



RAPPAHANNOCK GROUP
SIERRA CLUB

Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club

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Website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/rappahannock>

July-September 2022 Newsletter

Memo from the Chair, RGSC

By Bill Johnson

Regional Landfill Initiative

At the end of August 2022, RGSC was invited to join the August R-Board Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee Meeting as an advisory committee member. Because of my experience in the 2013-5 battles to prevent a tire burning incinerator at the landfill, I was appointed by the RGSC ExCom. We are nervous that pyrolysis might be threatening again, due to the extremely polluting “advanced recycling” legislation passed in the past 2 year. If so, we want to organize against it, ASAP.

The landfill director, Phil Hathcock, is leading an inquiry into how to make the landfill operations more sustainable, looking at how Prince William County handles a yard waste ban and compost facility. Additionally, the landfill is working with Stafford Co Utilities on a project involving biosolid waste generated at the Stafford/Fredericksburg wastewater treatment plants. It is linked to the landfill’s composting options and facility, with an explanation to be provided at the November meeting.

I have been monitoring the situation, participating in meetings and sending/receiving email regarding what is going on. I want to ensure that there is no suggestion of a pyrolysis-based incinerator solution, and that creating and spreading more and more sewage sludge on farmland isn’t the composting solution proposed. We don’t need heavy metals, plastics, arsenic, etc., used as fertilizer for crops or animals, let alone those we eat.

The next meeting is on November 22, 2022, from 12-1 PM, location TBD.

Chemical Conversion (“advanced recycling”)

In 2021, the Virginia legislature passed a so called “advance recycling” piece of legislation, backed by the American Chemical Council and fossil fuel industry. It has been enacted in 13 states, with a goal of passing it everywhere. Projections have been made that as many as 5 such plants will be built in Virginia. It is uncertain how they will be regulated, but it is certain that they will result in air pollution, huge amounts of toxic ash, and health problems for residents living near the plants. The legislation changes the rules from waste handling to manufacturing regulations,

significantly relaxing the rules and worsening their impact on the environment, climate, and health of all residents living near these facilities.

The trade-off for the Sierra Club supporting this legislation initially was that styrofoam would be banned in Virginia, effective in 2023. Well that won't happen. In 2022, the Virginia legislature backed away from the ban, pushing it out 5 years. So, Virginia can build these "plastic recycling" incinerators, while allowing styrofoam to continue to be used. So we have a double loss – highly polluting styrofoam remains, while highly noxious incinerators can be built under relaxed rules.

We need to carefully watch to see that these incinerators are never built. Why? The "recycling" label was used to make it seem like plastics could be recycled into new plastic. However, no such capability exists with these pyrolysis-based incinerators. No advanced recycling capability has worked anywhere in the world that can convert plastic into new plastic. Instead, the plastic is converted into fuel to be burned. The entire process adds intermediary, exceptionally polluting steps into the processing of oil and gas and plastic. So why would these processes be used simply to convert plastic into fuels that can be burned, instead of directly burning the plastic itself? It makes no sense.

Unless all you want to do is pretend that plastic is being recycled into more plastic. Hmmm.

Here's a link to a story on it: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/16/us/plastic-recycling-climate-impact-lbg/index.html>

Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP)

We can thank coal mogul Joe Manchin if the MVP is completed. He would not vote for the recent Inflation Reduction Act without including provisions that would allow that pipeline to be built. He also wanted, and got, provisions that would weaken oversight of any fossil fuel infrastructure projects, albeit, additional legislation needs to be passed for this to occur. Someone should mention to Joe that there is a climate crisis that should take precedence over his coal profits.

Appalachian Voices has a campaign to tell our senators not to go along with the MVP. That gas pipeline project has violated numerous state and federal environmental laws and will continue to do so if allowed to proceed. Tim Kaine and several Virginia legislators, including Republicans, are also opposed to the MVP, as their constituents are vocally opposed to this unnecessary pipeline. This deal was crafted in secrecy without input from Virginians or any landowners affected by the pipeline — with the goal of tipping the scales in favor of oil and gas companies, and against communities. Here is the link:

https://actionnetwork.org/letters/protect-virginia-from-the-mvp-and-manchins-fossil-fuel-wishlist-2?link_id=2&can_id=2d006e1e8d82b620c22906e48922a5cc&source=email-tell-your-legislators-dont-green-light-mvp&email_referrer=email_1665338&email_subject=tell-your-legislators-dont-green-light-mvp

Appalachian Voices, POWHR Coalition, and Sierra Club have just developed and released a report detailing the obstacles in the way of Mountain Valley Pipeline's completion and pushing back against the false assertion the project is nearly complete.

