

April 2022 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group



These native Virginia bluebells were photographed during April in Pony Pasture Rapids Park. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

Register for our Upcoming Program

Wetlands, What Are They and What Value do They Contain?

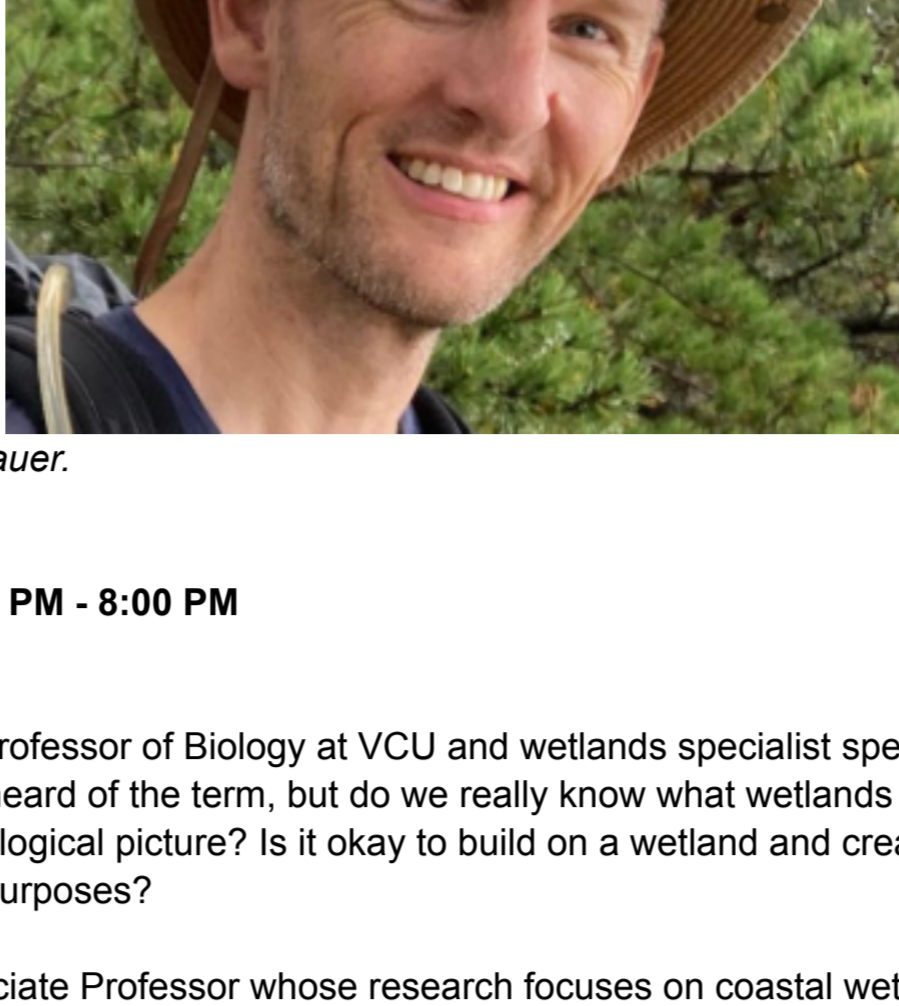


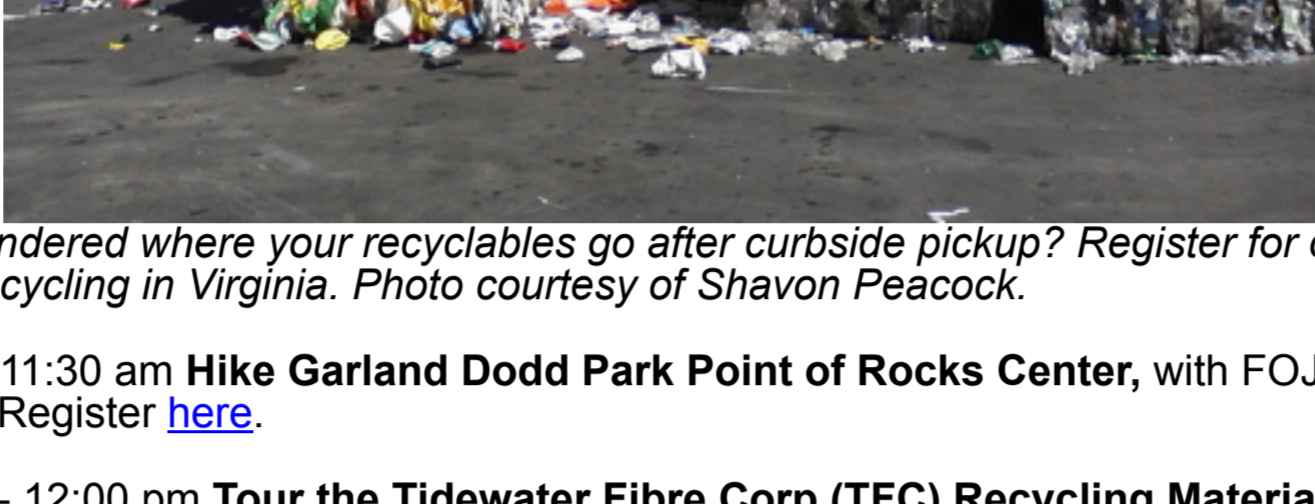
Photo courtesy of Dr. Scott Neubauer.

