

THE FALL LINE

September/November 2012

News & Activities of the Falls of the James Chapter, Sierra Club



GENERAL MEETING PROGRAMS

Free & Public Invited to Attend -Second Wednesday Each Month, 7 pm. Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 West Broad Street

September 2012 Program

Wednesday Sept. 12th, 7:00 pm
Jakob Helmboldt
Mayor's Office
Bike - Ped Coordinator

Hear about the Mayor's Bike and Ped program; current projects, and the future of Bike and Ped programs in Richmond and the region. We'll also hear about the Richmond 2015 World Cycling event.

At the end of the evening, we should to see whether there is enough interest to do

a Group bike ride on a following Saturday - perhaps parts of the Capitol Trail (Charles City Co. to the Chickahominy?), a route Jakob recommends; or a ride around "unknown" Richmond.

October 2012 Program

Wednesday October 10th, 7:00 pm
Double Feature:
New SOLAR Entrepreneurs

1. Bert Green is a 29-year-old entrepreneur who founded SolarMill in Richmond late last year with the goal of making consumer goods using solar power and sustainable materials. He will brief us on his products, his production facilities, and his plan for growing his business in a sustainable, small carbon footprint fashion. We are invited to tour the facilities a week or two later (and buy some holiday gifties early that are locally made and environmentally responsible!!)

2. Betsy Parsons was an electrician who went back to school for a degree in information, and is a constant tinkerer

and inventor. She writes "Almost anyone can build their own solar panels. Join us for a parts demonstration and a discussion on creating your own solar panels. Save thousands by configuring your own scalable grid-tied system to supplement your home power needs. As few as four 230W panels can power one refrigerator, one television, two light bulbs, three alarm clocks, and one radio. Discover how to make it portable and take it with you when you move. Learn what tools you need to use and how to use them. The evening will be packed with fun and information! JOIN US!"

Note that Elections are on November 6th, so we will provide Election information at this October meeting AND see article on pg. 2 about the **October Plant Exchange for our Members**

November 2012 Program

Wednesday Nov 14th, 7:00 pm
The Flora of Virginia Project & a Preview of the Book's Publication from co-author Chris Ludwig
VA Dept of Conservation and Recreation (other co-author is Johnny Townsend
State Biologist with
VA Natural Heritage Program)

The Flora of Virginia will be a 1,500-page, state-of-the-art reference describing and aiding in the identification of 3,200 taxa of plants native to or naturalized in Virginia. This is the first manual of our state's plants since 1762's Flora Virginica. This is slated for publication in December, so come get a preview of this history-making event!!

Some of you may remember Chris Ludwig from his playing with *Haze and the Transients*, who starred at our June Social. (See related article on pg. 5) Did you know that all but one of them are biologists/scientists? They

gave us a great musical evening - come see the 'groundbreaking' research they do in the daytime.



Chris Ludwig

ALSO, November is National Recycling Month !!

Falls of the James Group's Annual Holiday Celebration & Special Ralph White "Toast & Roast" Retirement Celebration!

SAVE THE DATE – Wednesday, December 5, 2012 6:30 pm!

Decades ago, the Falls of the James Group brought Ralph White to Richmond to be the City's Naturalist and head the James River Park System. Ralph also won the National Sierra Club Lifetime Achievement Award in the mid-2000s. As Ralph's retirement at the end of December 2012 draws near, we will celebrate the Giant, his Vision, his innumerable and priceless accomplishments, our many friendships, good memories, and wish him well in his retirement.

There will be more information in the Dec 2012-March 2013 newsletter, but seating in the Science Museum RF&P Room will be limited to 110, so watch our website and come to our Fall meetings for more information.

We'll Recycle What Your Recycler Won't !! Don't forget to bring your old batteries, CFC bulbs, #5 plastics, cell phones, and other hard-to-recycle goods.

October Plant Exchange for our Members

Catherine Welsh has suggested a plant exchange for our membership before the October general meeting. She has done these before and says they are great fun, successful, and well attended. She writes: *...the Fall, is the best time to divide and replant perennials, yet most of us have too many to replant in our own yards (besides, variety is better). Therefore, we should package them individually in pots or bags and bring them to the Science Museum, where we will exchange them with other members - very much like a cookie swap - give a plant get a plant and then the ones that are left over (and there are always lots left over because some folks take this opportunity as the incentive to divide everything in their yard) you give the left-overs to*

the folks who don't have any to trade like the new homeowners, etc.