Report website: <https://appvoices.org/reports/mvp-report/>

Report summary: https://appvoices.org/resources/reports/MVP_Report_Summary_2022.pdf

Full report: https://appvoices.org/resources/reports/MVP_Report_2022_AppalachianVoices.pdf

Social media to help amplify: <https://twitter.com/AppVoices/status/1572330432405934083>

Trucks, Warehouses, and Air Pollution

There's an interesting article published by the National Sierra Club about the impact on the public from huge warehouses. The newly built Stafford warehouses on Centreport Parkway are just beginning to have an impact on the air

local residents breathe. Rezoning to accommodate an industrial building and warehouse which may eventually become a distribution center is the subject of the Oct. 4th Stafford County Board of Supervisors meeting. Public comments are welcome.

Amazon, FedEx, and other warehouse operators are growing exponentially in southern Stafford in size, number of trucks, etc. A few years ago, the American lung association rated the I-95 corridor an “F” in air quality for ozone. That was before the building of these warehouses. What do we have to look forward to? Follow the links to read just how noxious diesel trucks are, and how they impact the air we breathe.

Full Story: https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/free-shipping-isn-t-free-for-everyone?utm_source=insider&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter#chap-truck-pollution

Additional Links from that story:

[Free Shipping Isn't Free for Everyone](#): Online retailing delivers a public health problem.

[Truck Traffic Equals Air Pollution](#): What used to be 500 trucks per day is now 500 trucks per hour.

[E-Commerce Warehouses Are Everywhere](#): —but not everyone is impacted equally.

[What Diesel Exhaust Does to the Human Body](#): The pollution you don't see in diesel exhaust is more dangerous than the soot you do see.

[Workers Suffer Too](#): At last count, 370 warehouses larger than 100,000 square feet occupied Will County in Illinois, with another 64 proposed or under construction.

[How Can We Solve This?](#): E-commerce is likely here to stay, so reducing its environmental and public health impacts centers on fixing the operations of all those trucks.

[Take Action](#): Join the movement for cleaner trucks and help to clean up this logistical nightmare.

Where are we taking our planet?

According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), towards a disastrous future. The Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) issued its 6th Assessment Report in February 2022. You can find it here: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

That report is staggering in the depth of its analysis. The entire report is over 3,000 pages. It has keys to reading it based on your interests. In a section called “Factsheets” (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/about/factsheets>), you can look at things that interest you. The regional and crosscutting fact sheets give a snapshot of the key findings, distilled from the relevant Chapters and Cross-Chapter Papers, the Technical Summary and the Global to Regional Atlas. Topics include impacts by continent, and diverse topics such as sea level rise, biodiversity, human settlements, mountains, and small islands. They are still working on 3 topics – (1) health (2) cities and settlements by the seas; and (3) food and water.

Coal Ash

We still have issues with how coal ash is being handled in Prince William County Possum Point by the Potomac River and Quantico Creek, and Fluvanna County Bremono Bluff overlooking the James River. Should the coal ash remain in place or be relocated to newly dug pits? Energy New Network published a story on this topic, which you can find here: <https://energynews.us/2022/08/29/to-excavate-or-not-to-excavate-with-toxic-coal-ash-that-is-the-question/>

Coal ash is a highly toxic residue from burning coal in power plants, containing heavy metals like boron, arsenic, lead, molybdenum, cobalt, mercury, and lithium, all of which pollute the air, ground, and water around us. Many coal-fired plants, like Possum Point and Bremono Bluff simply dumped the coal ash into unlined ponds, and that has contaminated the surrounding lands and waters, to the detriment of residents living nearby.

