

The Falls of the James Group Provides **Opportunities to Educate the Community**

Virtually By Veronica Hayes It's March 2021. This time last year COVID-19 was declared a National Emergency in the United States. Since then, our lives have changed drastically, yet the FOJG remains steadfast in its mission of educating the public on environmental risks.

As always, the FOJG provides programming on the second Tuesday of most months.

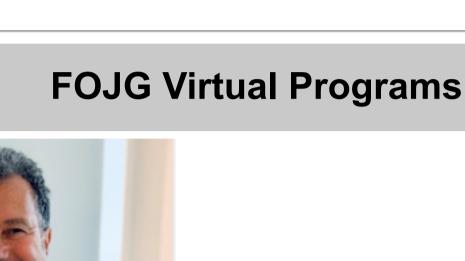
We are holding these programs virtually until further notice. We are very pleased with the turnout for our monthly programs and the conservations that have emerged from them. We had over 50 participants attend our last program, *Urban Heat Islands and* Their Effect on the Health of RVA, presented by Dr. Jeremy Hoffman on February 9, 2021. The program discussed the relationship between the lack of green spaces in

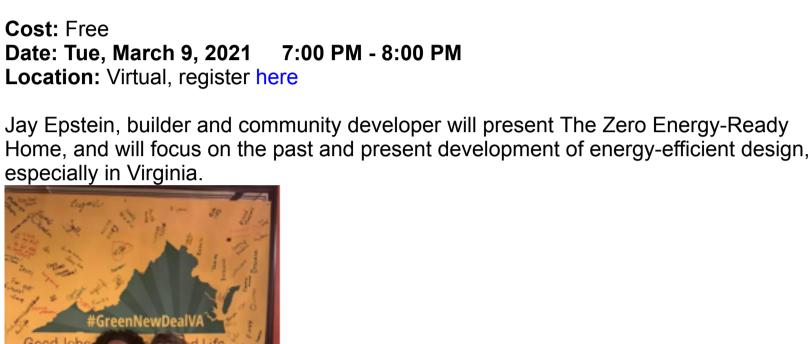
urban settings, redlining, climate change, and public health. Many volunteer and advocacy opportunities are highlighted throughout this newsletter. Your help is appreciated and sincerely valued! We again emphasize that our programs are open to the public, and encourage you to invite your friends, family, and loved ones to attend.

Updated National Sierra Club COVID-19 Response

SIERRA

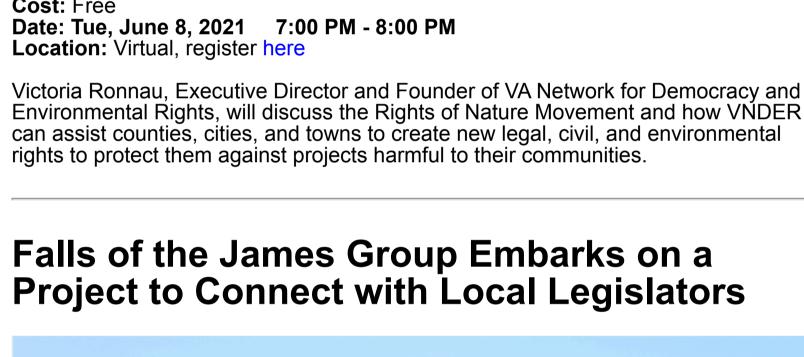
The National Sierra Club Executive Director Mike Brune, Chief Operations Officer, Jen Trahan, and Ramón J. Cruz, President, have made the difficult decision to extend our current COVID-19 response until July 4th, 2021. This means that all of our physical offices (national and chapter) will remain closed until this time, and travel and in-





The Rights of Nature

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM



Solar panels collect energy from the sun to produce clean renewable energy. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