We could do this from 6 pm to 6:45! Those who want to participate should park in the parking lot between the IMAX theater and the Children's Museums; we'll use the grassy swath near the NW corner of the IMAX theater, where spilled dirt and debris won't cause a problem (lets hope).

Please label your plants, add your name, growing instructions, and their provenance (i.e. heirloom irises from Granny's homestead in Louisa Co, etc). Also, stash them in your cars afterwards -- no plants and no dirt shall be allowed into the Science Museum, OK? Thanks, Catherine, for the great idea!!



We'll also be saying good bye to the Science Museum after the Ralph White "Toast & Roast". The Science Museum has substantially raised their rates to help fund the construction of additional facilities to the rear of the Building, so we must find a new "home" for our general Meetings, starting in January, 2013. When your Ex Comm resumes meeting in September, we will launch a search for a new meeting location, which we would like to keep centrally located, with adequate, well-lit parking and room for us all. If you have a good idea, please contact John Z at 288-5005 or jjeugner@comcast.net

Falls of the James Group Outings Program Suspended Indefinitely

Andrew and Shavon Peacock bravely volunteered to try to resurrect the Group's Outings program last summer, after a year or two of diminishing leadership and programming. Last Fall, they organized trips to York River State Park, the Petersburg Battlefields, and a hiking trip in the Shenandoah National Park. The group's response was minimal -- me for the first trip, Patrick for the second, not sure if anyone showed for the third (I doubt it). After some recent discussions, we decided to put the program on ice. What's to blame? Any ideas?

Oddly enough, the twice a year canoe trips with Biologist Garrie Roush (Mattaponi Canoe & Kayak/Flatwater

Discoveries have been well-attended, but fewer FoJG members have been taking advantage of them. For example, on the last two trips, exploring the Dragon Run on April 28th & 29th, all but 4 of the 30-plus participants were NOT Sierra Club members. Folks, the writing is on the wall and I don't like what it's saying.

A BIG thank you to Andrew and Shavon for trying so hard to help the group keep in touch with nature (especially in Virginia, the wild, the beautiful, the timeless); have remarkable experiences together; and stay active. Happy Trails, you intrepid twosome!
JJZ



Put your tax free dollars to work right here in Central Virginia, contribute to The Sierra Club Foundation.

Tax year 2012 may be one of the last years in which taxpayers can deduct donations to tax free organizations such as The Sierra Club Foundation. Past donations to TSCF have supported local Environmental Film Festivals, educational gifts, and educational content of this newsletter. Please consider helping further our mission by making your donation before the holiday rush in order to secure your tax deduction for 2012. Checks must be made to "The Sierra Club Foundation" with notation "Falls of the James Group Acct GG3552". Contact Marybeth Mains, Treasurer for further instructions and mailing address. marybeth125@verizon.net

View from the Chair

by Scott Burger

Although the summer is coming to an end, for the Sierra Club Falls of the James group, the heat is still on. While we did not have a formal membership meeting, group leaders have still been meeting and working on various projects and campaigns. It's been busy, and I can't help but think that an increased awareness and urgency of climate change's effects are also helping drive the pace.

Some of these matters may seem part of the regular patterns but they are demanding more intensity... For example, there have been recent meetings focused on May's Big Yard Sale fundraiser and how to improve upon it... There have also been some meetings to put together the 2013 RVA Environmental Film Festival. While the second weekend in February has been reserved for it, there are still outstanding questions about who is willing to lead the effort. If answers and volunteers do not emerge by the time you read this, the event may not happen... Some great programs are planned for this Fall's membership meetings, and our Executive Committee is also researching and deciding where to hold membership meetings in the Spring...

Perhaps those examples still seem too much behind the scenes (in which case, I will dutifully ask you to get more involved), so how about some of the local, public campaigns that we have been involved with... Despite a strong SCFOJ letter in opposition, Richmond City Council voted to move forward with the 2nd Street Connector project. The good news is that the plan now includes a bridge instead of just burying the historic canal it bisects, leaving the hope that future generations might be able to use the canal as a 'blueway'... Speaking of connections, there is an East Coast Greenway conference coming to

