from paper and cardboard, moving towards “single-stream recycling”. While this seems easier, it actually reduces the amount of materials that can be recycled effectively, and thus the amount of money the landfill can make by selling recyclables. That is because mixing glass and plastic with paper causes the paper/cardboard to become contaminated, and thus useless except for composting or burning in an incinerator.

RGSC attended the DMME fracking hearings at Dahlgren Campus of UMW, and spoke using the Chapter-developed talking points. Of the 20 or so speakers, all but 3 focused on why fracking needed to be closely regulated or prohibited, including points made by the King George Planning Commissioner head. Three members of the audience represented the oil and gas industry, and not surprisingly, were against any new regulations. They stated that they were at the SW Virginia hearing earlier. The local Free Lance-Star newspaper covered the meeting and the article was fairly accurate.

http://www.fredericksburg.com/news/local/king_george/people-attend-state-hearing-about-proposed-changes-to-fracking-regulations/article_835d69ba-c5c2-5d7c-a215-af50269f530c.html

During the week of November 12th, RGSC tabled an event called the 6th Annual Community Partnership Fair. At that event, RGSC shared our goals and mission with Stafford County students, teachers, and counselors. Linda Muller, our Chair, attended it and stated that it was very successful!

RGSC met with Professor DiBella, UMW Art Department, to talk about our 2nd Annual Open Call for Environmentally-Aware Art for Earth Day 2016. We will get approval for a flyer and Professor DiBella will have it distributed to Art teachers in January and placed on the UMW website, with art submission dates of mid-to-late March.

We will be attending a School Board meeting in late January to discuss solar panel installation at Stafford Schools. A program called

the Solar Schools Initiative began in Albemarle County with the Piedmont Sierra Club and has spread across Virginia with a company called Secure Futures Solar. A Virginia Tech student is the coordinator for that initiative, and his group will give an educational presentation on January 26th at 7 PM. The School Board will vote on it sometime in February at a regular School Board meeting. It would be helpful for people to come out and support that initiative.

Chapter (State-wide) Sierra Club highlights:

- Virginia Chapter's ExCom meeting was held on January 9th, 2016 at the Ivy Creek Nature Center in Charlottesville. There were State-wide Chapter Officer Elections. As a result of the voting there are three new Chapter leaders: Seth Heald, Chapter Chair; Marjorie Leach-Parker, Vice Chair; and Bill Johnson, Secretary. Ralph Grove was reelected as Treasurer. There were also three new Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) members: Samantha Parsons, Daryl Downing, and Bill Johnson, with Seth Heald being reelected.

- The Clean Power Plan (CPP): The Commonwealth's implementation of solar and wind technologies instead of coal, gas, or nuclear in response to the CPP is under attack from ALEC and Americans for Prosperity, a front for the Koch brothers. The Sierra Club is gearing up to counterbalance the concerted efforts by fossil fuel interests and Dominion Power to continue to use fossil fuels to generate electricity. A Republican Delegate pre-filed legislation for the 2016 General Assembly to require that the General Assembly approve and oversee the state's implementation of the Clean Power Plan, an attempt to stop the state from complying with it. The good news is that Mark Herring announced that he has joined a coalition of 17 other states to defend the CPP against other states' challenge to stop it.

- Paris Climate Talks: The world gathered in Paris, including our Chapter Director, Glen Besa, to stop climate change. It was a very successful beginning to world-wide actions to prevent the worst effects of climate change. The Obama Administration led the way, with China and India joining in to try and keep the global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius. A great beginning, but just that, a beginning; much still needs to be done to protect the future for our grandchildren. There is an informative article in the December Sierra Club's newsletter, the Insider. If you want to read the text of the agreement, follow this link: [the final text](#).

•John Kerry: Secretary of State John Kerry gave a very strong speech in defense of US action against climate change at Old Dominion University, linking climate change and national security, promising to form a task force on climate change. Listen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKke9rpSugI>

•The Pope's visit: The Pope's message appears to be galvanizing more people to realize how important climate issues are to the future.

•Fracking: We have provided comments to the King George Board of Supervisors as they attempt to use their Comprehensive Plan and zoning laws to regulate fracking. Mark Herring, the Commonwealth's Attorney General, has issued a letter ruling stating that localities can ban fracking, but most Counties are afraid to do so because of industry threats to sue. We have also submitted comments to strengthen DMME's proposed fracking regulations.

•Coastal Flooding: There have been numerous articles and studies pointing out the problems Virginia will have with rising oceans, including security issues with the Hampton Roads military bases, more frequent flooding of Virginia coasts, and even a prediction that residents will have to abandon Tangier Island in about 50 years because of rising seas, making them the first "climate change refugees" in the continental US.