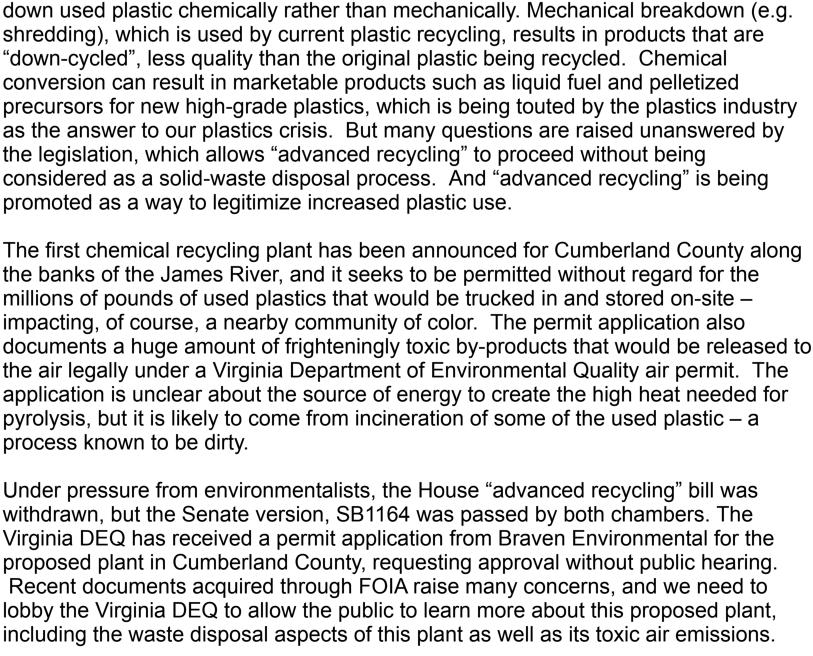


The General Assembly this year passed SB1164, legislation defining "Advanced

manufacturing plants that use pyrolysis, high-heat, low oxygen techniques to break

Recycling" that serves as a trojan horse for the plastics industry by enabling

Plastic contributes tremendously to the world waste problem. Photo courtesy of Marc Newberry.



Advocate? Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, othing's going to get better.

 Pittsylvania County, and defeating the proposed MVP Southgate Lambert Compressor Station. • Brown Grove, Hanover County and defeating the proposed Wegman's distribution Communities impacted all along the route of the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline.

1) Trees: Care and expansion of Richmond's tree cover with special focus on equity issues related to the heat island effect as documented by the Science Museum of

Virginia. Per Richmond 300 plan (Objective 17.2), increase city-wide tree canopy from 42% to 60% and seek to achieve a 30% tree canopy in all neighborhoods, prioritizing

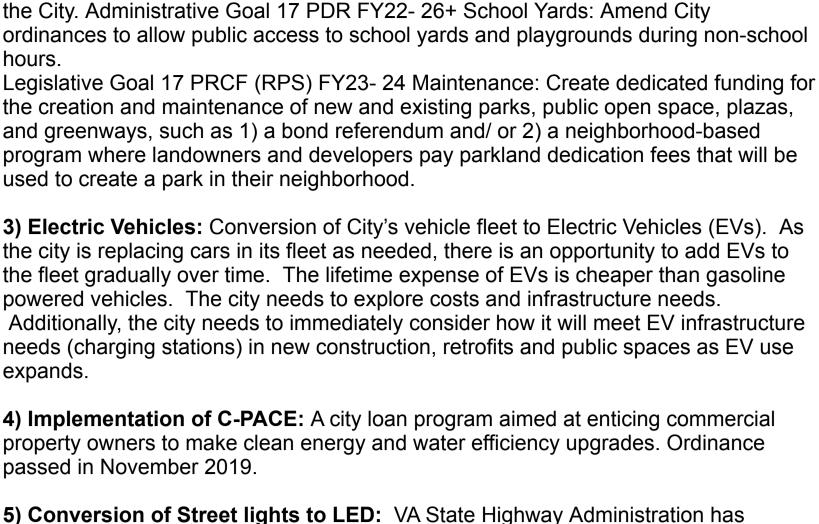
areas with a high heat vulnerability index rating and low tree canopy coverage.

Walker Community Land Trust to create public open space.

2) Provide Greenways & Parks for All: Develop parks and greenways so that by 2037 100% of Richmonders live within a 10-minute walk of a park. Utilize the Maggie

Promote the Parklet Program and encourage the development of parklets throughout

The pandemic changed many things, and certainly altered the way the Falls of the



undertaken this transition at minimal cost because of the saving in electricity.

