

December 2020 Newsletter, Falls of the James Group



Mountainous view of Southwest Virginia in Grayson Highlands State Park. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

The Falls of the James Group Adapts to COVID-19 Restrictions

As we come to the end of a challenging year, the Falls of the James Group (FOJG) remains dedicated to the preservation and restoration of our environment through Education, Conservation, and Recreation.

For many years, we've held our monthly programs at the Science Museum of Virginia. For the safety of our community, and in agreement with the National Sierra Club COVID-19 response, we moved our monthly programs online in June 2020. Since then, many FOJG members and members of the community have attended our monthly programs on topics such as clean energy in Virginia, touring African American historic waypoints in Virginia, and exploring the James River Park System.

Until further notice, our virtual monthly programs will continue into the new year and occur on the second Tuesday of every month. Please know that all of our monthly programs are free and open to the public! We encourage you to mark your calendar for these events and to pass them along to anyone who may be interested.

Have a safe and healthy New Year, and feel welcome to connect with us on our [Facebook Page](#) and our [Facebook Group](#). By sharing relevant articles, nature pictures, volunteer opportunities, and trail recommendations, we can strengthen the FOJG's mission.

COVID-19 Response from National Sierra Club

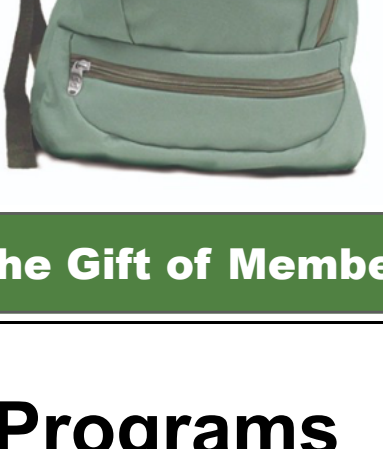
The National Sierra Club Executive Director Mike Brune, Chief Operations Officer, Jen Trahan, and Ramón J. Cruz, President, have made the difficult decision to extend our current COVID-19 response from August 31, 2020 until February 28, 2021. This means that all of our physical offices (national and chapter) will remain closed until this time, and travel and in-person meetings and outings will remain on pause.

Please continue to visit the [FOJG website](#) for potential COVID-19 Response updates.

Give the Gift of Membership, Receive a Free Sierra Club Trekker Bag

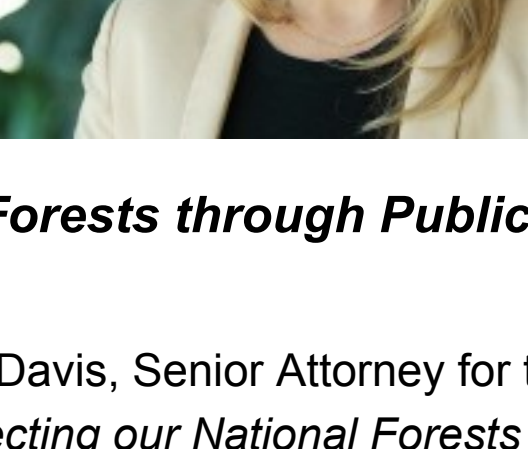
Whether you want to treat yourself or a friend to a Sierra Club membership, we have you covered. For as little as \$15, you can become a Sierra Club member by clicking [here](#)!

By becoming a member, you receive a free Sierra Club Trekker Bag, the beautiful Sierra Magazine digitally and in print, and state, national and local Sierra Club email updates and newsletters to keep you informed of current environmental issues and events.



Give the Gift of Membership!

FOJG 2021 Virtual Programs



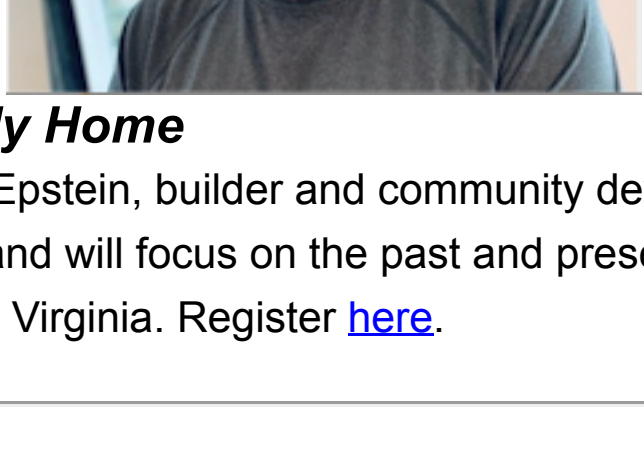
Protecting our National Forests through Public Engagement in Environmental Review

1/12/21 at 7:00 p.m. - Kristin Davis, Senior Attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center, will present *Protecting our National Forests through Public Engagement in Environmental Review*. Register [here](#).



