

# Tennessee Sierran

SIERRA  
CLUB  
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

Volume 56, Number 1 — January / February 2023

## 2023: A Pivotal Year for Tennessee

by Scott Banbury Page 3



### What's Happening?

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Come for Hiking, Programs, Good Food, and more.  
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Conservation Education Day is March 1st.  
Come to Nashville to Make Your Voice Heard.  
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Masthead photo: Roan Highlands, © Ron Shrieves  
Cover photo: Scott Banbury, 2019 CED Press Conference, by Todd Waterman

# From Tennessee Chair Dr. Cris Corley

## Early Morning Thoughts: Being Healthy in Body and Planet



Adjusting to the change in time and shortening of daylight hours presents complications to my circadian rhythm. The wild temperature swings, ranging from a day time high of 80 degrees one day to a bone chilling 40 the next, are definitely stressing my thyroid. With my advancing age, it seems my body's ability to quickly adjust has slowed dramatically. Our old host, Planet Earth, appears to be experiencing similar difficulties in adjusting to the rapid increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Over the history of time, our atmosphere has experienced rapid increases in heat-trapping gasses, mostly the result of catastrophic events including meteor strikes and volcanos. With time, our oceans, forests, and grasslands slowly absorbed the offending carbon dioxide and the Earth would return to a more desirable temperature for its inhabitants to enjoy. But as our planet has aged, thanks to us so has its ability to recover quickly from atmospheric change.

The industrialization of humanity has put a kink in Earth's atmospheric cycling. As our greenhouse gasses escalate, our planet's ability to capture the offending gasses has been compromised by the clearcutting of forest and the elimination of our grasslands. The oceans' ability to absorb offending gasses has plateaued due to the abnormal levels of dissolved carbon dioxide concentrates, complicated by the increase of sea temperatures, thus resulting in the mass die-off of coral reefs and plant life.

My time on this planet has been fairly comfortable, but our future generations' ability to survive is at question. It still amazes me how many people believe climate change is "fake news." Growing up and living my entire life in the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains, I am an eye witness to the ever-increasing change in Tennessee's climate.

When I was a child in 1967, my father took the family on our first ski trip. We didn't travel to Vermont or Colorado, we jumped in our old station wagon and rode up the plateau to Renegade Mountain Ski Resort in Crab Orchard, just outside Crossville. The plentiful snow and lengthy winters were ideal for a smalltown kid to learn the sport of snow skiing there. I continued to ski thru my college years at Renegade, but the ski seasons were becoming shorter and warmer. By 1980, the mountain was unable to provide sufficient amounts of snow and the resort collapsed. All of our seasons in Tennessee have been affected by the continued increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations. Just this summer at my home place on Old Hickory Lake, my weather station recorded 30 straight days with a heat index of 100 degrees plus.

Now is the time for all of our members to come to the aid of our planet. A renowned Tennesseean, Al Gore, sounded the battle cry almost 30 years ago. Just recently I ran across an old letter I received from then Senator Gore, dated February 28th, 1991. He had just recently returned from an expedition to the South Pole. At that time, significant research was being focused on the effects of released hydrocarbons on the ozone layer. Al wrote, "I hope that you will continue to care about Antarctica and to help in efforts to protect it." The letter truly energized me to become involved in environmental efforts to protect Antarctica and the Earth's atmosphere.

Our chapter has numerous members and committees working on this potentially catastrophic issue. We have Kent Minault and JoAnn McIntosh addressing the electrification of transportation, Amy Kelly's organizing to curtail the effects of burning fossil fuels, and Virginia Dale's amazing focus on preserving 30% of our wildlands for carbon capture by 2030. Our Conservation Chair Bill Moll has done an incredible job in organizing committees focused on land, water, and air issues. I strongly urge each of you to find a group that stimulates your passion in protecting our old friend, Earth. Contact me if you'd like help.

Please help save Planet Earth by joining the team with a mission to combat greenhouse gasses. With our efforts, we will aid our old planet in providing adequate atmospheric conditions conducive to life. Otherwise, let's hope Elon Musk will be able to rapidly complete his planned mega resort on Mars — we may need to reserve a room!

Contact Cris at [chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org](mailto:chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org)

## Singer-Songwriter Bill Oliver Inspires in Nashville

by Karen McIntyre, Retired Metro Nashville School Librarian

Bill Oliver, a singer/songwriter from Austin, Texas, who is known for songs with messages of environmental stewardship, was on stage for a celebration of sustainability Sunday night, Nov. 27 at the Harding House Brewery in Nashville. Nashville's Sustainability Advisory Committee sponsored the program and members of the Sierra Club's Middle Tennessee Group supported it.

Bill's songs often focus on children, and his signature piece, The Habitat Song, is one that kids especially love. "When you're closer to the ground, to the flowers, maybe you identify with them more. But I always identified with the kids, and have an easy time with them; half my act is wiggling my eyebrows and being kind of, you know, a little silly, a little goofy. Sometimes I can do that with adults, too. (Continued on page 6)



Bill Oliver inspired a love for the environment with his music in Nashville on November 27

## Tennes-Sierran

The bimonthly newsletter of the  
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Volume 56, Number 1 January / February 2023  
Digital Edition

### Change of Address

Email: [Address.Changes@SierraClub.org](mailto:Address.Changes@SierraClub.org)

Online: [MyAccount.SierraClub.org](http://MyAccount.SierraClub.org)

Snail Mail: Mail new address AND the mailing label on page 1 to:  
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041

Request no paper copy here: [http://bit.ly/Stop\\_My\\_Paper\\_Copy](http://bit.ly/Stop_My_Paper_Copy)

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February Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by January 20

March Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by February 17

March / April Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by January 31

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# Looking Ahead in 2023: A Pivotal Year for Tennessee

by Scott Banbury, Tennessee Chapter Conservation Programs Coordinator



2023 looks to be a pivotal year for the environment in Tennessee. Major decisions will be made regarding the future of clean energy, solid waste, the protection of our rivers and streams from pollution and withdrawals, the disposition of coal ash at TVA sites across the state and implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act in Tennessee.