6) Energy Saving Performance Contracts: Energy Savings Performance

facility upgrades with tomorrow's energy savings—without tapping into capital

switch to save the city money on electricity charges.

performance contract. The city also needs to press Dominion Energy make this

Richmond has a combination of city owned and Dominion Energy owned street lights. The conversion of city owned street lights could be part of a broader energy efficiency

Contracting (ESPC) is a budget-neutral approach to make building improvements that reduce energy and water use and increase operational efficiency. By partnering with an energy service company (ESCO), Richmond can use an ESPC to pay for today's

transit riders are lower income. Zero Fares can boost new ridership by overcoming the hesitancy related to not knowing how to pay or how much. Efforts are underway to propose methods to finance a permanent Zero Fares policy which we ask you to consider. 9) Financial Divestment: We urge the City of Richmond to divest from banks that fund Mountain Valley Pipeline and other fossil fuel infrastructure as part of a national movement to defund fossil fuel infrastructure and expedite our transition to renewable energy. 10) Plastic Bags Fee: In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation authorizing local governments to impose a fee or tax on single use plastic bags at

retail outlets. We urge the City of Richmond to join other cities in considering and adopting such a fee to reduce street litter and clogging of our sewers, storm drains

controversial stream restoration projects because of opposition from neighbors. In both instances, the projects called for the removal of well established tree cover at considerable expense for unclear benefits. The engineering practices for stream

restoration is currently undergoing a serious reassessment as to the actual benefits

12) Prohibit the use of pesticides/herbicides on city property: We recommend that the City of Richmond reform its existing policies to ban or significantly limit the

that are derived versus the harm done. Sierra Club urges the City to reassess its approach to stream restoration in light of the questions raised regarding its efficacy. Objective 16.1 of Richmond 300 plan Restore all streams into healthy riparian areas.

11) Stream Restoration: In recent years, Richmond has abandoned two

use of synthetic pesticides and herbicides on city property.

communities at public facilities and promote such planting on private lands. Implement the RVA Clean Water strategy to use 80% native plants in new landscaping at public facilities by 2023. Develop a strategy to integrate invasive plant management into existing city programs and reduce invasive plant coverage within the city. Discourage use of pesticides and herbicides and encourage organic practices to improve and maintain soil health and healthy habitat and ecosystems. Encourage use of bird-safe glass and other building materials and features that protect and enhance natural ecologies where appropriate.

Encourage bird houses, bat houses, and other structures that provide important and

Revise the City's weed ordinance to allow for exemptions for native plant species

Convert large City-managed non-recreational mown areas, such as floodwall

impoundment areas, to native community wildflower/pollinator species meadows,

Seek and develop strategies to achieve certification as an International Dark Sky

Install hooded light fixtures on public rights-of-way and buildings to reduce light

This could be accomplished in conjunction with the transition to LED lighting noted in

and plants for healthy pollinator communities on private lands.

15) Reduce light pollution. Per Richmond 300 plan. Objective 17.8

mown or bush-hogged once or twice each year.

Association International Dark Sky Community.

pollution and reduce effect on nocturnal species

elf-Sufficient Living FOJG Executive Committee Chair, Joe Brancoli, considers Helen and Scott Nearing's The Good Life a great springtime read. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancholi. By Joe Brancoli This month I suggest reading *The Good Life* by Helen and Scott Nearing. I enjoyed it very much around Christmas, upon the recommendation of Ralph White, former James River Parks Naturalist and FOJG Executive Committee member. Two books in

one, it explains and recounts the experience of a couple who moved from New York

City in 1934 to go 'back to the land'. They practiced organic growing, vegetarian eating, and self-sufficiency for decades in rural Vermont and Maine, becoming an example to interested visitors from the Depression until Hippie times. This is an

inspirational book as springtime arrives!

Jessica Sims stands in the snow wearing a homemade "Map of the James River" costume. Photo courtesy of

Sierra Club's environmental advocacy partner group, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, held its Annual Polar Bear Plunge on Saturday, February 13, 2021. This

opportunity for local nonprofits to fundraise and people to participate across the country. Multiple Sierra Club volunteers participate each year, including FOJG member Jessica Sims, who improvised a river plunge in her backyard, due to inclement weather! Jessica's participation will help benefit Appalachian Voices.

year the event was held virtually and occurred coincidentally on a snowy winter day in Virginia. The Annual Polar Plunge benefits programming at the CCAN and brings an

Get Featured in the Newsletter Photo of the Month and Member Spotlights location.