Urban Heat Islands and Their Effect on the Health of RVA

2/9/21 at 7:00 p.m. - Dr. Jeremy Hoffman, Science Museum Scientist, will talk about *Urban Heat Islands and Their Effect on the Health of RVA*, as well as new findings related to transportation, public health and socioeconomic. Register [here](#).



The Zero Energy-Ready Home

3/9/2021 at 7:00 p.m. - Jay Epstein, builder and community developer will present *The Zero Energy-Ready Home*, and will focus on the past and present development of energy-efficient design, especially in Virginia. Register [here](#).

The Richmond Earth Series

About the Richmond Earth Series

The Richmond Earth Series features speakers and videos on topics related to environmental justice, conservation, and earth healing practices. The Foundation for Family and Community Healing is partnering with the Living Water Community Center and the First Unitarian Universalist Church's Earth Ministry to bring this series to Richmond!

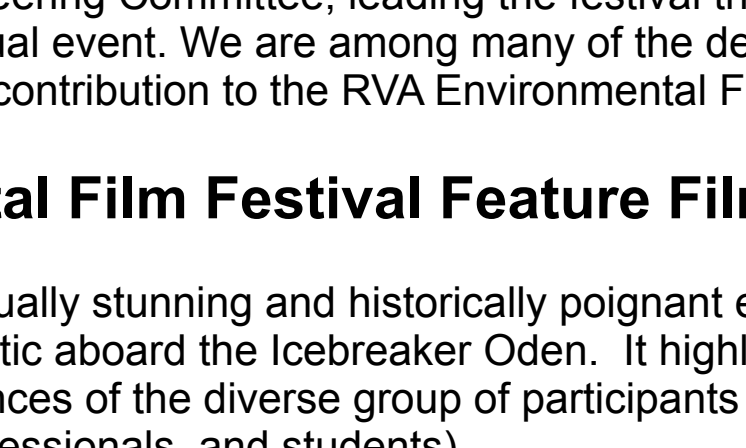
Richmond Earth Series 2021 Virtual Events

1/2/21 at 10:00 a.m. - "Ecowomanism," presented by Rev. Dr. Faith Harris, Assistant Professor, VUU, Interim Co-Director, Interfaith Power and Light. Register [here](#).

1/21/21 at 6:30 p.m. - "A Healthy Economy Should be Designed to Thrive, Not Grow," a video viewing of Ted Talk presentation by Kate Raworth. A public discussion will follow. Register [here](#).

In case you missed it, you can view recorded program "Finding Resilience in Nature: Wisdom from our Elders," by Beth Norcross, Executive Director, The Center for Spirituality in Nature by clicking [here](#).

RVA Environmental Film Festival



About the RVA Environmental Film Festival

The eleventh consecutive RVA Environmental Film Festival will take place February 12th - February 28th 2021. The RVA Environmental Film Festival seeks to educate the public on environmental issues that impact the community on a local, national, and global level. This year the RVA Environmental Film Festival will present over 25 free films virtually.

FOJG Impact on RVA Environmental Film Festival

The RVA Environmental Film Festival is free and open to the public thanks to donations from environmental organizations, such as FOJG! This year, FOJG was recognized as a top donor by the RVA Environmental Film Festival. The RVA Environmental Film Festival is also made possible by many passionate volunteers. This year we had six FOJG members serve on the Steering Committee, leading the festival through uncharted waters to its incarnation as a virtual event. We are among many of the dedicated organizations that have made a mighty contribution to the RVA Environmental Film Festival!

RVA Environmental Film Festival Feature Films

Frozen Obsession, a visually stunning and historically poignant expedition through a dramatically changing Arctic aboard the Icebreaker Oden. It highlights the expedition's research and the experiences of the diverse group of participants (scientists, historians, journalists, education professionals, and students).