## The 113th General Assembly

In the legislature, we will be working to advance legislation that moves Tennessee toward a truly circular economy that keeps packaging waste out of our landfills and environment. Watch for alerts on Sierra Club's

Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act that would implement a comprehensive extended producer responsibility for packaging policy in Tennessee. This would shift the cost of managing packaging waste to the companies that create it, provide much needed funding for our local solid waste managers, encourage more sustainable packaging design, and create viable streams of recycled material to manufacturers in Tennessee (see article on page 6).

We'll also be working with the legislature to fix the state laws that limit local communities' ability to make their own determinations about the siting of facilities that irreversibly impact the environment, including quarries, mines, landfills and other solid waste facilities. Too often, local officials don't know about major permitting actions by the state within their jurisdictions until it's too late to take any action at the local planning level. We hope to enact policy that would give local officials advance notice of permit applications and the ability to stop state permitting of activities that are inconsistent with local planning.

Thanks to a Chapter Strong Grant we received this year from national Sierra Club, we will also be working with a broad coalition of community organizations called WeDecideTN to push back on the General Assembly's efforts to preempt local governments from enacting policies that they disagree with. When local governments adopt policies to address their challenges, they shouldn't have to worry that the General Assembly will nullify their action or strip their right to act on local issues. Look for updates on these efforts in upcoming newsletters and legislative alerts.

## Cleaning Up TVA's Coal Ash

In August of 2015, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) issued an order requiring TVA to conduct extensive groundwater monitoring at seven of its coal ash impoundments across Tennessee, including Allen (Memphis), Cumberland, Bull Run (Claxton), John Sevier (Rogersville), Kingston, Watts Bar, and Johnsonville. If TDEC sticks to their current timeline, results from this testing will be released throughout 2023, as well as corrective action plans where necessary.

In most cases TVA has indicated their preference to cap these impoundments and leave the waste where it is along our rivers, often below the water table. They've even recently suggested greenwashing this by putting solar farms on top of the cap. We will be watching this closely and advocate that coal ash is removed and reinterred high and dry away from our rivers where coal ash threatens ground and surface waters.

## Solid Waste and Recycling

TDEC'S 2015-2025 Solid Waste Management Plan adopted in 2015 was full of great aspirations; but, unfortunately, few of the policies it presented were adopted. TDEC is already preparing to launch the creation of a new plan which will entail public engagement across the state and hopefully support our legislative priorities and advance the good work that is already underway. With the Middle Point Landfill in Murfreesboro, which serves more than 30 counties in Tennessee and is set to close in the next three-to-four years, there is no time to waste.

Expansive composting programs that seek to divert food and yard waste from our landfills are taking root in Memphis, Chattanooga and Nashville where they make up as much as 50% of the volume. Instead of landfilling this valuable organic material where it degrades into greenhouse gasses, proper composting results in nutrient rich fertilizer to support agriculture and remediate polluted sites.

Unfortunately, competing interests in Tennessee want to turn municipal waste into fuel pellets to be burned by various industries or incinerated for energy, both of which are harmful to the climate and air quality. Current state policy often encourages this and/or no longer requires solid waste permits for these activities.

The other growing trend is "chemical" or "advanced" recycling where plastics are broken down through pyrolysis or gasification and converted into fuel to be burned or base chemicals to be turned back into plastic. There may be some benefit in the latter and here in Tennessee, Eastman Chemical is developing a plastics-plastics process that may be promising.

## Comprehensive Water Planning

In 2018 we participated in a process that led to the creation of the Tennessee H<sub>2</sub>O Plan which assessed and made recommendations as to how the state might move forward balancing the growing demands of communities and industry with protection of our surface and groundwater resources and the ecosystems they serve. This includes the impacts of both water withdrawals from and wastewater discharges into streams, as well as the losses and pollution resulting from leaking infrastructure serving both.

TDEC's Duck River Comprehensive Permitting Project is a pilot project for considering the cumulative impacts of all the withdrawals and discharges within a watershed, and appropriately so since the Duck is the most biologically diverse river in TN – some say North America – and threatened by enormous residential and industrial growth, primarily in Maury County. A slew of permits will all be up for public comment at the same time in early 2023 and we will be working with impacted residents and partner organizations to make sure the Duck's biodiversity is protected. We will also be working to stop the ill-advised sewer discharge proposed on the Lick Creek in Hickman County, a tributary to the Duck.

In East Tennessee, we're seeing increasing contamination of groundwater with E. coli, most likely as a result of poorly engineered and maintained septic systems that developers want to deregulate even further, a problem we'll continue to address across the state. In West Tennessee, we continue to work with Protect Our Aquifer to safeguard the Memphis Sand Aquifer, particularly in regards to the huge increase in groundwater demands from Ford's Blue Oval factory, and wastewater associated with new development in the recharge area of the aquifer.

## Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, TVA & the Inflation Reduction Act

The historic Inflation Reduction Act passed in August 2022 provides enormous incentives for both personal and institutional investment in clean energy and energy efficiency. Individual homeowners will be eligible for thousands of dollars in rebates for home energy efficiency upgrades with low to moderate income households benefiting the most. In addition to the individual incentives, a lot of money will be coming to the state in the form of block grants to be administered by TDEC. The Act also opens up a slew of opportunities for TVA and local power companies to expand their adoption of clean energy and energy efficiency programs. Much of the Chapter's energy work in 2023 will be working with local and state governments to see that Tennessee takes full advantage of all these opportunities.

If you would like to know more about any of these issues, want to get involved or know anything else we need to pay attention to, please contact me at [scott.banbury@sierraclub.org](mailto:scott.banbury@sierraclub.org) or 901-619-8567. Happy New Year!

## Conservation Education Day is March 1st!

Join Chapter Conservation Programs Coordinator,  
Scott Banbury, and Others Who Want their Voices to be Heard  
in Nashville ~ Wednesday, March 1

We will meet with our legislative representatives in their offices in the Cordell Hull Building in Nashville to communicate our interest in bills before the State House and Senate. Likely topics include the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) bill (see article on page 6), private sewer systems, coal primacy and whatever else arises during the sessions.

Training session on Tuesday night, February 28  
covering issues and how to lobby your representatives

Keep up with activities on our New Facebook Group  
*Tennessee Conservation Education Day*

Have questions?  
Contact Bill Moll at 404-401-7899 or [whmoll@aol.com](mailto:whmoll@aol.com)

This opportunity is jointly sponsored by the Sierra Club,  
Tennessee Conservation Voters, Tennessee Environmental Council,  
Harpeth River Conservancy, and Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light.

*Please plan to participate, if you can.*

# What Can We Learn from a Fourth Grader? Part Two

## An institution ends a program that kept seven tons of organic waste from the landfill

by Karen McIntyre, Retired Metro Nashville School Librarian

“What did you say to my students?” Ms. Vaughn looked stressed. “A parent called and wanted to know why you told the kids America was poop.”

“I can’t imagine!” I was introducing the children at Westmeade Elementary School in Nashville to ecology with the little book, *Planting the Wild Garden*. It explains how nature regenerates itself. We focused on how the wind carried the seeds, the rain knocked them from the stalks into a river that planted them along its banks, and how they hitchhiked on fox’s fur to a new home. The only thing that was unusual was when we came to the page where the birds ate the seeds. A student interrupted, “If the bird eats the seeds they can’t grow,” so I explained how the bird digests the soft pulp around the tiny seed and it passes through its gut and comes out in his poop. ‘EWE’ they cried out in unison.



Compost Chaperone Nancy Green (right) takes a break to share some joy with a Westmeade Elementary School student. Photo courtesy of Karen McIntyre

“NO, not EWE. Nature provides the poop as fertilizer that coats the seed. When it lands in the dirt and the rain comes, that fertilizer helps the seed sprout. Friends, POOP IS A MIRACLE!” Ms. Vaughan looked at me and laughed out loud. HE HEARD “AMERICA,” not “A MIRACLE.” She went to call the parents and I sighed in relief!

The children experienced the fullness of nature including composting in the garden and saw it as something of value, as nature’s way of turning trash into treasure. Thanks to our programs about waste, recycling and Warner Park Nature Center’s work with our young naturalists, our fourth graders were ready to solve world hunger!

Our waste audit companions, Warner Elementary and Hill Middle School, had not experienced nature education. Their students hadn’t asked to redirect food to the hungry, and they did not know composting was A MIRACLE. For them trash had simply disappeared, but now we were asking them to do something more difficult.



Fourth grade Team of Warriors at Westmeade Elementary School in Nashville. These were the kids who got really involved. The original fourth grader who started it all was in an earlier class — these kids were active in composting two years later. Photo courtesy of Karen McIntyre

To value composting people must understand that organic matter in a landfill turns into methane, a gas that is 25 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>. They must recognize that landfills create pollution, and even at Westmeade where the cultural shift toward sustainability had begun, our administration considered composting an irritation. It was clear that Warner and Hill weren’t going to join us in composting, and we were on shaky ground at Westmeade.

A 5:00 pm email on Friday requesting my presence in the Principal’s office the following Monday sent me on a mission. I enlisted friends from environmental groups across Nashville and by Monday I had “Compost Chaperones” scheduled for a full month.

These intrepid Waste Warriors, armed with aprons, gloves, and a grabber to keep plastic out of the waste stream had another weapon in their quiver — infectious joy. After the first day, it was obvious that they “enjoyed” the children, and the children enjoyed them. We settled into a successful rhythm as students put their “share” food in the first bin, plastic waste in the trash, and organics into the compost. Finally, the compostable trays were stacked and the Captains added them to the bin neatly to conserve space. Plastic clamshells, cutlery, lids, bowls, and wrappers (Continued on page 6)

# Harvey Broome Group Endorses: Two Wins, Two Losses

by Kent Minault, Chair of Harvey Broome Group’s Political Team and the Tennessee Chapter’s Transportation Team

Our Harvey Broome Group Political Team jumped into the recent election to endorse four candidates for State office: incumbents Gloria Johnson and Sam McKenzie, and challengers Amanda Collins and Greg Kaplan.

Our endorsements are based on two main considerations: (1) a fairly complex questionnaire on environmental issues, and (2) the candidate’s record either in office or in other community or professional activity. An incumbent who was previously endorsed by us and has performed well in office is not usually asked to fill out another questionnaire. We also check out videos and news articles on websites that feature candidates’ campaign activities.

