



RAPPAHANNOCK GROUP  
SIERRA CLUB

# THE RAPPAHANNOCK REPORT

The Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club Quarterly Newsletter October-December 2022

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IN MEMORIAM, RUTH  
CARLONE 1933 – 2022

## MEMOS FROM THE CHAIR

by Bill Johnson

### 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 would, supposedly, facilitate the recycling of plastics into other plastics, via a pyrolysis-based incinerator. Instead of waste management regulations, the plants would be governed by "manufacturing" regulations which are less strict than waste management regulations. So, what does this "advanced" technology really do? It turns plastics into a burnable fuel that has to be shipped via truck and/or pipeline to its ultimate destination. That exacerbates climate change by releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere at every stage. A double whammy, as massive amounts of GHGs are released during extraction; and refining; and transportation; and use; etc. It is in no way "recycling"; it's just another way to burn fossil fuels. That legislation was passed with a provision to ban styrofoam in Virginia, in 2023<sup>1</sup> In 2022, the Virginia legislature backed away from the ban, pushing it out 5 years. So, Virginia can now build these "plastic recycling" incinerators, while allowing styrofoam to continue to be used.

The "recycling" label was used to make it seem like the plastics would be recycled into new plastic. However, no such capability exists yet.



No advanced recycling capability has been shown to work anywhere in the world to economically convert plastics into new plastic. It is significantly cheaper and easier to use raw fuels.

Find us on  
our [website](#)  
or [Facebook](#)

## **POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS), MICROPLASTICS, HEAVY METALS, MERCURY, AND OTHER TOXINS**

PFAS has a 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 and your body? Yes, there too. Acres and acres of farmland are being covered with sewage sludge. It's regulated right? It's safe, right? No and no. Virginia does not test or regulate the spread of sewage sludge, but it does prevent anyone from objecting to the spreading of this material. Virginia's DEQ is not doing anything to regulate it, 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 and grazed on lands 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. So do bees, right?

As a member of the Stafford/Fredericksburg Landfill Advisory Board, I am watching the results of a February 8th meeting where the landfill will be discussing creating compost at the landfill. At the same time, the R-Board has stated that they have a solution to Stafford's "biosolids" problem. I tried to find out if they were connected, but the head of the landfill refused to answer my questions. We'll see.

### **MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE (MVP)**

Much of what Joe Manchin wanted for the MVP has been stymied. He has been unable to get wording into any legislation that changes the rules of engagement for approving energy projects. He has tried to get oversight changes that would allow the MVP to be built, regard less of its environmental impact. (However, the Republican-controlled House wants legislation to get that done under the guise of government reforms.)

We need to remain vigilant. If a Republican House can force the completion of the MVP...

#### **SIERRA CLUB MATCH**

**IT WAS DOWN TO THE WIRE BUT THANKS TO YOU WE MET THE MATCH! A GENEROUS 33 DONORS CAME THROUGH TO GET US TO A TOTAL OF \$20,155 IN LAND DONATIONS BEFORE THE END OF 2022 SO WE COULD GET THE FULL \$20,000 MATCHED BY THE GENEROUS ANONYMOUS DONOR IN THE NAME OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK GROUP SIERRA CLUB TO SUPPORT DOWNTOWN GREENS' 56-ACRE CONSERVATION AND EXPANSION PROJECT.**

## 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 designed to lower energy costs, reduce pollution, bolster Virginia's clean energy economy, and provide funds for climate-related problems, like flooding. 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.

So why is Youngkin trying to make a potentially illegal end run around the legislation? 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 issued a memo on the subject of pulling Virginia out stating that only the legislature can do that. The Governor won't allow that opinion to be released to the public. So, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) Virginia has filed suit on behalf of Appalachian Voices in the Charlottesville Circuit Court is seeking access to that document.

## 2022 RECAP OF RAPPAHANNOCK GROUP ACTIVITIES

By Paula Chow

As challenging as 2022 was on many levels, RG and its leadership forged ahead with an amazing plethora of activities in our efforts to meet our mission and goals. Look at all our activities involving our membership and the public:

### January-February

- Staying abreast of the General Assembly and advocate for bills that benefit the environment and oppose proposed legislation that doesn't.