Cooked: Survival by Zip Code takes audiences from the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave to one of today's biggest growth industries: disaster preparedness. The film forges inextricable links between extreme weather, extreme disparity, and extreme racism, daring to ask: what if a zip code was just a routing number and not a life-or-death sentence?

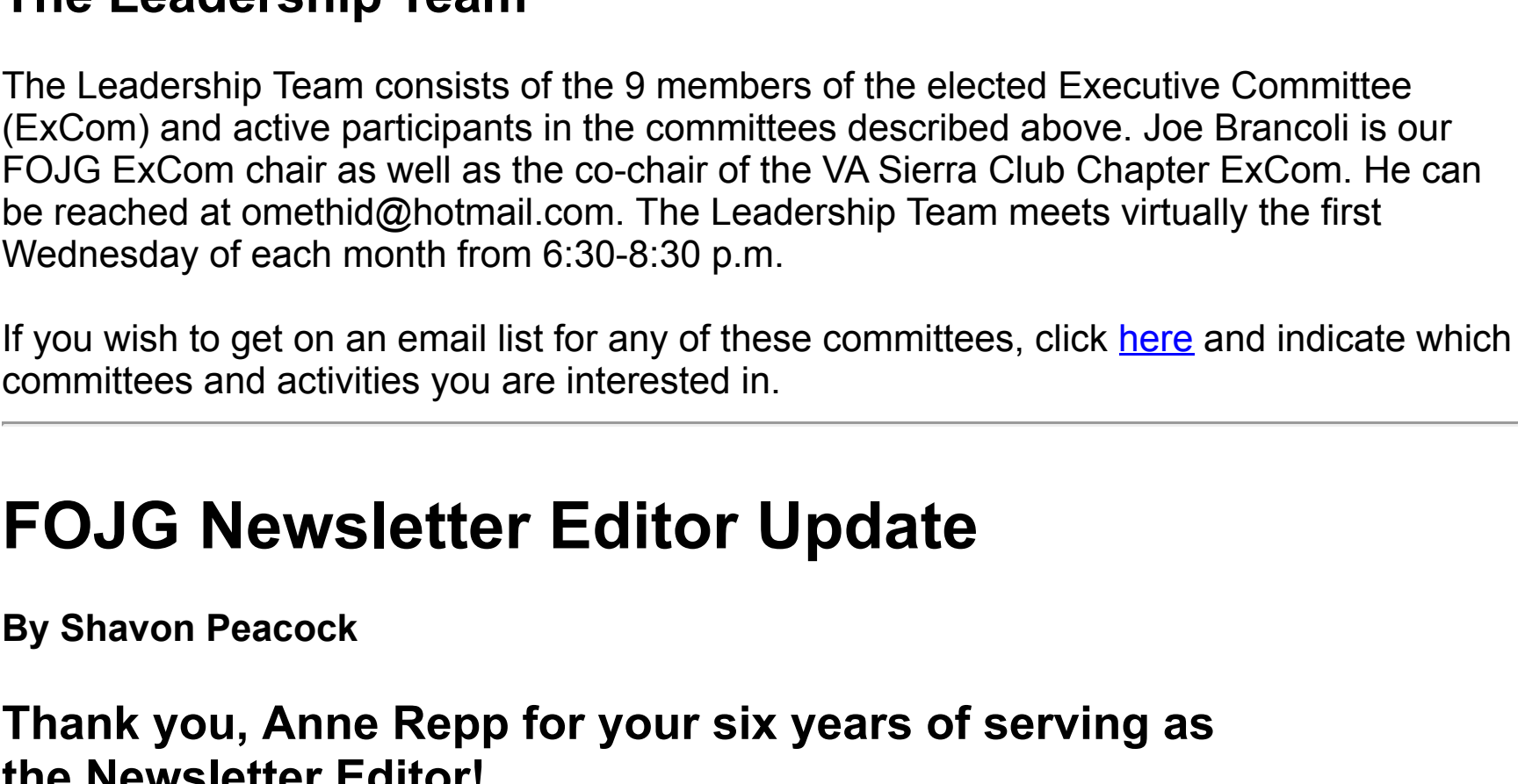
Into the Okavango documents a 1,500-mile expedition across three countries and shows the effects of increasing pressure from human activity. The Okavango River Basin and the Okavango Delta, one of our planet's last wetland wildernesses, provide a vital source of water to people, African elephants, lions, cheetahs and hundreds of species of birds. From National Geographic Documentary Films.