Richmond in early November. See greenway.org for more details... I wish I could relate good news about local mass transit after serving on Richmond City Council's GRTC Task Force, but I expect that any real movement will come from the Mayor's office. And on that tip, it looks like the Shockoe baseball stadium proposal will sadly once again dominate discussion for Bottom development instead of a multi modal transit center.... The Route 5 controversy in Henrico is still very much alive. In addition to traffic concerns (including bicycle paths), residents are worried about threats to basic air quality... On a more positive note, the Richmond water rate reform petition has over 1200 signatures and continues to draw public interest for both environmental and social justice reasons... we recently helped publicize the Richmond Region Energy Alliance (RREA)'s area Home Energy Makeover Contest, which ended on August 26. One homeowner in the Richmond area won up to \$10,000 in home energy improvements to tackle their home energy bills... The SCFOJ Conservation Committee is launching its recycling project contest for local students, "Recycling Breakthrough!", to much acclaim. Please take the time to learn about it and other activities on the SCFOJ website or our Facebook page...

And then the upcoming elections... no, I will not get too partisan, but I hope you are wondering like me when either of the Republican Presidential candidates will get more vocal about climate change (never mind Obama's early endorsement by Sierra Club)... Locally, the SCFOJ will be partnering with other groups like the Alliance for Progressive Values to hold some candidate forums on the last three Thursdays in September. More info on that will be made available soon... On the state level, I know SC organizer Kate

Pollard Addleson will be kicking off a new Beyond Coal to Clean Energy campaign.

I could go on and on with more of these short notes, and if you want to know more news and opinions, feel free to ask one of our Executive Committee members. But what I really want to convey is that this is your Sierra Club group, and your participation is needed now more than ever in order to leverage our resources and meet challenges ahead. Despite the frenzied pace and some of the grim outlooks, I take great comfort and pride in our accomplishments and knowing and working with some of the best environmentalists there are. On behalf of the Sierra Club, thank you for all that you do.



2012 Big Yard Sale a HUGE Success

Great News, Everybody !!!! The gross proceeds from the 2012 Big Yard Sale totaled \$14,062 and some change! The BYS committee is still processing a few reimbursement requests, but it appears that we made almost \$2,000 more than last year. We expect to be splitting about \$12,000 with the URGreen Group.

A HUGE THANK YOU to all those who worked SO Hard - Gill Sigmon and Tamara Smith, Jane Hotchkiss and Caroline Meehan, John & Bucci Zeugner, Catherine Welsh and Joe Brancoli, Adele Maclean and Scott Burger, Bob & Carol Pontius, Bob Campbell and Alice Preston, Roger and Elizabeth Pittard, Dave and Caroline Crighton, Mary

Beth Mains, Steve Carter-Lovejoy, Tracy Labin, George Calvert and Jan Edwards, Catherine Moser, Mary Alice Nesbitt, Brigitte Newberry, Jane and Bob McKinley, Eve Capehart, Kim Klinker, Charles Poole, John Allen, Glen Besa and Tyla Matheson, Tom and Gretchen Cole, Ed Nock, Barbara Zimmerman, Jerry Vevers, Jim Leduc, Andrew Paine, Connie Carrol, Marianne Benton, Edie Kennedy, Kathleen Rose, Patricia Selinger, Dan Cecilia, Ruth Ann Berry, Wendy Floyd, Sallie Freeman, Eileen Levandowski, Dee Dee Miller, and a few more (Hope I didn't leave you out!)

What a fantastic effort!
CONGRATULATIONS !!



Line outside Old Gym for BYS - photo, JJZ



Catherine and Jane find the Holy Grail - photo, JJZ



Anne, Jane and Bob discover some treasures - photo, JJZ



Tracy checks the booty in the kitty - photo, JJZ



Gill and Catherine check the list twice - photo, JJZ



Tamara sees the light at the end of the tunnel - photo, JJZ

Annual June Social Celebrates Year's Success!

Our annual June social celebrates our FOJG volunteer efforts and this year on June 13th we had a terrific turnout of 52 for a pot luck picnic dinner at the Carillon Shelter in William

Byrd Park.

The weather was perfect to enjoy a summer evening with friends while being serenaded by the upbeat music of *Haze and the*

Transients. Good friends, good food, good music, good weather – a great time was had by all! Thank you, volunteers!



Haze and The Transients - photo TS



Local Food Celebration - photo TS



Happy Campers! - photo TS

Wasteful Habits of our Household Appliances — Vampire Power

REPRINTED from the Virginia chapter newsletter, Old Dominion Sierran, by Ross Shearer and Ivy Main (Summer 2010) with thanks to Roger Petard for bringing this issue to the attention of the Va Chapter Conservation committee.