Cost: Free
Date: Tue, April 12, 2022 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Location: Virtual, register [here](#)

Dr. Scott Neubauer, Associate Professor of Biology at VCU and wetlands specialist speaks about wetlands and their value and importance. We've all heard of the term, but do we really know what wetlands are? Do they serve a purpose? How do they fit into the larger ecological picture? Is it okay to build on a wetland and create another somewhere else? Is it fine to use them for recreational purposes?

Dr. Scott C. Neubauer is an Associate Professor whose research focuses on coastal wetland biogeochemistry and microbial ecology, with an emphasis on ecosystem responses to environmental change. Before starting at VCU in 2012, he spent eight years as the Assistant Director and a Research Assistant Professor at the University of South Carolina's Baruch Marine Field Laboratory. Prior to moving to South Carolina, he earned his Ph.D. from the College of William and Mary Virginia Institute of Marine Science and then completed appointments at George Mason University, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and Villanova University.

Join us for Outings



Have you ever wondered where your recyclables go after curbside pickup? Register for our Recycling Tour and learn about recycling in Virginia. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

4/16/22 9:30 am - 11:30 am Hike Garland Dodd Park Point of Rocks Center, with FOJG member Shavon Peacock. Register [here](#).

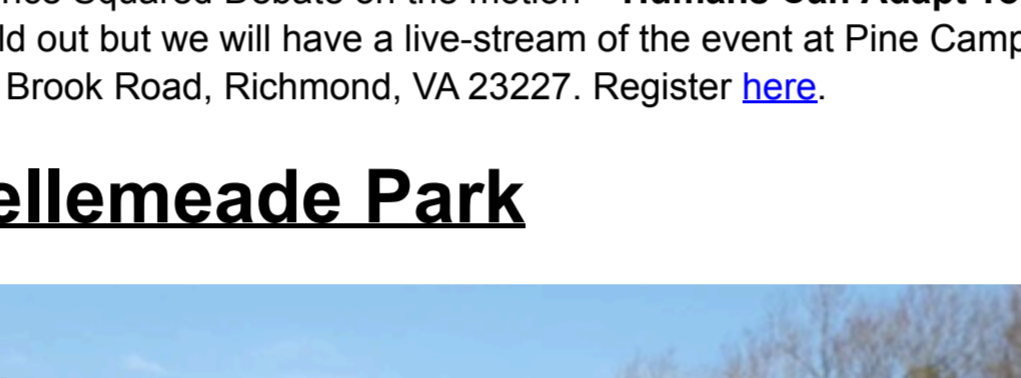
4/19/22 10:30 am - 12:00 pm Tour the Tidewater Fibre Corp (TFC) Recycling Material Recovery Facility (MRF) with Ralph Grove, Shavon Peacock, and other FOJG members. See where your recyclables go after curbside pickup. The capacity limit is 20 people, so sign up quickly to reserve your spot. Register [here](#).

4/23/22 FOJG Earth Day Tree Planting Project is canceled and rescheduled for Fall 2022. Due to the complexities of planning this venture and the fact that fall is a better time to obtain and plant trees, we are planning on a fall tree planting project. We will update you in the fall with a date and location for this event. If interested in joining our Tree Planting Committee, or if you want to help plant, contact [Shavon Peacock](#).

4/30/22 9:00 am - 3:00 pm We are promoting the Native Plant Festival at Dorey Park in Richmond, hosted by Root 5 Family Farms and Keep Henrico Beautiful. Shereen Hughs, Bill Shanabruch, and Dr. Doug Tallamy will present at this event. For more information, click [here](#).