Sam and Gloria have both been strong allies in Nashville, and we were relieved to see them win back their seats with comfortable margins. The Republican-led Legislature had tried to sideline Gloria Johnson by merging her district with Sam’s, forcing them to run against each other. Gloria dodged this ploy by moving to a home a mile away so she could run in the newly formed District 90, containing a large rural and more conservative constituency. Nonetheless, she won the seat by the biggest margin of all of her four wins to date, seriously embarrassing the Republicans’ redistricting gambit. Sam also won his district by a powerful 71%, though only 30% of the voters showed up.

Amanda and Greg both lost in districts with large rural and conservative areas. District 14 had the highest voter turnout of any district in the state with 46% of voters submitting a ballot, marking a trend where majority Republican districts had the highest participation. Greg’s race in District 18 had the second highest voter turnout with 43%, but his campaign garnered an extra dollop of publicity from a highly antisemitic mailer put out by the County Republicans and disavowed by his opponent, Elaine Davis. Even though District 18 had been redrawn by Republicans and extended into South Knoxville to make it more conservative, the margin of conservative victory was the same as in the old District 18 in 2020, clearly marking a Republican underperformance. Greg’s energetic style and vigorous opposition to the recent “divisive concepts” legislation won him a 61%



Sierra Club’s Harvey Broome Group endorsed Sam MacKenzie and Gloria Johnson (top) and Amanda Collins and Greg Kaplan (bottom) in the November 2022 election. Photos provided by candidates.

majority in the Sequoyah Hills area, beating Joe Biden’s percentage there in 2020 by one point.

Sierra Club members worked hard for our candidates, putting out endorsement statements and calls to action on social media and other platforms. Chapter Political Committee Co-Chair Jerry Thornton was out canvassing, as was the HBG Political Committee. Our new HBG Committee member Dana Moran created a handsome graphic for our endorsement statements that hit social media the Monday before Election Day, earning high praise from campaign managers.

She and I walked several neighborhoods in south and west Knoxville and had many conversations with voters. The undecideds were the most instructive. One gentleman in a rural South Knox neighborhood took Greg’s candidate card, then told us he identified as a Reagan Republican. He sighed and looked thoughtfully at the card. “But I’m gonna vote for this guy.” He bit his lip. “I just can’t get behind where the Republican party is going. And I can’t support most of the candidates they’re running.” His wife came into the doorway and smiled at us. “We won’t be voting Republican for some time to come — maybe never.” We heard this opinion many times leading up to Election

Day. Conservative voters were turning away from Republican extremism.

Nationwide, young voters showed up in record numbers. In Michigan, where Democrats won control of the State House and Senate for the first time in 40 years, young voters were critical to Democratic success. University polling stations had long lines and frequently had to stay open late, a situation reflected around the country. Many election deniers lost their races. Abortion rights advocates also drove turnout. Commenters pointed out that voters showed a clear pattern of rejecting former President Trump’s “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) element and did so across partisan lines. Also, environmental groups mobilized energetically to get their members to the polls and to drive participation in candidates’ Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts. Tellingly, there were virtually no attacks on Democrats for supporting the Inflation Reduction Act, the biggest clean energy program yet. This is a huge change from (Continued on page 7)

# Tennessee Chapter Winter Retreat

## January 20-22 ~ Cedars of Lebanon State Park

Join fellow members of the Tennessee Chapter January 20-22 for the Chapter Winter Retreat at Cedars of Lebanon State Park, just north of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Activities include hiking, election of ExCom officers and committee chairs, planning for the year, live music, and eating, of course. We anticipate National Sierra Club Board President Ramón Cruz being in attendance for part of the weekend and will give a Sierra Club update and a Q&A on Saturday evening.

Come for hiking, relaxing close to nature, and the company of good friends, old and new. Be a part of the fellowship, hikes, fireplace chats, meetings, winter-sky stargazing, birding and disk golf.

**Covid Protocol:** Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, each attendee at the January Retreat is required to take a rapid Covid test on the day of departure to the Retreat. If you test positive or have symptoms of Covid or flu, do not attend the Retreat. If you do not have a test kit, there will be test kits available at the Retreat. However, to avoid an unnecessary trip, please take your test at home. Free test kits are available at: <https://www.covid.gov/tests>.

Thanks for caring for the health of your friends!

### HIKES

Tennessee State Naturalist, Randy Hedgepath, will lead us on Saturday and Sunday hikes (see the retreat schedule to the right for specifics). Be sure to prepare for muddy trail conditions (unless it is frozen) and winter weather that is likely in late January. Winter hikes can be great experiences if you are properly attired! It's a good idea to have a daypack for carrying water, snacks, and extra clothing.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

We'll be at the Group Lodge, where you get bunkhouse lodging (women's and men's dorms). You must bring your own sleeping bag or linens/blankets, towels and personal items. If you don't wish to stay in the group lodge dorms, camping spaces and two-bedroom cabins are available to rent at the Park. There are also hotels in Lebanon, which is about 10 miles north of the Park. Find venue information and directions at Cedars of Lebanon State Park website here: <https://goo.gl/LCKLM3>.

### CEDARS OF LEBANON STATE PARK

The Park, established in 1955, is named for Eastern Red Cedar trees found throughout the area. The trees reminded early American settlers of the famed Biblical cedar forests that thrived across Mount Lebanon in what is now the Mediterranean area.