### April

- Wild & Scenic Film Festival at UMW - tabling and enjoying the annual film festival outdoors
- Earth Day Festival at Old Mill Park, sponsor, vendor and presenting Living Green Awards to Botanical Bites and Provisions LLC and Grapewood Farm and organizer of Student Judges program.

### May

- Annual tabling of D.A.R.E. graduation celebration at Pratt Park.
- Outings tour of Grapewood Farm in Montross, RG's Living Green Award 2022 recipient.

### June

- Festival Del Rio with Friends of the Rappahannock and Defensores De La Cuenca - tabling and networking with the LantinX community.

### August

- A conversation with Delegate Candi Mundon King, 2nd District (part of Prince William County and part of Stafford County). She has an excellent environmental voting record.
- Our Children's Trust virtual presentation of "Layla H. v. Commonwealth of Virginia." Youth lawsuit (among others in the U.S.) alleging that VA issuing permits for the fossil fuel infrastructure violates youth plaintiffs' rights under the VA Constitution.

### September

- Support and attendance at preliminary hearing in Richmond Circuit Court for Our Children's Trust lawsuit.
- Learn & Serve Community Fair at Stafford High School - tabling to introduce RG to the students who might want to volunteer for school credit ("learn & serve").

### October

- Walk & Pedal for the Planet with Fossil Free Fredericksburg at Memorial Park, Fredericksburg tabling and event activities.
- Caroline County Harvest Festival - tabling at this very popular festival. Outings tour at Downtown Greens' Expansion Project at Braehead Farm location.

### November

- Outings litter cleanup at Widewater State Park.

### December

- Outings tour at Spotsylvania Solar Center, largest solar farm east of the Rockies.
- Anonymous donor match challenge to RGSC for Downtown Greens' Expansion Project.

### All Year Long

There were many other behind the scenes activities including discussions for youth activities, the lawsuit against NRC in regard to the SLR (subsequent license renewal) for the North Anna power plant, volunteer recruitment, networking with the local schools, internship procurements and supervision at UMW, recreating the Climate Crisis Art competition, participating in local sister organization networking, conferring with UMW Professors and so much more. Keep abreast of our upcoming activities, events and needs with our Facebook page and newsletters.

# UPCOMING VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 2023

Linda C. Muller RGSC Vice Chair Legislative/Political Chair

## BLOCK THAT KICK!

By the time this issue of the RGSC Newsletter goes to press, the Virginia General Assembly will be in session. This year will be a "shorter" session that will convene January 11, 2022 and run through to February 25, 2023. It should be noted that the session can be extended by the Legislature.

As is often repeated that elections have consequences, we enter this year's General Assembly Session with the same composition of elected representatives as last year. The House of Delegates is held by a Republican majority, and the Virginia Senate is held by the slimmest majority by the Democrats. While the Sierra Club is a non-partisan organization and willing to support elected officials who support pro-environment legislation, it has been documented via voting scorecards that the Virginia House and Senate GOP members want to diminish and/or eliminate many of the gains made in important environmental legislation. Many of those "bad bills" died in Senate Committees.

This year many conservation and environmental groups expect to play legislative defense in protecting hard won' clean energy and pro-environmental laws.

## WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE

In 2022, there were legislative bills to diminish or repeal: Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), The Clean Economy Act, Clean Car Standards and ultimately these bills did not pass. More of the same is expected this year, and several of last years "bad bills" have all ready been reincarnated and pre-filed for this year's session: Quick example for 2023 : HB1372 (House Bill) and SB778 (Senate Bill) :

Repeals the State Air Pollution Control Board's authority to implement low-emissions and zero-emissions vehicle standards for vehicles with a model year of 2025 and later.

## HOW AND WHERE TO TRACK LEGISLATION

For the 2023 General Assembly Session, there are - over a thousand bills filed (as of January 10, 2023) and more expected to be filed by the January 11, 2023 deadline. How can anyone keep track of who is filing, what is filed, what committee it is assigned to etc. In Virginia, we are fortunate to have several resources available for citizens who want to take an active role in this year's session.