Event Registration and Contact Information

The all-virtual festival will provide an in-person feel with live film introductions and opportunities for audience participation. Visit [RVAEFF's website](#) and Facebook and Twitter pages to register. For more information, contact rvaenvilmfest@gmail.com, gill.sigmon1@gmail.com, or pamkirby1@comcast.net.

Get Involved with FOJG and Join a Committee!

Volunteering and acts of service strengthen our community! Take action by joining a committee that resonates with you.



A wind turbine towers above the bare trees on a sunny winter day. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

Advocacy Committee

The Advocacy Committee deals with issues such as solar and wind power, pollution, climate change, conservation, and legal, political, pipeline and environmental justice issues. Lee Williams is the chair of this committee and can be reached at lm4peas@gmail.com. Steve Carter-Lovejoy has a Single Use "Skip the Plastics" Committee. If interested in this committee, please contact Steve at scarterlovejoy53@msn.com.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee, which covers the newsletter, website, media, and publicity meets as needed. Anne Repp is the one of our leaders on the Communications Committee. Please contact anne.repp@verizon.net if you are interested in serving on the Communications Committee.

Membership Engagement Committee

The Membership Engagement Committee works to engage environmentalists in FOJG activities and outings, lining up speakers for programs, and recruiting and welcoming new members. This Committee usually meets virtually at 6:30 p.m. the last Thursday of the month. Contact Shavon, the Membership Engagement Chair if interested in getting involved at shavonandrew@verizon.net.

The Leadership Team

The Leadership Team consists of the 9 members of the elected Executive Committee (ExCom) and active participants in the committees described above. Joe Brancoli is our FOJG ExCom chair as well as the co-chair of the VA Sierra Club Chapter ExCom. He can be reached at omehw@hotmial.com. The Leadership Team meets virtually the first Wednesday of each month from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

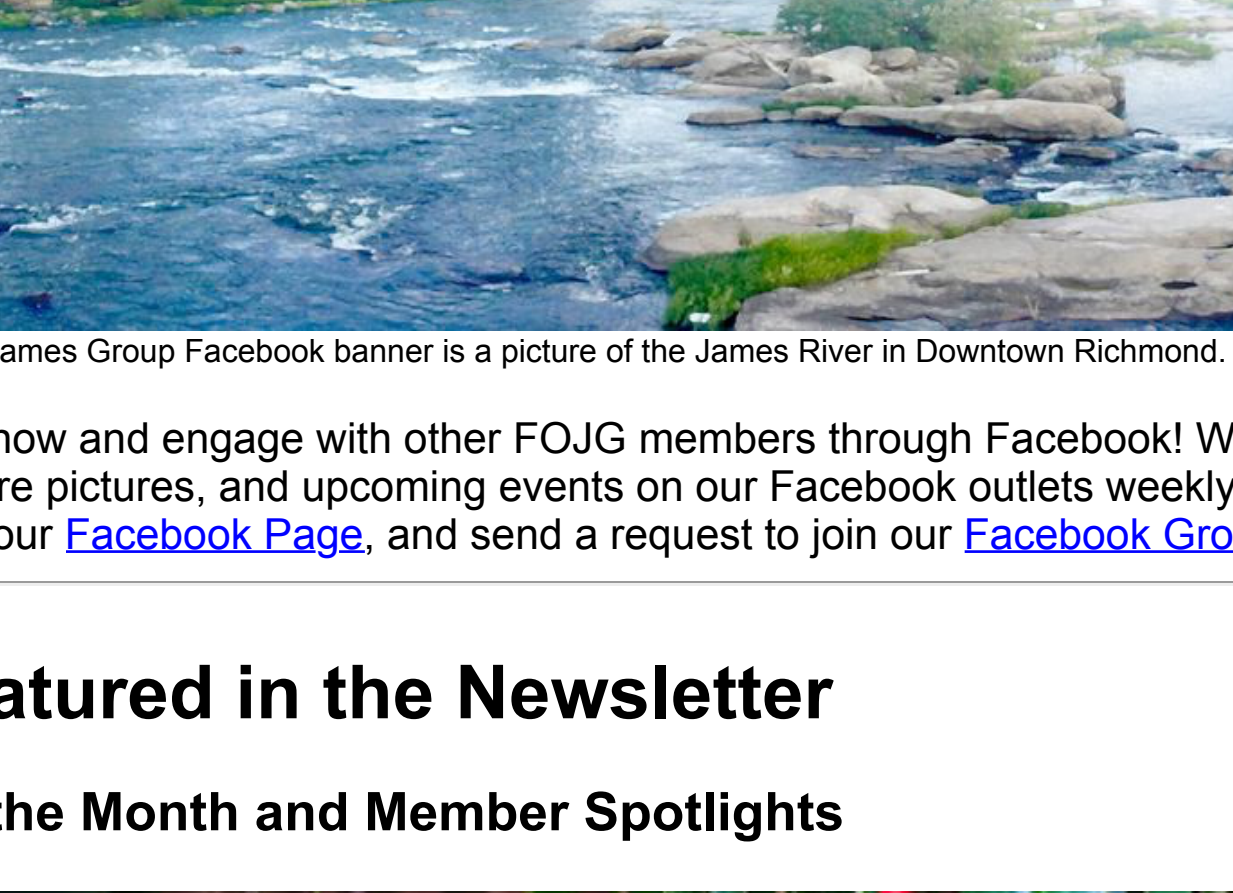
If you wish to get on an email list for any of these committees, click [here](#) and indicate which committees and activities you are interested in.