You and your family may be following an energy diet these days, but chances are your appliances are getting fatter than ever, feeding surreptitiously on your electric current even after you've turned them to "off."

This continuous electric draw is known as "standby" power, or more colorfully, as "vampire" or "phantom" electrical load. A stand-by requirement is necessary for any appliance designed around a soft touch pad or easy-turn dial, or whose operation includes a remote control. Although these convenience technologies require electrical current to function, usually the amount used far exceeds what is actually required.

According to some estimates, standby now accounts for 10 percent of the average household's electrical consumption. Almost all of our appliances, from electronics to washing machines, are guilty. For the typical middle class household, the amount of energy wasted this way exceeds all of the considerable gains achieved in refrigeration efficiency over the past generation.

The example of standby loads often cited in the media is the black plug-in transformers such as cell phone chargers. But these devices actually have very low standby loads, generally less than one watt. The attention they receive often diverts notice from the far more wasteful standby loads of most appliances.

Since there are no labeling requirements for standby, the only way for us consumers to measure vampire loads is with a watt meter, such as the P3 International Kill-a-watt meter.

Informal testing by Sierra Club members and others shows that some types of appliances are significantly more wasteful than others. The most wasteful category includes TV cable or satellite boxes, known in the industry as "set top boxes."

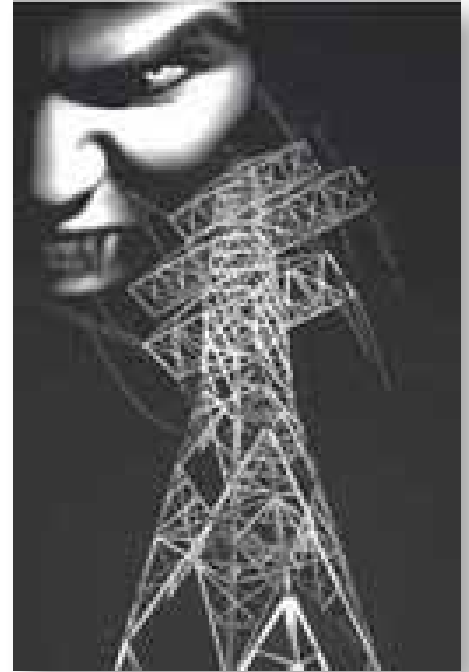
These draw between 10 and 50 watts when turned to "off," with many units pulling the same number of watts when switched to "off" as they do when turned

"on," such that the "on / off" switch is just a product design gimmick. We observed this condition in a number of appliances, primarily set top boxes and mini stereo units.

We were also surprised to find vampires among some appliances we didn't expect, such as washing machines, clothes dryers, and dishwashers. One test of an Energy Star washer from Maytag, drawing five standby watts, showed that it used less electricity washing the family's laundry in a year than it did sitting idle between loads.

What needs to happen? Truth-in-labeling would be a nice start. The electrical appliance industry should be prohibited from lying to consumers by using the word "off" as the industry default idiom for standby, still consuming electricity, and sometimes at full power.

Manufacturers should be required to inform us with labels showing the size of the standby electrical load on the package box and in a permanent label on the front of the appliance.



Battling Vampires Close to Home

- Assume any appliance with a remote control, touch screen or softtouch pad has a standby load.
- Unplug appliances when they will not be used for a period of time, or use power strips—and remember to turn them off.
- Some members report success in using energy-conserving power strips such as the Smart Strip for shutting off the peripherals associated with computers and televisions.
- Buy Energy Star appliances, which generally have much lower standby loads than standard models.
- Test your own appliances with a Kill-A-Watt meter, available in some hardware stores or over the internet for about \$30.
- The Falls of the James Group will purchase one if there is adequate interest among our members.
- Share your meter with your neighbors.

The Great Falls Group has prepared an instruction sheet and a table for recording your findings.

It is available online at:

<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls/VampireLoadTableApril09.pdf>

Advertising now being accepted for future Fall Lines
Have a business that is environmentally responsible or beneficial?
Have a service of interest to our 1,550 members?
Please contact John Z at jjzeugner@comcast.net

Quick Bryan Park Update

by John Zeugner

I hope that most of you have heard about the Shirley Subdivision controversy. It's a 7-acre property in Henrico County immediately adjacent to the NW part of Bryan Park, which is known to many as the shelter #2 area --which we've been planning to transform into a Environmental Education Center and Nature Preserve for almost 20 years. Fast forward to today.