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

Follow us on Social Media Facebook Twitter Thanks for all you do for the environment, Sierra Club Falls of the James Group

Steve Yarus, FOJG Executive Committee Member: hsyarus@gmail.com Instagram

Lee Williams, FOJG Advocacy Chair: lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com

Aileen Rivera, FOJG Executive Committee Member: jgmoulds@aol.com

Bruce Tarr, FOJG Executive Committee Member: bruce.tarr@comcast.net

Falls of the James Group This email was sent by the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

100 W Franklin St, Mezzanine Richmond, VA 23220-5048

person meetings and outings will remain on pause.

The Zero Energy-Ready Home 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Jay Epstein, builder and community developer will present The Zero Energy-Ready

Good Job

The Green New Deal Virginia Cost: Free

Date: Tue, April 13, 2021

Location: Virtual, register here

Lee Williams and Karen Campblin will update us on what's happening with the Green New Deal Virginia Coalition.

Cost: Free

By Steve Carter-Lovejoy

If you are passionate about minimizing Richmond's plastic waste, you may consider joining the Skip the Plastics RVA workgroup. The Skip the Plastics workgroup meets on Zoom the second Sunday of each month at 3:30 p.m. Contact Steve Carter-Lovejoy at scarterlovejoy53@msn.com with any questions or to join the mailing list. Click here to learn more. **Advocacy Committee Update**

Graphic created by Executive Committee member, Lee Williams.

James Group Advocacy Committee has been operating this past year. We have begun getting our rhythm back, and are meeting virtually on the third Thursday of every month. As a grassroots environmental organization informed by the concerns of our members, Sierra Club has a wide range of issues we advocate for, but Sierra Club's two overarching areas of concern are climate change and environmental justice. Looking ahead, our Advocacy Group priorities are focused on standing with the communities of: center. We have begun scheduling meetings with our Richmond City Council representatives to discuss:

By Lee Williams

expands.

7) The future of Richmond Gasworks: A number of cities and even some countries are imposing moratoria on new gas connections to address climate change. While Richmond actually earns income from Richmond Gasworks, the city needs to begin now to analyze the future viability of its gas operations and how it may be phased out gradually over time with minimum disruption to customers and the city's revenue stream. 8) Zero Fare Transit: The pandemic has profoundly disrupted public transit but the zero fare policy has been a success overall especially in terms of equity as many

and rivers with plastic bags.

budgets.

13) Collective Bargaining for City Employees: State legislation now authorizes local governments to allow collective bargaining by its employees. Sierra Club supports granting city employees collective bargaining rights as a social justice reform. 14) Increase and enhance biodiversity within Richmond: Per Richmond 300 plan, Objective 17.7 Implement strategies in Equitable Transportation to connect parks via greenways that could also serve as animal habitat corridors, explore using RMAs and RPAs to create green ribbons through the city. • Increase the prevalence of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator

safe shelters for wildlife.

Watch our social media and calendar for ways to get involved, or contact Lee Williams at Lee.SierraClub.GreenNewDealVA@gmail.com to join the committee. Joe's Book Nook

item 5 above.

FOJG Member Spotlight Jessica Sims Participates in the Chesapeake Climate Action **Network's Annual Polar Bear Plunge!**

Jessica Sims.

Jessica Sims takes a cold splash to benefit Appalachian Voices. Could there be a Falls of the James Group team at the Annual Polar Bear Plunge in the future? Photo courtesy of Jessica Sims.

2021 FOJG Executive Committee Joe Brancoli, FOJG Executive Committee Chair/Leadership Chair, & Acting Chair VA Sierra Club Chapter Executive Committee: omethid@hotmail.com Glen Besa, FOJG Political Chair and Outings Leader: glenbesa@gmail.com Steve Carter-Lovejoy, FOJG "Skip The Plastics" Committee Chair: scarterlovejoy53@msn.com Carille Greenbery-Ribley, FOJG Executive Committee Member: carillegr@gmail.com Shavon Peacock, FOJG Secretary, Membership Engagement Chair, & Outings

Leader: shavonandrew@verizon.net

Veronica Hayes **Newsletter Editor**