FOJG Newsletter Editor Update

By Shavon Peacock

Thank you, Anne Repp for your six years of serving as the Newsletter Editor!

FOJG and I want to thank Anne Repp for her amazing six-year run as FOJG Newsletter Editor! She began editing the newsletter in 2014 shortly after she joined FOJG. Anne fully digitalized the newsletter, saving money and conserving resources by eliminating printing, paper, and mailing costs. The digital newsletter initially went out to 2,000 FOJG members but now goes out to 12,000 environmentalists and members. Anne has done an outstanding job in editing 8 to 9 newsletters a year but was ready for a break from her volunteer stint as editor. Thank you, Anne for your time, energy, and dedication!



Welcome to our new Newsletter Editor, Veronica Hayes!

Entering in the Newsletter Editor position is Veronica Hayes! Veronica is a Richmond native whose interests lie in conservation and social justice. Her dream job is to work with a nonprofit agency, like the Sierra Club or Nature Conservancy as a Communications Coordinator. Veronica graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Appalachian State University in 2019, where she studied public relations, marketing and communications, and worked at the Office of Sustainability. Veronica spent the last year working in the Thousand Islands Region of Upstate New York with the Student Conservation Association. She worked specifically at the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center at Wellesley Island State Park as an Environmental Educator and Social Media and Publicity Coordinator. Thank you, Veronica for taking on this important volunteer position!



Recent Executive Committee Elections

By Joe Brancoli

Among the many elections this fall, one that is very close to home is that of the Executive Committee of our Falls of the James Group. First, great thanks go to two retiring members: Kate McClorey, who will stay involved with our Member Engagement committee, and Andrew Peacock, who will continue his six-year run as Treasurer, while stepping down from the Ex Comm.

Three Ex Comm members were re-elected: Lee Williams, Shavon Peacock and Joe Brancoli.

Last and the opposite of least, two new faces are on Ex Comm. Carille Ribley, who has been in leadership of the Environmental Film Festival for years, and Aileen Rivera, who is involved with Keep Henrico Beautiful and with the efforts to fight gas plants and pipelines, and to support residents of Charles City County.

We welcome the new members and salute those leaving, as we hope for renewal in 2021.

Stay Connected with FOJG on Facebook

The Falls of the James Group Facebook banner is a picture of the James River in Downtown Richmond.

Stay in the know and engage with other FOJG members through Facebook! We post articles, nature pictures, and upcoming events on our Facebook outlets weekly! Like and follow us on our [Facebook Page](#), and send a request to join our [Facebook Group](#).

Get Featured in the Newsletter

Photo of the Month and Member Spotlights

A vibrant holly tree in Bryan Park reminds us of the joys of winter. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

Have you recently volunteered for a meaningful project? Photographed something beautiful outdoors? Stumbled upon an interesting trail, park, or historic site? Contact Veronica Hayes at veronicasydneyhayes@gmail.com with the subject "FOJG Newsletter" for a chance to be featured in the upcoming newsletter. Please email pictures, a blurb, and important information such as your name, the date, and the location.

Thank you for your dedication to FOJG,
Veronica Hayes
Newsletter Editor
Sierra Club Falls of the James Group