5/22/22 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm Join us at the Carillon Shelter in Byrd Park in Richmond for the FOJG Members Picnic and Plant Swap. Bring a potluck dish to share and plants (preferably native plants) to swap. Register [here](#).

Join FOJG and the Richmond Forum for a Live-Stream Event



4/30/22 8:00 pm - 10:00 pm FOJG is hosting a Community Amplifier event for this month's Richmond Forum! We will host a live-stream of special Intelligence Squared Debate on the motion – **Humans Can Adapt To Climate Change**. The live event at the Altria Theater is sold out but we will have a live-stream of the event at Pine Camp Cultural Arts and Community Center at 4901 Old Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23227. Register [here](#).

Volunteer at Bellemeade Park



Bellemeade Park Chicken Chateau. Kids are learning how to care for and clean up after the chickens. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

Bellemeade Park Conserve and Create Work Days will take place on **June 4, 2022, July 2, 2022, and August 6, 2022**, from **9:00 am - 12:00 pm**. Bring water and gloves. All tools that are necessary will be provided. Please register by clicking on the date that you would like to volunteer.

Volunteer opportunities are also available **every Saturday from 11:00 am - 12:30 pm** to help Hispanic youth work in the Bellemeade Youth Garden. Show up at Bellemeade Park and see Lisa Thompson, who is the Volunteer Coordinator. No registration is required.

FOJG Executive Committee Spring 2022 Updates



The banner above rests on the grass of Monroe Park and reads "System Change, Not Climate Change." Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

By Joe Brancoli

With increasing temperatures and decreasing cases of COVID-19, we mark the return of spring. The Falls of the James Group Executive Committee meets monthly on the first Wednesday of the month, and I would like to announce some things that we are working on.

- With the recent income from the sale of shirts and tote bags, we are beginning to reach out to targeted environmental groups to offer small-scale monetary support.

- A working group of Erik Shilts, Glen Besa, Sarah Weisinger, and Lee Williams are studying Richmond's budget. We are asking Richmond residents to contact Mayor Stoney and their Council people regarding these items:

- The city must begin planning for the phase-out of its gas utility, instead of spending millions each year expanding the fossil fuel infrastructure.
- The city should fund the position of Urban Forester and re-constitute the Urban Forestry Commission.

- Members attended a rally at the U.S. Supreme Court on February 28, 2022, to show support for the Environmental Protection Agency and the 2015 Clean Power Plan, threatened in the case of West Virginia vs. EPA.

- Monthly rallies are being held on the first Fridays of the month at the Bell Tower at the Virginia State Capitol to focus attention on the climate emergency.

As noted throughout this newsletter, we have a variety of activities planned in April and May, as allowed with certain COVID-19 precautions. If you are interested in helping with planning for outings, tours, or tabling at events, please visit our website [here](#), or send an email to FOJG [here](#).