So what should be done? EPA says the ponds need to be cleaned up. Should they be capped in place? Dug up and moved to lined pits? Recycled? All these are possible, with industry favoring capped in place, as it's the simplest and cheapest solution. However, that means that, without suitable liners, the coal ash will continue to leach its poisons into our surface and drinking water. Should they be dug up and moved into new, lined pits? Sounds better, but what protections will be implemented to prevent air pollution from particulate matter within the coal ash? There's no real choice here, as the ponds must be closed to protect our water and environment.

In 2014, approximately 50,000 tons of ash and 27 million gallons of ash basin water spilled into the Dan River in Eden, North Carolina. The ash and contaminated water flowed downstream through North Carolina and Virginia, spreading over 70 miles and contaminating the river, killing off aquatic life along the way, and damaging drinking water for nearby residents. The Bremono Bluff coal ash ponds sit next to the James River, and is a catastrophe in waiting.

RGSC and the York River Groups will be co-hosting a session on coal ash in the near future. RGSC is also working with a University of Mary Washington professor, Dr. Frankel, and some of his students to investigate the impacts of coal ash leachates from the Possum Point Powerplant. While previous studies have mainly focused on the impacts of these contaminants on freshwater ray-finned fishes, little is known about their effects on non-model aquatic invertebrate species. As such, this study will assess the exposure effects of two coal ash-associated trace metals, cadmium and arsenic, on the viability, locomotor behavior, and embryonic development of the Seminole ramshorn snail.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)

Virginia officially entered into the RGGI program in 2021 via legislation signed into law by our previous Governor. Now, Governor Youngkin is attempting to pull Virginia out of that agreement, in a potentially illegal method.

RGGI is a market-based partnership with neighboring states designed to lower energy costs, reduce pollution, and bolster Virginia's clean energy economy. The initiative seeks to reduce health problems, reduce the cost to build energy efficient buildings, create clean energy jobs, and motivate electricity producers to migrate towards clean energy sources.

RGGI imposes a carbon pollution limit on electricity producers, and that limit is reduced annually. As Virginia's monopolistic energy producers move towards clean energy sources, instead of having to buy allowances for the amount of pollution they expect to pay for the damage they are causing our planet.

Monies that are being collected today are supporting multiple low-income energy efficiency programs, including:

- Energy-efficient affordable housing.
- Weatherization, to reduce energy consumption, lower energy bills for low-income households, and create a healthier and safer living environment.
- Community flood preparedness funds to allow communities impacted by flooding to access the first dedicated stream of state money to help localities prevent and protect against the significant damage flooding causes.

Already, millions of dollars have been granted to multiple programs to help people move away from dirty fossil fuels to more sustainable energy sources. The goal, to reduce the use of polluting fossil-fuel energy sources, is being achieved. So why is Youngkin trying to make a potentially illegal end run around the legislation? Why indeed?

And how is he doing it? For starters, he placed 4 pro-fossil fuel proponents on the Virginia Air Board, trying to get them to vote on Gov. Youngkin's sham "emergency" regulation pulling Virginia out of RGGI. The Virginia Attorney General issues a memo on the subject of pulling Virginia out, but the Governor won't allow that opinion to be released to the

public. Why is that? Because his own Attorney General states that Younkin doesn't have the authority to do so. So they are trying other, potentially illegal actions, to try to pull Virginia out of the climate program.

Here's an article on the document that Younkin won't release: https://richmond.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/the-mystery-of-the-secret-virginia-air-board-document/article_4bc77dff-7562-53c8-a65b-eabb1af3c34d.html

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) Virginia is coordinating a response to Younkin's attempts to pull us from RGGI. On August 4th, 2022, SELC filed suit on behalf of Appalachian Voices in the Charlottesville Circuit Court seeking access to a document associated with VA's anticipated attempt to withdraw from RGGI. Virginia's participation in RGGI is required by law and cannot be repealed through executive action or regulation. A member of the State Air Pollution Control Board disclosed the existence of the opinion at a public Air Board meeting on April 20, 2022. At that meeting, Board member Hope Cupit said in an exchange with Department of Environmental Quality Director Michael Rolband that she received "an opinion from the attorney general's office back in March [2022] saying that [removing Virginia from RGGI] is not the responsibility of the board, that it's the responsibility of the General Assembly."