From the Park's Website: "In the 1940s, botanists noticed unique natural ecosystems found in and around Cedars of Lebanon State Park and Forest. These areas are natural rock gardens called cedar glades. The presence of glades is due to limestone rock coming so close to the surface of the ground that it causes the soil to be thin or absent. The small amount of soil that does exist along the cracks and potholes in the limestone slab, has been built up over many years. Water and surface temperatures vary so much throughout the year that a harsh, desert-like, inhospitable habitat is created with its own unique plant community. Nineteen rare and endangered species of plants grow profusely here and nowhere else in the world."

### RETREAT COSTS

- Early Bird Discount by January 13 (lodging, 2 breakfasts, Saturday dinner) – Adult \$60
- First Chapter Retreat, receiving our special price (lodging, 2 breakfasts, Saturday dinner) – Adult \$40
- Student (lodging, 2 breakfasts, Saturday dinner) – \$30
- Late registration (after January 13) – \$70
- Child under 16 – No Charge
- Only the Sunday Executive Committee meeting (registration, breakfast, no lodging) – \$10

**REGISTER HERE:** <https://bit.ly/Winter-2023-Retreat-Reg>

**QUESTIONS?** Ask Bill at [whmoll@aol.com](mailto:whmoll@aol.com)



Hikers at Cedars of Lebanon State Park. Photo by Todd Waterman.



Tennessee State Naturalist Randy Hedgepath will lead hikes at the January 2023 retreat.



Sierra Club National President Ramón Cruz is scheduled to attend the Tennessee Chapter retreat in January 2023 and will give an update and a Q&A on Saturday evening.



Virginia Dale will talk on Saturday afternoon about Tennessee Smart Yards, an Extension-led program that guides Tennesseans on practices they can apply in their outdoor spaces to create healthier, more ecologically-sound landscapes and communities.

### RETREAT SCHEDULE

The Chapter retreat will begin at 4 pm on Friday, January 20, and end at 11 am on Sunday, January 22.

#### Friday

Meet at the lodge to carpool to no-host dinner at a local Mexican restaurant or enjoy dinner on your own..

#### Saturday

Breakfast 6:30-8:00 am

#### 9:00 am Hike with Randy Hedgepath

The Hidden Springs Loop Trail is a 4.2 mile walk thru the cedar glades and has some dramatic geologic features of the karst topography. Be sure to prepare for muddy trail conditions which we will certainly have unless it is frozen. Meet Randy at the parking area where you turn to the horse barn.\*

#### 9:30 am to noon Morning Programs

9:30 -10:00 am Conservation Education Day – Bill Moll

10 - 10:45 am – Legislative issues – TNClean, Food Waste bill: Scott Banbury, David Bordenkircher

10:45 - 11:30 am – Extended Producer Responsibility - Dan Firth

11:30-noon - Climate Change – Davis Nolan, Channel 2 Weather

Noon-1:00 pm Lunch time – on your own

#### 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm Afternoon Programs

1-1:45 pm – Beyond Coal Campaign, Amy Kelly

1:45-2:30 pm – Jackson Law

2:45-3:30- pm – Smart Yards –Virginia Dale

3:30-4:15 pm – Inflation Reduction Act

4:15-5 pm – Outings/Hiking - Ron Shrieves

6:00-7:30 pm Dinner

#### 7:30-9:00 pm Evening Programs

Sierra Club National President Ramón Cruz will give an update followed by a Q&A period Live Music by Antoinette Olesen & Buddy Farler

#### Sunday

Breakfast 6:30 - 7:30 am

8:00-11:00 am – ExCom meeting

#### 9:00 am Hike with Randy Hedgepath

Hike the Cedar Forest Trail with Randy Hedgepath. Meet Randy at the first parking lot located where you turn into the recreation area. This is a 2-mile walk through an upland forest with some beautiful rock formations and interesting sinkholes.\*

\*Note: You can also meet Randy at the Group Lodge thirty minutes before the hikes and ride with him or carpool to the trailhead.

## Extending Producer Responsibility: The Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act

by Dan Firth, Chair, Tennessee Chapter Solid Water and Mining Committee

The Tennessee State Legislature this year will consider the Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act this year. If passed, it will reduce the amount of packaging disposed of in landfills by incentivizing companies to reduce the total amount of packaging sold in Tennessee, as well as incentivize reuse and recycling.

Tennesseans are inundated with an ever-increasing amount of packaging. A small amount is recycled, but much goes directly into landfills. Tennessee was recently ranked 47th in the amount of packaging recycled, with just seven percent of common container and packaging materials recycled. Much of it ends up as litter defacing our roadsides and contaminating fields, forests, and waterways. And landfills are filling up. For good reason, the addition of new landfills and expansion of existing landfills are challenged — because **landfills pollute air and water, they are hazardous to those living and working nearby.**

Where they exist at all, county and municipal recycling systems across the state are bending under the weight of increased costs for collection, transportation, and processing of recyclable materials. Because of a lack of markets **or costs**, fewer types of materials are collected. Inconsistency in materials collected across programs results in consumer confusion and consumers give up on recycling. Some materials collected by recycling programs still end up in the landfill. Improved infrastructure, additional personnel, and reliable markets are needed. Taxpayers end up footing the bill, **making improvements challenging.** No one likes to spend much on waste disposal and recycling.