Climate Action Needed: FOJG Advocacy Update

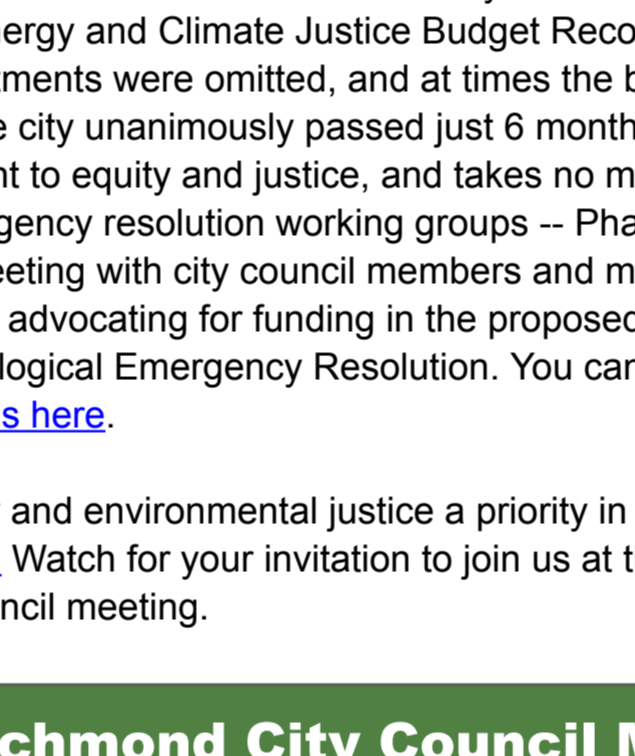


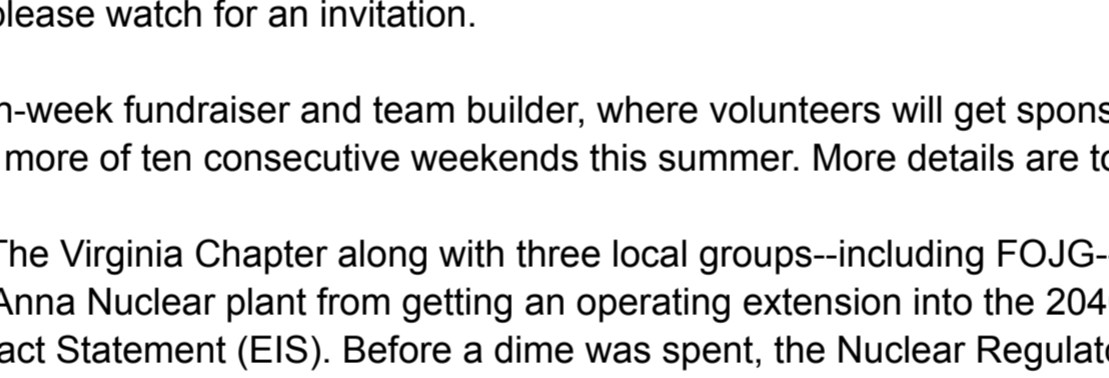
Photo courtesy of The Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Sierra Club, Falls of the James Advocacy Committee has reviewed Mayor Stoney's proposed FY2023 budget and has sent the administration our RVA Clean Energy and Climate Justice Budget Recommendations. We are concerned that energy efficiency and clean energy investments were omitted, and at times the budget is at odds with the Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution that the city unanimously passed just 6 months ago. Climate change is not listed as a priority, the budget reflects no commitment to equity and justice, and takes no meaningful steps to reduce emissions. Three of our climate and ecological emergency resolution working groups – Phasing Out Richmond Gas Works, Tree Canopy, and Green Fleet—have been meeting with city council members and making recommendations to committees and the Stoney administration for months advocating for funding in the proposed FY2023 budget to be directed to initiatives outlined in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution. You can [see our proposed RVA Clean Energy and Climate Justice Budget Recommendations here](#).

If you'd like to help us make clean energy and environmental justice a priority in Richmond, please [send Mayor Stoney and City Council members an email here](#). Watch for your invitation to join us at the upcoming public hearing on **April 11, 2022** and on **May 2, 2022** at the City Council meeting.

Email Richmond City Council Members!

Happenings at the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club



By Joe Brancoli

As the Falls of the James Group representative to the twenty-person Executive Committee of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, I write this article to provide updates on what the Virginia Chapter is doing. These updates reflect the current status as of the March 12, 2022, quarterly meeting.

Trainings in equity and anti-racism are being offered to volunteer leaders and staff in April and May, led by a consultant group based in Richmond, Virginia.

The Virginia Youth Leadership Council was created in the summer of 2021. It holds monthly meetings and plans advocacy actions. One member, Patrick Berard, serves on the Chesapeake Bay Group Executive Committee, and another member, Indya Woolfolk, is a student at the University of Richmond who spoke at our February program.

The Annual Gathering will return (fingers crossed) on Saturday, **September 17, 2022**, at Pocahontas State Park. This year it will be a one-day event; please watch for an invitation.

Ten Wild Weekends is a ten-week fundraiser and team builder, where volunteers will get sponsorships to hike, bike, or paddle ten miles on one or more of ten consecutive weekends this summer. More details are to come.

Here is some good news. The Virginia Chapter along with three local groups—including FOJG—pledged money for a legal effort to prevent the North Anna Nuclear plant from getting an operating extension into the 2040s with no update to the original Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Before a dime was spent, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission voted unanimously to open the process of re-evaluating the EIS, which should allow for public hearings.

Here is some good legislative news. One completely good bill passed the General Assembly this year with unanimous support in both the House and Senate. Monty Mason's SB575 requires the state and allows localities to consider lifetime costs when assessing the purchase of new vehicles. This will favor electric vehicles in most cases, an example of how to get something positive done in adverse circumstances.

Observe the Spring Blooms of Hanover Wayside Park



Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

Looking for some spring blooms and a place to celebrate nature during Earth Month? Consider visiting the gardens at [Hanover Wayside Park](#)! Retired landscape gardener and FOJG member **Stan Balducci** tends to these gardens, where he has planted over 16 plant species including azaleas, bearded iris, daylilies, dogwood trees, tulips, and periwinkle.