<https://www.southernenvironment.org/press-release/selc-appalachian-voices-seek-release-of-opinion-that-virginias-withdrawal-from-rggi-would-violate-law/>

We need to oppose this potentially illegal withdrawal. Here's an article discussing the legality of the Governor pulling us out of RGGI: https://richmond.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/61-dems-say-virginias-participation-in-rggi-is-up-to-legislature/article_86e0f575-2dc6-5e30-9b39-fa056de7a9f2.html.

Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

PFAS has an more insidious name - "Forever chemicals". Sewage sludge is a by-product of separating human and industrial waste from water in treatment plants. Per the Sierra Club, sludge is "the most pollutant-rich manmade substance on Earth". So, it's in your water and in the air. What about your food?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) explains what they are at this link. <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-explained>

- PFAS are widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time.
- Because of their widespread use and their persistence in the environment, many PFAS are found in the blood of people and animals all over the world and are present at low levels in a variety of food products and in the environment.
- PFAS are found in water, air, fish, and soil at locations across the nation and the globe.
- Scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.
- There are thousands of PFAS chemicals, and they are found in many different consumer, commercial, and industrial products. This makes it challenging to study and assess the potential human health and environmental risks.

Per a September 19, 2022 article in The Guardian, "States are continuing to allow sewage sludge to be spread on cropland as fertilizer and in some cases increasing the amount spread, even as the PFAS-tainted substance has ruined farmers' livelihoods, poisoned water supplies, contaminated food and put the public's health at risk."

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/19/us-states-toxic-sewage-sludge-pfas-farmers>

Acres and acres of farmland are being covered with sewage sludge. It's regulated right? It's safe, right? No and no. Only 2 states test for PFAS in sludge, and every sample tested was contaminated. Virginia does not test or regulate the spread of sewage sludge. Virginia's DEQ is not doing anything, waiting for EPA to analyze risks associated with PFAS-infused sludge.

So what can you do? Eat organically grown vegetables and meat. Why meat also? Because non-organic meat can be raised on food from farms where sludge has been applied. But at least it's ok to eat wild-caught meat you hunted, isn't it? Wherever sludge is applied, signs are posted warning people not to walk on the fields or graze animals for at least 30-days after being covered in sludge. Deer, rabbits, etc., can read, can't they? So they know not to wander across the fields and eat clover.

Tyla Matteson, Chair of the York River Group is quoted in the article.

2022 Living Green Awardees

At the 2022 Earth Day Festival in Fredericksburg last April, RGSC awarded 2 Living Green Awards to companies that promote environmental stewardship efforts in their daily operations. Such activities include things like reducing their carbon footprint, conserving water and/or other natural resources, purchasing and using sustainable products, and the like.

We gave 2 awards this year, one to Botanical Bites and Provisions, LLC (www.BotanicalBitesandProvisionsLLC.com) and the other to Grapewood Farm (www.grapewoodfarm.com). Botanical Bites operates a certified naturally grown farm in Spotsylvania and Grapewood Farms operates a certified organic farm growing small grains, that they process into stone ground artisanal flour.

Follow the link below to see more: <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/rappahannock/programs>.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

By Paula Chow, RGSC Programs Chair

Layla v. Commonwealth of Virginia

RG's summer program was a virtual presentation on August 14th about the lawsuit Layla H. v. Commonwealth of Virginia filed Feb. 9, 2022. Two of the thirteen plaintiffs, Ava, 19, and Cadence, 10, and their attorney, Kimberly Willis, discussed their case with questions submitted by the Executive Committee. The nonprofit law firm Our Children's Trust represents plaintiffs across the U.S. on climate change actions. The first lawsuit, Juliana v. United States was filed in 2015. For details go to <https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/juliana-v-us>

The VA lawsuit was heard in Richmond Circuit Court on September 16, 2022. The judge dismissed the case (in favor of the state of VA) based on sovereign immunity. In the press conference and rally following the court hearing, Our Children's Trust attorney Nate Bellinger, stated that there will be an appeal. Attorney Willis said that there are 3 ways to support the plaintiffs: 1. Go to their Facebook page and share the information, 2. sign their petition and 3. donate to Our Children's Trust. All the attorneys work pro bono so they depend upon donations. For details go to <https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/virginia>