A primary source is Virginia's Legislative Information System (LIS) Lobbyist In A Box. As a citizen you can set up an account and track bills by subject and by legislator. The LIS offers a treasure trove of information on each legislator's bills, committee assignments, status of bills. It a great resource! There are also other websites that offer similar - information in a more "user friendly" format. Two other bill Tracking sources include: Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) and Richmond Sunlight.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Who Is My VA legislator?](#)

[How Can I Track Virginia Legislation?](#)

Virginia Legislative Information System  
(Track Bills by subject, legislator,  
committee)

[The Virginia Public Access Project \(VPAP\)](#)

[Richmond Sunlight](#)

[Conservation Lobby Day Sign Up &](#)

[Lobbying Basics Video Information](#)

Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)

Tuesday, January 31st • 8 AM – 1 PM

[Virginia Chapter Sierra Club Action Alerts](#)

[VA Chapter Sierra Club Scorecard 2022](#)

[\(pdf\)](#)

## TAKE THE NEXT STEP: ADVOCATE-MEET WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVE!

Have you ever personally met with your elected officials to discuss important environmental issues or bills? Have you ever called or emailed your elected officials to offer support on a bill or offer reasons not to support a bill? If yes, you understand the importance of being a "citizen lobbyist." If no, make this year the year to do it! Elected officials need to hear from their constituents because, after all, they are your representative. And every year, conservation and environmental groups gather together in Richmond for a special Conservation Lobby Day, sponsored by the Virginia Conservation Network.

This year's Conservation Lobby Day is scheduled for Tuesday, January 31st 8am-1pm. There is a small fee, with a special student discount, and you will have the opportunity to meet with your elected official (or more often the Legislative Assistants) to discuss important environmental bills (support/or not support). It's also a great way to meet and network with fellow citizen lobbyists. The Virginia Chapter Sierra Club will issue action alerts though-out the session and you can also visit the VA Chapter's Action Alert page for the latest updates. Stay informed, participate! You will make a difference!

# EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## PLANNING FOR EARTH DAY ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

By Paula Chow

How exciting! Earth Day is April 22 and this year, the Earth Day festival will be held on Saturday, April 22, 2023. Conceived in 1970 as a way to bring awareness to Mother Earth and Nature, the festival at Old Mill Park attracts folks from around the region tallying up to 7,000 attendees, perhaps more. RG has consistently been a sponsor of this event, with the initial event developed by the RG and Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation 20 years ago which was initially held at Alum Springs Park.

The Executive Committee seeks volunteers for three separate efforts: 1) to join the Earth Day Planning Committee as representative of RG, 2) to work on RG's Earth Day festival programs, 3) to help create the displays for RG's booth and 4) to help educate the public using the displays as they come to Our booth at the Earth Day festival.

For the Earth Day Planning Committee the tasks involve attending the monthly meeting at Parks and Rec on the first Wed. of each month at 9am and working on securing the vendors as well as finding new ones:

The two programs RG has created specifically for the Earth Day festival - Living Green Award and Student Judges-are straightforward and interesting.



The Living Green Award was created to acknowledge and promote organizations, businesses and entities who have sustainable and environmentally friendly policies and practices. Anyone can nominate a candidate. Upon the nomination form being completed, an interview/tour is occurs whereupon a decision is made.

The Student Judges program was created to involve more youth in a fun way. Area students volunteer to judge the display booths in three categories." Best Interactive Display, Most Creative Display and Most Educational Display.

The students team up in groups of 2 - 4 where the process takes about 2-3 hours. They receive a certificate and pizza for lunch. Another volunteer opportunity is to help RG Create its display booth messages. If you have a passion for a particular issue, this could be the opportunity to showcase it! And you can be at the booth, to help educate the public about that display or other displays we have OR to just tell them about the Sierra Club and Rappahannock Group. Please consider volunteering to help plan this most important event of the year. We have only 3 short months to get it all done. The climate crisis needs you!

## COAL ASH

By Bill Johnson

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 Bremo Bluff dumped toxic coal ash into unlined ponds. That has contaminated the surrounding lands and waters, to the detriment of residents living nearby.

RGSC and the University of Mary Washington will be co-hosting a session on coal ash in March 2023. University of Mary Washington (UMW) professor, Dr. Frankel, and some of his students are investigating the impacts of coal ash leachates from Possum Point. 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.