Mark Motley, of Motley's Auction and Realty Group in Richmond, acquired the property about 4 years ago. He widened the 35-ft wide lots to meet the minimum width of Henrico's codes, resulting in 40 lots, essentially 4 rows of 10 homes each, directly adjacent to Bryan Park. The current proposal has numerous problems: too many houses, too close together, on too-small lots, and it ruins the wonderful, wooded seclusion of the back part of Bryan Park.

Friends of Bryan Park met with Mr. Motley in early April, to learn more about his plans and discuss other options. He said that he wants to build good, affordable housing and to preserve as many of the trees on the site as possible. In fact, 40 units of modular housing are to be squeezed into these small lots and new water and sewer lines will need to be trenched-in. Add driveways

and other utility services and the site WILL need to be clear-cut, removing large mature trees and destroying the existing wildlife habitat.

There are numerous other environmental impacts, which are identified in their Summer 2012 Newsletter, posted on the Friends of Bryan Park website. The Ex Comm voted to oppose this proposed development -- please visit the site and tell Mr. Dick Glover (the area's Henrico Supervisor) that he should find a land swap, or conserve the site as a park, thus adding to the great Northside Park. The Shirley Subdivision Task Force is meeting regularly to explore these and other options. If you'd like to get involved, contact FoBP through their website.

Additionally, the Friends have produced a 12-page Tree Tour booklet with tree descriptions, illustrations, and a self-guided tour with a map, with the help of William Andrews, an intern last summer. The tour can also be downloaded; visit the FoBP website (resources tab). Also, William developed 2 measured walk/run loops in the back part of Bryan Park, where no cars are allowed! They are essentially a 1 mile course and a 3.1 mile course.

(3.1 miles is equivalent to 5,000 meters, or 5 kilometers, a common race distance.) These courses are intended to allow walkers and exercisers to know how far they have walked or run. By timing their speeds, and by keeping daily or weekly records, they can figure their time or speed improvements.

Both measured loops have start and finish signs, each with a map showing the route and interval measurements. The start and finish lines for the 1 mile course are in the northeast part of the Azalea Garden loop, close to the southern end of the Shelter 3/ soccer complex area, and are all color-coded blue. The start and finish lines for the 3.1 mile course are just south of Shelter #1, a little ways down Jordans Branch Lane. The course is a little more complicated, but the map and the interval signage should make the rationale clear. The start, finish, and interval markers, are all color-coded green.

Try them yourself, start recording your times. Invite your parents, your friends, your children, to start walking or running them, and enjoy the health benefits and beauty of the park.



Enjoy, explore and protect the planet



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**General Membership Meetings - Second Wednesday each month,
 September - May, 7 pm. • Free & Public invited to attend
 Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 West Broad Street, Richmond
 until end of 2012 - new meeting location to be announced in next newsletter!**

Falls of the James Group Delegates & Current Executive Committee Officers:

Co-Chairs	Scott Burger Adele MacLean	scottburger@mac.com amaclean94@gmail.com
Vice Chair	John Zeugner	jzeugner@comcast.net
Secretary	Eric Vrabel and Catherine Welsh	evrabel@yahoo.com welshcm@msn.com
Treasurer	Mary Beth Mains	marybeth125@verison.net

Group Delegates Elected by Membership (Ex Comm)

Scott Burger	714-5444	EXPIRES Dec 12
Adele MacLean	282-8637	EXPIRES Dec 13
Tamara Smith	562-2500	EXPIRES Dec 12
John Zeugner	288-5005	EXPIRES Dec 12
Catherine Welsh	745-1512	EXPIRES Dec 12
Mary Beth Mains	212-6897	EXPIRES Dec 12
Eric Vrabel	571-244-1087	EXPIRES Dec 13

The Executive Committee meets usually the 1st Wed, Aug -June, 7:00 pm at the SC VA Chapter Office 422 E Franklin St, Suite 302

NOTE: 2 Vacancies! Want to get more involved? Want to tell your grandchildren you tried to avert the convergence of nearly a dozen environmental catastrophes? Runaway Greenhouse effect, worldwide climate melt-down, unprecedented sea level rise, and massive population displacements? The collapse of major eco-systems, systemic species extinctions, food shortages and resource wars? Action or the easy chair? JJZ

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