At the rally, one of the plaintiffs, Claudia Sachs, 19, sang her original song composed in 2018 "The Future of Humanity" which has become a climate anthem. Watch it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_ZDyfXsc-k

Learn & Serve

Stafford County Public Schools hosts an annual Learn & Serve Nonprofit fair to familiarize students with area nonprofits for which they can volunteer and earn credits. RG received many sign ups and the students showed interest in environmental issues. It was very good to hear two students say that they learned about Sierra Club's history in their AP History class.

In case you might be wondering what was said in class, these facts are what they remember: our founder was John Muir, who was hiking in what is now Yosemite National Park, was so astounded by its the pristine beauty that he wanted to protect it in perpetuity, so he founded the Sierra Club in 1892. He worked with President Theodore Roosevelt to help found the National Park system. The Sierra Club is responsible for the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and in large part, the Endangered Species Act.

Harvest Festival

Come visit our booth at the popular Bowling Green Harvest Festival Saturday, Oct. 15th.

Walk & Pedal for the Planet

Fossil Free Fredericksburg hosts their 3rd annual rally, walk and pedal event on Saturday, October 22nd at Kenmore Memorial Park, 10- 12pm. Check their Facebook page.

North Anna Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and industry had a public meeting on August 17, 2022 on their report "The Path Forward for Site-Specific Environmental Reviews for Subsequent License Renewal."

In a nutshell, the February 24, 2022 Commission Orders that initiated a 24-month NRC rulemaking to reset the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) reviews for Subsequent License Renewal of the licensees' Environmental Reports is ongoing.

However, the Orders also provide an alternative that licensees can choose to not wait for that process to be completed (including public comments) and codification by submitting a supplemental, site-specific Environmental Report. After NRC staff reviews the submission and should the staff provide a Finding Of No Significant Safety Issues (FONSI), it would be posted in the Federal Register as a notification of an opportunity for public hearing and intervention on the new Environmental Report.

Sierra Club and Beyond Nuclear with their attorney are monitoring both Dominion and Duke for docketed submissions to NRC for the optional supplemental, site-specific Environmental Reports.

There is a need for a seismic expert that would be interested in reviewing Dominion's submission. We have significant concerns about North Anna's safety-related systems, structures and components (SSC) that went through the 2011 Mineral Earthquake but did not subsequently go through the site-specific analysis to requalify SSC for the second 20-year extension period. One system that Dave Lochbaum, our nuclear engineer expert in the proceeding has pointed out, is the buried piping system that provides water to the nuclear power station's fire protection system. Because it is largely inaccessible to inspection, it was not adequately inspected following North Anna's 2011 "beyond design basis earthquake."

CSX chemical tanks storage

CSX has continued to store their chemical tanks in the Mayfield neighborhood of Fredericksburg. There was an emergency evacuation this summer due to a detected leak. RG is in discussion with Fredericksburg NAACP to look at the issue.

We all thought this issue was resolved back in 2016. Then Sen. Edd Houck and Sen. Bryce Reeves was able to get a budget item of \$900,000 to provide for a 1-mile extension to the track for safer storage. Everyone celebrated believing the issue was closed! Article from 2016:

<https://fredericksburg.today/2016/04/19/csx-to-move-hazmat-tankers-from-mayfield-neighborhood/>

This issue came up again in early 2021. The Fredericksburg City Council passed a resolution to officially oppose the storage tank situation. Here is a link to the City Resolution:

<https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/18870/News-City-Council-Passes-Resolution-on-CSX-Storage-Tankers-022421-PDF>

Then in March 2021 Rep. Josh Cole, Rep Mark Cole, Sen Bryce Reeves, a Representative from Congressman's Wittman's office and representatives from Senators Kaine and Warner were all on hand to meet with CSX representatives and was reported in the FLS:

"They wonder why CSX cannot use the 1 1/2-mile spur line that was constructed four years ago when tankers containing ethanol created public safety concerns in the neighborhood. Del. Mark Cole, R-Spotsylvania, asked McCann that question Friday, but McCann declined to answer in the presence of a reporter, citing safety and security concerns."

https://fredericksburg.com/news/local/fredericksburg-area-officials-meet-with-csx-officials-about-tankers-parked-in-mayfield/article_9a33e9da-15d6-5161-a3f8-2747c57076c1.amp.html

Contact Paula Chow paulachow132@gmail.com if you are interested in working on this issue with Fredericksburg NAACP and possible other partners.