In the gardens and throughout Hanover Wayside Park, there are many opportunities for observing wildlife. Oak trees, red maples, and American beeches are among the many tree species found throughout the park's grounds. The park is located on 39 acres of land, including fields, forests, walking trails, a playground, a picnic area, and a veterans memorial. Park admission is free and open to the public.

You Can Protect Virginia's Environment by Gathering Valuable Species Data!



Photo courtesy of iNaturalist.

Be a **Bioblitz citizen scientist** between **April 27 and 30!** You, your family, and friends can help scientists, land managers, nonprofits, and governments learn about the areas that they help to protect by gathering valuable species data from your neighborhoods.

[Join](#) The Science Museum of Virginia, Maymont, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, James River Park System, Pocahontas State Park, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Master Naturalists to explore metro Richmond and surrounding areas, discovering and documenting the biodiversity of our urban spaces. [The data gathering challenge will occur between April 27 and 30 using the free iNaturalist app](#). The more species observations that can be identified, the higher the challenge tally!

Gather round for a May 1 post-challenge party sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and biologists from the Virginia Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Heritage at Blue Bee Cider from 6 – 8 p.m. at 1320 Summit Ave, Richmond, VA 23230.

View Previous FOJG Programs



Monarch butterflies are one of the most recognizable insects in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

3/8/22: Duron Chavis, a former recipient of the 2021 Elizabeth Green Gandy Award, presents on urban farming in Richmond, Virginia. Click [here](#) to watch.

2/8/22: University of Richmond students Will Heinle, Elizabeth Halesz, Indya Woolfolk, and McKenna Dunbar discuss environmental projects moderated by Dr. Todd Lookingbill. Click [here](#) to watch.

1/11/22: Chris Burnside and Karl Green present *Monarchs: Endangered but not Protected*. Click [here](#) to watch.

To access all of our previous programs, visit our [Archive](#) section [here](#).

Joe's Book Nook



Do you recognize this popular children's book? *The Wind in the Willows* is a great springtime read. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

By Joe Brancoli

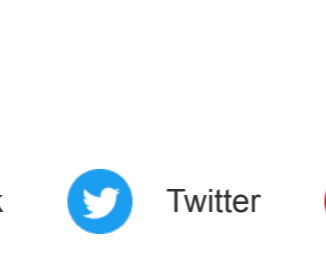
Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* occupies my thoughts this spring. While truly a story for all seasons, I think it now for its delightful opening, where the main character, Mole, chases the rabbits as he dances giddily to the river, intoxicated by spring and ready to explore new worlds.

Mole and his friends Badger, Ratty, and Mr. Toad travel through many tests and experiences in this heartwarming but hard-edged volume. At the center of the book is a chapter detailing a night-long search for the missing child of Otter with language beautifully evoking the onset of dawn and the sense of awe at the presence of a nature god. It begs to be read as the sun rises by our own James River.

On a historical note, Syd Barrett, the leader of a little-known British band, named Pink Floyd's first album after the twelfth chapter of this book, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. Please enjoy this charming work and let's hope that our society can come with Mr. Toad to the painful point of breaking our passionate attachment to the motor car!

As always, please support your local booksellers.

Updated National Sierra Club COVID-19 Response



The National Sierra Club Executive Director Mike Brune, Chief Operations Officer, Jen Trahan, and Ramón J. Cruz, President, as of August 5th, 2021, indicated that outings, meetings, and some events have resumed. All require a safety plan, written by the organizers, to be approved by the Virginia Chapter and National Sierra Club. In addition, all participants at any indoor event MUST be masked, regardless of vaccination status. These guidelines are extended through **May 31, 2022**.

Get Featured in the Newsletter

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 veronicasdneyhayes@gmail.com with the subject "FOJG Newsletter" for a chance to be featured in the upcoming newsletter. Please email pictures, a blur, and important information such as your name, the date, and the location by the 22nd of the month.

2022 FOJG Executive Committee Members

Joe Brancoli, FOJG Executive Committee Chair/Leadership Chair: joesierra@gmail.com

Glen Besa, FOJG Political Chair and Outings Leader: glenbesa@gmail.com

Steve Carter-Lovejoy, FOJG "Skip The Plastics" Committee Chair: scarterlovejoy53@msn.com

Carlie Greenberry-Ribley, FOJG Executive Committee Member: carliegr@gmail.com

Shavon Peacock, FOJG Secretary, Membership Engagement Member, & Outings Leader: shavonandrew@verizon.net

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

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Thanks for all you do for the environment,
Veronica Hayes
 Newsletter Editor
 Sierra Club Falls of the James Group