## SPOTSYLVANIA SOLAR ENERGY CENTER

By Geoff Johnson

The Spotsylvania Solar Energy Center was recently completed by AES Corporation in Spotsylvania County, Virginia approximately 50 miles south of Washington DC. At 485 Megawatts, this is the largest solar project in Virginia and the largest east of the Rocky Mountains. AES estimates that 825,000 tons of CO2 emissions will be offset each year by using the power generated by the Energy Center.

The Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club (RGSC) with the help of AES Corporation, set up two tours of the solar facility this past December. AES provided a driving tour of the facility showing a section of the solar panel layouts, wetlands with water retention areas, and preservation areas for local wildlife. It also included a stop at the office for a question-and-answer session with the engineering staff. This was an educational and unique opportunity to learn firsthand about solar technology, its interrelation with the environment and its advantages as clean, renewable energy. The knowledge gained will help our future efforts in supporting similar developments.

Although there was some public dissent, RGSC wrote two articles (a letter to the editor of the local newspaper and an article for the Sierra Newsletter) in support of this project during the planning phase. Obviously solar energy is one of the many clean and sustainable forms of energy that will lead future energy developments. In addition to this advantage, the land supporting the new facility was previously forested for its lumber and therefore, made it attractive for a solar development.

RGSC Outings are open to all and are advertised via Campfire, email and local publications. We received several inquiries for additional tours including local high schools. RGSC passed this on to AES.



## MEET OUR INTERNS

*Hi everyone! My name is Natalie Loeffler, and I am one of Sierra Club's newest interns. I am a junior at University of Mary Washing majoring in Conservation Biology and minoring in French. In my free time, I love to read and play the piano. My interests in ecology mainly focus on soil sciences, plant ecology, and conservation education/outreach. I met Bill and Diana at the Bowling Green fall festival. After talking with them for a bit and learning a bit about different projects the club was working on, I was immediately intrigued. During my time with Rappahannock group, I hope to learn about how small organizations run and how to impact the environment around me at a local level. I look forward to working with the Fredericksburg locals and getting to know the other members.*

*Hi! I'm Zoe Hanrahan and I'm from Lynchburg Virginia. I recently joined the Rappahannock Group of Sierra Club as an intern and I just wanted to take a minute to introduce myself. I'm a second-year students at the University of Mary Washington and I'm a double major in sociology and communication & digital studies. In addition to school, I spend my free time reading, taking care of my plants, and practicing with the fencing club on campus. I learned of the Sierra Club and this opportunity through the Environmental Sociology class taught by Dr. Eric Bonds this past Fall. Professor Bonds reiterated that the best way to make a difference and protect our environment is to work together as a group. By working with the Sierra Club I hope to learn more about how I can make a difference and help protect the world around us and by extension provide a brighter future for our tomorrow. I am excited that they have given me this opportunity and I look forward to helping with their newsletter and all the wonderful events they plan. I can't wait to meet everyone involved.*



[Ruth Anne Carlone](#)

## IN MEMORIAM, RUTH CARLONE

**1933 – 2022**

By Paula Chow

The Executive Committee mourns the loss of our amazing activist and youth advocate, Ruth Carlone. She even participated behind the scenes at RG's last outing in Nov., a litter cleanup at Widewater State Park. Ruth was a warrior who championed environmental education for youth. She and her husband participated in all events we tabled that involved youth – Earth Day, D.A.R.E., National Night Out, YMCA Health Fair. Her husband, Mike, made bird feeders to giveaway and she and friends dug up seedling trees on her property to giveaway to kids and she provided all kinds of materials about wildlife to educate kids. Her favorite was teaching the kids about birds and their bird calls where she had interesting books with the bird calls of local birds. This past year, she provided vibrantly photographed wildlife bookmarks for our upcoming events to giveaway to kids, a super popular item that attracts kids. She was clever, creative and thoughtful about how to engage the kids to get them to think about the environment, what is in it and how to protect them. Even when Ruth was not in a position to plan the event or attend, she was adamant about assuring that she had participated in some way so that there could be a benefit for the kids.