•Offshore Drilling: Virginia Beach Board has finally seen the light! While they didn't specifically come out against offshore drilling, they rescinded their 2010 endorsement of offshore drilling. Unrelenting pressure from opponents of offshore drilling is having an effect. We need to keep up the pressure! Hilary Clinton made statements against the need to conduct offshore drilling in a radio interview in South Carolina, pointing out the environmental risks and the impact of slowing down the move towards renewable energy. Additionally, more than 30 members of Congress joined US Rep. Mark Sanford in calling on federal regulators to halt the approval process for oil and natural gas testing and drilling offshore.

•Gas and Pipelines: The national Sierra Club has issued a new Energy Resources Policy, opposing the building of new gas-fired electric generating units. The policy states: "Natural Gas: The Sierra Club opposes new electric generating units powered by natural gas, including peaking and combined cycle units. Consistent with the Board's goal of eliminating all fossil fuels from the electric sector no later than 2030, it is critical that the US avoid further high-capital

investments in new natural gas plants and related infrastructure.” That supports the efforts of Sierra Club activists fighting against new pipelines across Virginia to deliver Marcellus Shale fracked gas from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. That effort become even more important as the recent budget agreement lifts the ban on exporting fossil fuels from the US.

- Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP): This is a centerpiece of the Obama’s trade policies, and he has successfully forced Congress to approve or reject it in its entirety, without change. However, it is a really bad deal for the environment. It would: (1) allow fossil fuel companies to attack climate policies in private tribunals that are stacked with industry personnel; (2) facilitate dirty fossil fuel production by expediting natural gas exports; (3) increase climate-disrupting emissions by shifting US manufacturing overseas; and, (4) impose new limits on Government efforts to combat climate disruption. This deal has bi-partisan support in Congress, but it not a good trade deal.

- EPA Methane Emission Rules: We are providing comments to strengthen the first-ever rules to significantly reduce methane emissions from well sites. Methane is more than 20 times worse for our environment than CO₂, and eliminating escaping gases will help slow climate change. There is a current methane gas leak crisis in California. SoCal Gas operates a methane storage facility that has been leaking huge quantities of methane gas into the atmosphere on the scale of the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Estimates are it will continue unabated until March, a major disaster for the environment and the 2,000 plus families forced to abandon their homes.

- Solar: The City of Charlottesville has agreed to install solar panels on 6 schools. We are supporting the effort to educate the Stafford School Board to take the same step. The budget agreement reached in the past few weeks has extended the renewable energy credits for wind and solar for the next five years, but it has also included a phase-out date for those credits.

- Dominion Power: Dominion has openly admitted that renewable energy is the cheapest way to generate electricity. They are now touting their solar initiatives, while actively discouraging residents from installing solar panels. Their statement: "Solar power is one of the most economic, renewable options, and it's a viable resource that

we look forward to continuing to use." Virginia still ranks last in solar implementations regionally. We are actively fighting against Dominion's recalcitrance in implementing wind and solar instead of building pipelines and a very risky nuclear power plant. They managed to have the State legislature pass a law that exempts their rates from review until 2022, but in a recent court case, one dissenting judge pointed out that that law may violate the Virginia constitution. It is unknown whether that can be used to overturn the law, as that issue wasn't brought up in the court case.

- Coal Ash at Possum Point: Dominion just received a permit from Virginia's DEQ to drain the polluted water covering approximately 3.7 million cubic yards of toxic waste stored in leaking pits at Possum Point, Dumfries. They have a permit to dump the toxic water containing heavy metals like into the Potomac River and Quantico Creek, both of which lead into the Chesapeake. They will then simply cover up the dried toxic coal ash, without dealing with the leaking poisons coming from the pits. This will become an environmental disaster, as the aquifer, Potomac River, Quantico Creek, and the Chesapeake will become contaminated with these heavy metals, like mercury, cadmium, arsenic, lead, and chromium. It is now recommended that all residents near the site have their water tested for pollutants, a costly endeavor that Dominion will not pay for.

- Politics: The Sierra Club Political Committee was fairly successful in getting politicians elected who support our environmental goals, with a win percentage of 67%. For the state senate, the Sierra Club endorsed 25 candidates; 15 won, 10 lost and all incumbents were winners. For the House of Delegates, we endorsed 39 candidates; 24 won, 15 lost, and all incumbents were winners. In local elections, we endorsed 21; 18 won and 3 lost.

- And, air and water quality, nuclear, forest, environmental justice, parks and public lands, smart growth and transportation policies, sludge/biosolids, incineration, and a host of other environmental issues.

Whew!