SAVE THE DATE

Earth Day on the Rappahannock APRIL 22, 2023

Outings Report

By Geoff Johnson, Outings Chair

Since our last report, RGSC Outings have included Caledon State Park hike and cleanup, Gari Melchers Studio Woodland hike and a visit to Grapewood Farm.

Our Outing to Caledon Park in King George county started with a 1 ½ mile guided hike to Boyd's Hole Beach on the Potomac River. Ms. Mackenzie Guenther, the Caledon State Park Interpreter guided the group and discussed the local flora and wildlife. The group spent more than an hour cleaning up the shoreline and collected 211 lbs. of trash off the shore of the Potomac River. After the cleanup we piled into a tractor drawn wagon and headed back to the park's visitor's center.

For the Outing to Gari Melcher's Studio, we started with lunch at Amy's Cafe in south Stafford county and then traveled over to the studio. VA Naturalists John Wiltenmutch and Imogene Treblei conducted the hike and woodlands tour.

This past May, Rappahannock Group Sierra Club visited Grapewood Farm in Montross VA. This is a family owned farm that specializes in organic small grains and stoneground flour. The Farm is dedicated to the good stewardship of the land and to managing its natural resources in a sustainable manner. They are this year's recipient of the RG Sierra Club's Living Green Award. It was amazing to see the effort involved in producing the grains and whole wheat flour! The Sachs family were fantastic hosts! After the farm tour, we had lunch in the main barn area.

As a volunteer for the local Sierra Club, I was invited to the Ribbon Cutting for the Spotsylvania Solar Energy Center. This is the largest solar panel installation in the United States, east of the Mississippi. About seven square miles, but most of the land is used for preserves and wetlands. An interesting ceremony and tour. RGSC is planning a tour of the Solar Center in the near future.

In addition to the Solar Center RGSC is planning future Outings to include:

- Fredericksburg Downtown Greens Land Acquisition, rescheduled to October 29, 2022
- Library of Congress, Packard Theater in Culpeper, VA
- Chesterfield Recycling Center, Chesterfield VA
- Bloomia USA in King George County, VA

If you would like to be on the email list for all future RGSC Outings, please email Geoff Johnson geoffwithrgsc@gmail.com

My Climate Journey

by Chandler Pridgen

I can't imagine my climate change story is much different than many others. One day (for me a little over a year ago), after all the years of hearing about climate change and thinking nothing of it, the reality suddenly set in. Less livable land, more bugs, food and water shortages, and unbearable heat all there for my kids to inherit and my wife and I to try and deal with in our 70's. Throw in a severe lack of government action and a pinch of public apathy and I had a can't miss recipe for self-loathing, depression and hopelessness.

Then came the ultimate questions. What can I do and will it make any difference in the grand scheme of things? Turns out, there are tons of things I can do to help with climate change, but will my doing them make a difference significant enough to put the world on a better track? Of course not. The only way to make that type of impact is for many, many people to start making changes in their own lives and I am not the type of person to start preaching climate reform to the masses. So with that settled, did I still want to make changes to my own life for the sake of climate change knowing that in all likelihood it wouldn't make a bit of difference in the long run?

After several long discussions with my wife, we ultimately decided to try some different avenues of action. Our reasons ranged from noble ones like wanting better lives for our kids to downright selfish ones like just wanting to alleviate feelings of hopelessness and guilt. In any case, our journey began with the basics: taking shorter showers, using only cold water when washing clothes, turning lights and fans off when we left rooms. We bought a programmable thermostat and set the temperatures to 78 in the summer and 68 in the winter (or as close as we could tolerate). We bought a drying rack so we could significantly cut down on using the dryer.