**Some Tennessee businesses are building business plans based on a sustainable future and a circular economy where valuable materials are remanufactured to produce new products. For example, Eastman Chemical Company and Domtar, both in Kingsport, Tennessee, are each building manufacturing plants specifically to use recycled materials. These companies want and need materials currently heading to landfills.**

While consumers (taxpayers) cannot choose the packaging they receive, they pay the costs of disposal. Only the companies selling their products in Tennessee have control over both the amount and type of packaging they use. As a result, it is the companies that can reduce the total amount of packaging and ensure that the packaging they use can be and is reused or recycled — keeping packaging waste out of the landfills.

To address these issues, the Chapter has, in a Chapter first, drafted the Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act, through extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from local governments to affected industries, to be introduced in the 2023 Tennessee legislative session.

The Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act implements an extended producer responsibility for packaging framework that:

- supports the unique requirements of Tennessee;
- shifts the financial burden of paying for disposal of packaging from the taxpayer to the companies producing the packaging, and builds transparency and confidence into the functioning of packaging recycling processes;
- reduces the amount of packaging waste disposed of in landfills and/or incinerated;
- encourages package designs and compositions that are less burdensome to the consumer and more economical for the recycling industry;
- prioritizes reuse and reduction strategies as the most effective way to accomplish these goals;
- incentivizes recovery of valuable materials and developing markets for collected materials, supporting a circular economy; and
- engages companies because they are best equipped to eliminate packaging waste in a fair and balanced way while protecting communities.

Watch for ways that you can help pass the Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act this legislative session. For further details, check out the bill framework: <https://bit.ly/TN-Waste-Reduction-Recycling-Act-fw>.

Contact Dan at [dwfirth@gmail.com](mailto:dwfirth@gmail.com)

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### Bill Oliver Inspires (Continued from Page 2)

If they have that spark still there!" Bill is the kind of singer that brings the audience into the music and is absolutely ebullient even when singing about bringing your own bag! He was joined on stage by several well-known local musicians he knew through the Kerrville Folk Festival. Singer-songwriters Joe and Tree Brunelle performed "Bottles and Cans," Roy Wooten played his own hand-designed cajón drum, and Joe Ray Reed, who is known as a Rock-n-Roll performer, filled out the stage.

The Brewery features only local grains which are in season and sends the spent grain left over from the process of brewing the beer to a local farmer who feeds it to his pigs.

Contact Karen at [kjmcinty@comcast.net](mailto:kjmcinty@comcast.net)

## Land Management Committee Report

by Virginia Dale, Chair, Tennessee Chapter Land Management Committee

Tennessee is renowned for many environmental benefits including its abundant and unique natural resources, extensive recreational opportunities, and the highest biodiversity of any inland state. Collectively, these benefits are known as the ecosystem services provided by healthy ecological systems, which in Tennessee include grassland, forest, and aquatic systems. Ecosystem services include functions such as pollination, clean air and water, flood and fire mitigation, and human mental and physical well-being. These benefits are often integral to the provisioning of food, clean drinking water, habitat, decomposition of wastes, and the resilience and productivity of economically important ecosystems. Activities such as use of native plants, reduced watering, and rain gardens designed to absorb rainwater, on private as well as public lands, contribute to these benefits.

Ecosystem services can be at risk of degradation or loss as a result of the way land is managed. Some management activities seem innocuous, but are harmful. For example, maintaining large areas of lawns reduces the amount of habitat and food available to native animals, and can put animals at risk when toxic chemicals are applied to those lawns.

The goal of the Land Management Committee is to foster positive effects on land management processes and ecosystem services across residential, commercial, and public lands in Tennessee. A major challenge is that, although much information is available about good management practices, there is limited knowledge among the public about management actions that actually support biodiversity and result in environmental benefits. The Committee is gathering information about better land management practices for Tennessee so that it can be provided in a variety of ways to residents, commercial enterprises (such as nurseries), city planners, and others who make zoning decisions. As examples of such information, Doug Tallamy, entomologist at the University of Delaware, lists actions that can be taken here: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/faq-2/getting-started>.

And, the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council provides the Tennessee Exotic Plant Management Manual ([bit.ly/TN-Exotic-Plant-Manual](https://bit.ly/TN-Exotic-Plant-Manual)) online. In addition, the Committee addresses specific local land management issues such as the plans for the Blue Oval City in West Tennessee to support the new Ford plant, and protection of biodiversity in specific areas of high conservation value such as the Wolf River and the Oak Ridge Reservation.

To accomplish these goals, the Land Management Committee is working with other nongovernmental entities such as The Nature Conservancy and Wolfe River Conservancy, as well as with municipalities and government agencies. There are numerous ways Sierra Club members can help. The Land Management Committee meets via Zoom on the third Thursday of each month at 5:00 pm EST (4:00 pm CST). The Committee will welcome new members to help accomplish its ambitious goals.

Contact Virginia at [virginia.dale4@gmail.com](mailto:virginia.dale4@gmail.com)

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### Westmeade (Continued from page 4)

filled their trays, making it difficult for the kids to get things organized. If a student appeared to pause, the Compost Captains stepped in to help, asking, "Can you eat that?". If the answer was "no," it went in the trash.

"Kids enjoyed using the grabber to fish out "mistakes" and sometimes intentionally dropped trash into the compost just so they could be part of the fun," said Compost Chaperone Deb Smith.

We provided \$100 gift cards to insure buy-in from the cafeteria monitor and custodian. We rewarded kids, too. Each week one class per grade level was declared "Compost Champions" and got featured on the morning news with each class member receiving Dragon Dollars which could be spent on items like "lunch with a teacher" or a "garden helper" pass.

On Fridays, Carla and her mother Nancy oversaw the composting. Nancy wore a sign that offered hugs. Her smile melted hearts and kids sometimes went through the line multiple times just to get another hug. Giving hugs was not the only thing that Nancy dispensed. She made the children feel significant and proud of what they were doing for the Earth.

As the end of the year approached, so did the end of the money from the Kroger grant. The Society of St. Andrew gleaned our rescued food and distributed it. As a 501(c)3, they offered to receive donations for composting, and pay Compost Nashville, our local residential compost collection company, for pick-up. Word spread that we needed donations to continue composting and soon next year's costs were covered. **We had the money, a streamlined process (that made it less of headache for the administration), and we were successfully composting!**

Just when things looked brightest, we were hit with tornadoes and then pandemic closure. When we returned in the fall our principal refused to restart any sustainability programs. Food re-direction, composting, recycling, and nature education abruptly ended. The reason: "catching the children up." But the children needed to be in nature more than ever for their mental and physical well-being. To be continued in a future issue!

Contact Karen at [kjmcinty@comcast.net](mailto:kjmcinty@comcast.net)

# Dear Eartha: Advice from An Eco-Guru

Dear Eartha,

Most of us have kept a keen eye on the COP27 events just concluded in Egypt. We also watched with horror the deaths from flooding in Pakistan and India, along with other atrocious events caused by climate change around the world. Finally, the “loss and damage” outcries are being addressed, albeit weakly, by the governments of the first world who have caused the majority of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon overload upon Planet Earth. Would you share your thoughts on the “loss and damage” progress and what we, as environmentally responsible citizens of the biggest producer of destruction, can expect? Thanks.

–Guilty as Charged in Memphis

Dear Memphian,

Back in the 70s when I was wearing a “War is Menstruation Envy” tee shirt walking around Golden Gate Park on Earth Day, I bought a button with a photo of the Earth and the words “One World” atop and below it. What I think we are all seeing more clearly than ever before is how every citizen of every country on the globe is connected and this is the one world we occupy, though not in equal comfort, prosperity, or future prospects. Here’s how the UN High Commission on Refugees defines a reparation pathway: “‘Loss and damage’ refers to the devastating impacts of climate shocks and pressures, such as cyclones, floods, droughts and sea level rise, on people’s safety, homes and means to live with dignity” (Siegfried, 11/18/22, [unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org)).

While the Sierra Club has promoted environmental justice in recent years, governmental leaders continue to equivocate on what we now call the “loss and damage” funding arrangements moving forward more rapidly as destructive climate patterns escalate, and more human beings die in countries other than those of the biggest users of carbon.

You mentioned Pakistan. Indian journalists reported 1,596 dead from Pakistan’s flooding with 12,863 injured (9/23/22 [www.tribuneindia.com](http://www.tribuneindia.com)). Bill Kibben in *The New Yorker* reminds us of the million plus people dying

from the effects of climate change upon their environment in South Sudan and Somalia (11/19/22, <https://bit.ly/NYer-McKibben-ClimateJustice>). Leaders from around the world including those of India and many African nations, as well as the Secretary General of the United Nations, exhort those in powerful positions in the Global North to imagine refugees multiplying from millions to hundreds of millions.

These are difficult times and economic decisions strategically need to be made which require strategic thinking. U.S. economists question how to promote environmental business practices (as outlined in Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act), especially focusing on ways the World Bank can lend much more for renewable energy products. However, the World Bank, an international development organization of 187 countries, McKibben says, is “still pouring huge amounts into fossil fuel development, against the advice of climate scientists who say there’s no more margin for new oil and gas projects” Furthermore, Biden has now effectively banned the sale of any modern semiconductor-manufacturing equipment to China. The US may thus be impeding China’s decarbonization development as semiconductors are crucial for that process, suggests Robinson Meyer in *The Atlantic* (11/23/22, <https://bit.ly/Atlantic-Meyer-Semiconductors>).

Yep, it’s complicated, but we are inching forward. I’d like to leave us with the Sierra Club’s 2022 highlights to underscore that change is occurring and our efforts as environmental activists continue to produce positive results:

- Passed the Inflation Reduction Act — \$369 billion to drive job creation and reduce pollution in our communities
- Stopped fracked gas exports in the Gulf Coast
- Delayed the Mountain Valley Pipeline, *again*
- Protected Gray Wolves, *again*
- Celebrated the recognition of Tribal rights in land management

–Eartha

This column was written by Rita Bullinger.

Submit your question for Eartha to: [SierraTNNews@gmail.com](mailto:SierraTNNews@gmail.com)

## HBG Endorsements (Continued from Page 4)

the Democrats’ big loss in 2010 over their support for the cap-and-trade bill. Also, Dems shrugged off Republican attacks blaming Biden for high gas prices, which usually spells trouble for the party in power. Pam Kiely, Associate Vice President of U.S. Climate at the Environmental Defense Fund said, “The main thing we can take away ... is that strong commitments on climate ... are electoral benefits for constituents right now.”