Before we knew it, we were making more changes. We started a garden (if anyone needs tomatoes, let us know) and after receiving an absolutely ghastly water bill, we bought a rain barrel. This eventually led to us buying an electric lawn mower (we already had an electric weed eater or we would have probably ended up buying one at that time as well). Then, when the war between Russia and Ukraine started and gas prices shot through the roof, the opportunity presented itself for getting an electric car, which we did. Solar panels and a Sierra Club Membership soon followed. We even started donating to a place based in Switzerland that specializes in direct air capture technology.

Despite all the recent purchases, we still wanted to go a step further and align our money with our newfound passion. So we began researching ethical banks. However, before switching I wanted to contact our current bank where we have been customers for over 15 years and see if they would be willing to talk about taking more of a stand for climate action. I got my answer rather quickly when I discovered that there was no way to directly contact the corporate office. With that, after several more weeks, we settled on Amalgamated Bank and began slowly transferring our money over, a process that is still ongoing and so far has gone quite smoothly.

That is not to say that everything has gone just as smoothly or that it will continue to do so.

Living in a 78 degree house in the middle of summer is just about unbearable. We have had more than 1 load of laundry go sour on the drying rack (on one particular load I didn't figure it out until I had already arrived at work). I had to jerry

rig the electric lawn mower so it would stop randomly cutting off and during the heat of the summer, the battery dies out quicker. Our electric car, although a very good car so far, is not as efficient on the highway as it is on backroads. And I do not know how, or if, our solar panels are going to be recycled at the end of their lifetimes.

So are all these lifestyle changes worth it? For my wife and I at this moment, yes, especially considering the lifestyle changes that are projected within the next 20-30 years. So with that said, why have I even bothered with any of this after saying just a few paragraphs ago that none of it will make a difference in the overall problem? Well, there are many reasons, some selfish and unselfish, but entirely too many to get into here. In the end, there were 2 primary ones. One, because the writing process is a therapeutic one for me personally. Two, and most importantly, I believe that someone's story, just their story, can be a springboard for positive change in someone else's life, and I hope mine will connect in that way for someone and in turn the environment around them.

ELECTIONS 2022

By Linda Muller, RGSC Political Chair



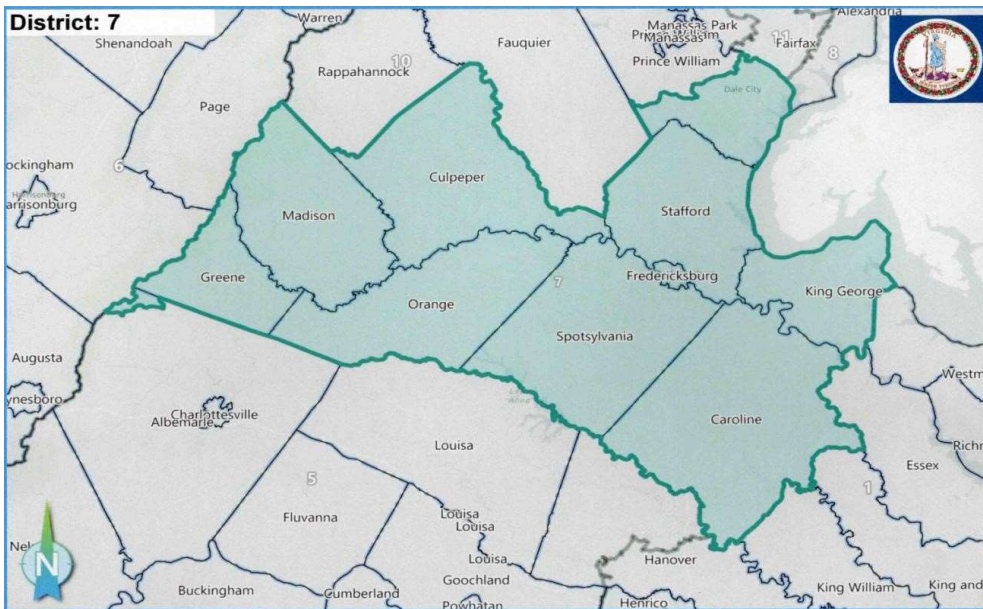
Election 2022: New Congressional Districts: Check Your Local Polling Location Too!