It’s concerning to us that all our endorsed candidates adopted the traditional Democratic three-part talking points: jobs, education and health care, and said little about the climate. The flaw in the strategy was made glaringly obvious at a house party for Jason Martin where he reiterated the three points; then when his eyes met mine, he concluded by saying, “Oh, yeah, and the environment!” Given the election outcomes, is it really a good strategy to leave the environment as an afterthought? A recent *Scientific American* article would suggest not (<https://bit.ly/SciAm-Climate>). The article cites a Princeton survey published in late August after the passing of the Inflation Reduction Act. It showed that a large majority of Americans have such distorted beliefs about support for climate policy and concerns about climate in general that the authors called it a “false social reality.” Recent polls from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication show that 66 to 80 percent of people in the United States support major climate mitigation policies. But very few Americans think that other Americans do. In other words, all of us supporters of strong climate policy think we’re alone in our thinking, while in fact we’re not. Gregg Sparkman, lead author of the new study, feared that such a false impression could lead to self-silencing on climate. People conform to norms, so if we assume something isn’t popular, we don’t talk about it. If we don’t talk about it, candidates don’t mention it either. The article cites another study where a large sample of local policymakers had the same distorted view about the unpopularity of climate solutions.

I’ve shared the article with Martin and other candidates whom I’ve met during this election — both winners and losers. We Sierra Clubbers might pass it around to other decision-makers to un-delude them and reinforce the wide popularity of climate action.

Candidates might well pick up on the suggestion, since it gives them an advantage. Todd Waterman tells us: “Dr. Martin spoke at length about TVA, renewables, EVs, and jobs in a November 4 Oak Ridge Rally speech. We had a good talk on climate afterward.” Let’s press other candidates on this point.

But the national picture shows we also need to be more energetic about mobilizing ourselves to action. Postcard campaigns and phonebanks made a real difference this November, but nothing beats face-to-face conversation. Our political strength will grow to the extent that we’re willing to get out of our comfort zone and speak with others.

If you want to get a Sierra Club endorsement for candidates in your area, contact Chapter Political Chairs Jerry Thornton ([gatwildcat@aol.com](mailto:gatwildcat@aol.com)) and Bill Kornrich ([bkornrich@gmail.com](mailto:bkornrich@gmail.com)).

Contact Kent at [kminault@gmail.com](mailto:kminault@gmail.com)

## Mother Nature

by Emily Dickinson

Nature, the gentlest mother,  
Impatient of no child,  
The feeblest or the waywardest, —  
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill  
By traveller is heard,  
Restraining rampant squirrel  
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,  
A summer afternoon, —  
Her household, her assembly;  
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles  
Incites the timid prayer  
Of the minutest cricket,  
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep  
She turns as long away  
As will suffice to light her lamps;  
Then, bending from the sky

With infinite affection  
And infiniter care,  
Her golden finger on her lip,  
Wills silence everywhere.

This poem is in the public domain.

## Tennessee Chapter Fundraising Corner

by Mac Post, Fundraising Chair

The Year-End fundraising letter for 2022 was sent last month. Please give generously so that the Chapter can continue to direct energy and resources to meet pressing environmental challenges. If you prefer to donate through a secure website, follow this hyperlink: [sc.org/TNVictory2022](http://sc.org/TNVictory2022) or scan this QR Code:



Your contribution will help protect our natural resources, embrace clean energy, increase land conservation, reduce waste going into landfills, and empower local communities to develop a sustainable green future. Best wishes for the new year.



**Be a champion for the environment. Join today for \$15.**

From delisting endangered species like the Gray Wolf to drilling for dirty tar sands, the threats to our environment have never been greater. Your support is absolutely essential to preserving our most precious natural resources - join the nation's largest and most effective grassroots movement today.

We'll thank you with this free insulated cooler tote (limited time!) as well as these exciting Members-only benefits:

- One-year subscription to *Sierra* magazine
- Worldwide Members-only outdoor trips
- Automatic membership in your local Chapter and Group
- Discounts on Sierra Club calendars, books, and other merchandise.



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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail with this full ad to:

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## Defenders Fund Donors

Many Thanks to These Generous Contributors to the Defenders Fund!

Paul Batovsky	Betsy Garber	Hunter Oppenheimer
Gordon and Judy Gibson	Sandra Kurtz	Alan Fister
Bill and Genie Moore	Peg Duthie	Linda Holmes
Meg Robertson	Robert Hayes	Elizabeth Cunningham
	Theresa Ball & David Parsons	

### RETREAT SCHEDULE

	LOCATION	DATES
Winter 2023	Cedars of Lebanon State Park*	January 20-22
Spring 2023	Fall Creek Falls State Park	April 28-30
Fall 2023	Pickett State Park	October 13-15
Winter 2024	Cedars of Lebanon State Park	January 19-21
Spring 2024	Fall Creek Falls State Park	May 3 -5

\* Ramón Cruz, National Sierra Club President, plans to attend.

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

#### COVID-19 NOTICE

**COVID-19 NOTICE: Sierra Club activities may enforce group size limits, PPE, social distancing requirements to comply with COVID-19 restrictions of the meeting venue, city, and county rules where the activity takes place. Please contact the activity organizer for any updates. Check website for Zoom or in-person meeting status or contact your chair (see page 2).**

#### Group Program Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 1/23, 2/27, 3/27	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Thu 1/19, 2/16, 3/16	6:00 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 1/10, 2/14, 3/14	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	No Jan, Feb Meeting, Thu 3/9	7:00 PM

#### Group Business Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	No Jan Meeting, Mon 2/6, 3/6	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Wed 1/4, 2/1, 3/1	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 1/24, 2/28, 3/28	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Mon 1/16, 2/20, 3/20	6:30 PM

#### Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
CareNET (Rogersville)	Thu 1/26, 2/23, 3/23	6:00 PM
Clarksville	Tue 1/10, 2/14, 3/14	6:00 PM
Holston Valley	Tue 1/17, 2/21, 3/21	6:00 PM
Watauga (Mountain City)	Sun 1/8, 2/12, 3/12	2:00 PM