Whats New in Virginia 2022? New Congressional Districts and depending on your specific locality, you may have a new polling location.

Why? Every 10 years the U.S. undertakes a census as required by the United States Constitution to determine population growth and representation. As a result of the 2020 census Virginia Congressional Districts have been updated. Local election districts and polling locations may have changed.

For 2022 New 7th Congressional District includes RGSC members located in:

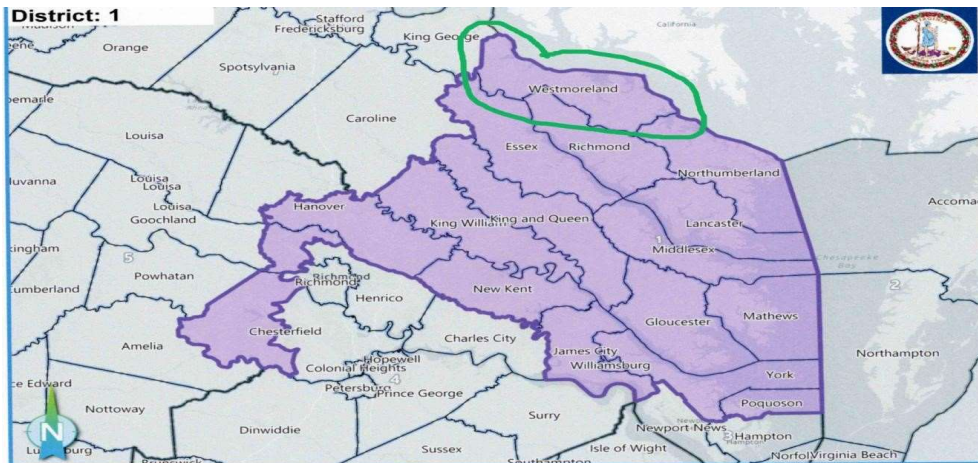
Culpeper, Orange, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Caroline, King George, and the city of Fredericksburg.



map source 7th VA Congressional District:

https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/districting/2021_1224_scv_final_cd_maps.pdf

For 2022 New 1st Congressional District includes RGSC members in: Westmoreland County.



map source 1st VA Congressional District:

https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/districting/2021_1224_scv_final_cd_maps.pdf

SIERRA CLUB INDEPENDENT ACTION (PAC) ENDORSEMENTS

Every Federal Election, the **Sierra Club Independent Action** (a National PAC) endorses Federal candidates across the country based on a representative's environmental voting record, or on a candidate's position record and campaign strength.

Here is the Sierra Club Independent Action's website for endorsed Federal candidates:

<https://www.sierraclubindependentaction.org/endorsements>

(Please note that endorsements are submitted on a rolling basis and may be updated with additional candidates)

As part of the country's largest most influential grassroots environmental organization, members of the Rappahannock Group Sierra Club are encouraged to support candidates who have demonstrated a record of support for important environmental issues.

⇒ **IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES AND RESOURCES**



SEPTEMBER 23 THROUGH SATURDAY NOV 5TH: Early In-Person Voting at local sites:

⇒ Link for local early in person/absentee voting site see your local Registrars Offices:

<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/PublicContactLookup> **OCTOBER**

17 DEADLINE TO REGISTER TO VOTE/UPDATE REGISTRATION

Link for Voter Registration: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/>

⇒ **NOVEMBER 8TH, 2022 ELECTION DAY POLLS OPEN 6AM - 7PM**

Check your voter registration and voting location:

<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>

New for 2022: Same Day Voter registration. Its BEST to register to vote by October 17, 2022 deadline. See your local registrar for details.

Registered to vote? Never hurts to double check BEFORE November 8th 2022.

<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>



RGSC Mailing Address: RGSC PO Box 7972, Fredericksburg, VA 22404

RGSC Email News Group Sign-up: rappsirragroup [at] gmail.com

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Program Chair: Paula Chow paulachow132 [at] gmail.com	Newsletter Editor: Bill Johnson billatthelake [at] comcast.net
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