



Georgia Sierran

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB GEORGIA CHAPTER
OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2023



LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

What are the big issues we'll be tracking at the Georgia Capitol in 2024?

TRANSIT EXPANSIONS

Two counties in Metro Atlanta are expected to pursue new transit initiatives next year

EXCOM ELECTIONS

Make sure to vote in the executive committee elections for our Chapter and our Local Groups

AT THE TRAILHEAD

**BY GINA WEBBER, DIRECTOR, SIERRA CLUB
GEORGIA CHAPTER**

Happy fall to our Georgia Sierra Club community! It's been a busy year here at the Georgia Chapter — from educating Georgians on the benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act to fighting to protect the Okefenokee Swamp and getting more people outside with outings. As we face a global climate crisis, Sierra Club's work at the state and local level is more important than ever.



GINA WEBBER

This winter, Sierra Club welcomed our new national Executive Director: Ben Jealous. From 2008 to 2013, Ben served as the youngest-ever president of the NAACP and launched the organization's climate justice program. Most recently, he headed the People for the American Way. Ben knows from experience that progressive change begins at the local level.

Earlier this year, Ben announced that Sierra Club would be undergoing an organizational restructure. This nationwide restructure will improve the Sierra Club's overall ability to support Chapters and local grassroots work, organize winning campaigns, and build stronger, more resourced infrastructure at the state and regional level.

I'm confident that under Ben's leadership, the Sierra Club will continue to build upon our 130-year track

record of accomplishments and meet Sierra Club's 2030 goals:

- Protect 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters.
- Expand access to the outdoors for all people.
- Transition the energy system from fossil fuels to renewable technologies.
- Address inequities in the way governments respond to climate disruptions.
- Build power by attracting younger and more diverse people to the Sierra Club.

To meet these goals here at the Georgia Chapter, we must continue to invest in our staff, train more volunteer leaders, educate Georgians on our issues, and center communities most impacted by the climate crisis in all of our work.

The Sierra Club Georgia Chapter will embark on this work as it has always done: as a grassroots organization that depends on the efforts of people like you who are dedicated to making a better tomorrow for our families, our communities, and our planet.

The strength of the Georgia Chapter is with our volunteers, including our Executive Committee members who volunteer their time. In the following pages, you will read about our 2024 Executive Committee candidates. We hope that you will take the time to consider each of these fantastic candidates and exercise your right to vote.

Thank you for all that you do on behalf of Georgia, our people, and our planet.

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On the Cover

Sierrans encircle a U.S. Geological Survey marker while on an outing.
Photo courtesy of Grant Brown

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GA Power's fuel costs: Who should pay and how much?

BY CHARLINE WHYTE, SENIOR FIELD ORGANIZER, BEYOND COAL CAMPAIGN

In the spring of 2023, the Sierra Club and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy entered together as intervenors in Georgia's fuel cost recovery docket before the Public Service Commission (PSC). At issue was Georgia Power's request for \$2.1 billion from customers for "under-charged" fuel costs, which will result in an extra \$16 per month for the average (1000 kWh) residential customer.

The PSC decided, as they have for decades now, that 100% of the cost of fuel should be paid by Georgia Power's customers. The utility does not have to pay one cent for any of the fuel it obtains to create electricity, creating what some analysts have called a "moral hazard."

A moral hazard exists when the person or company making a decision is insulated from the consequences of the decision. Without any economic consequence or incentive to move more aggressively to manage fuel costs, Georgia Power is unlikely to be motivated

to change course. To this end, we strongly advocated for a modernized sharing of fuel costs and fuel risk between the utility and its ratepayers. If Georgia Power had some skin in the game, we argued, they would have an incentive to keep fuel consumption low.

Unfortunately, on May 11, 2023, the PSC voted to authorize Georgia Power's request. As disappointing as it may seem at first glance, there is plenty of success behind our intervention. Going into the docket process, our goal was to make noise and open up the appetite to modernize the Fuel Cost Recovery mechanism.

Our voice was loud and clear: (1) We put up two expert witnesses on the stand. They answered questions from Commissioners, PSC Staff, and other intervening parties for more than two hours. (2) Our position and our experts' recommendations are now on the record. (3) We were able to rally support from the public, who came out strong to voice their concerns during the public hearing. (4) We got tremendous media coverage of our arguments before the PSC. And (5) We now



Photo: Screenshot from Public Service Commission livestream on YouTube

In this screenshot from the PSC's livestream of the hearings for Georgia Power's fuel cost recovery docket, Sierra Club attorney Isabella Ariza questions witnesses.

have an open door to continue conversations with Georgia Power and explore legislative change in Georgia.

While this is just the first bite at this particular apple, we are optimistic that this strategy is the type of visionary and forward-looking model that aligns Georgia Power's business incentives with the public's best interest.

CLEAN ENERGY COMMITTEE

Fed. legislation is speeding up clean energy transition

BY SCOTT PRESSON, CHAIR, CLEAN ENERGY FOR ALL COMMITTEE

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) are full of opportunities to make meaningful progress on our climate

emergency for our homes, businesses, communities, nonprofit organizations, utilities and EMCs, and local and state governments. More programs are being rolled out as the federal agencies finalize their funding announcements and guidance.

The consumer rebates are expected to be finalized in 2024 as states, including Georgia, are now writing their procedures for implementing the rebate

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program. This program will offer rebates to low and moderate income households for energy efficiency and electrification improvements. Tax credits are already available for certain efficiency and electrification projects. We can all be part of a just, equitable transition to a clean, sustainable economy and future! Do your part!

Guidance is being rolled out for a number of federal IRA programs. Environmental justice is a priority across the spectrum of the IRA climate programs. Sierra Club and other environmental organizations are developing information to get you up to speed (learn more at sierraclub.org/harnessing-power-inflation-reduction-act). Sierra Club is also training volunteers to be Community Advocates to help educate and promote these opportunities in their communities. Another useful resource geared towards individuals and families has been developed by Rewiring America (rewiringamerica.org). This site has links to a useful guide document that includes steps for making your plan (rewiringamerica.org/IRAGuide) and a calculator to identify how much savings are available for your situation, including what rebates you would be eligible for given your income (rewiringamerica.org/app/ira-calculator).

The Georgia Chapter's Clean Energy Committee, in partnership with the Transportation Committee and other environmental organizations, will continue promoting opportunities for residents, businesses, local governments, and community organizations to take advantage of these clean energy benefits.

We are also participating in stakeholder meetings for the Climate Pollution Reduction grants. Under this IRA-created program, the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and the state of Georgia (on behalf of the rest of Georgia) will each develop a Priority Climate Action Plan. During the implementation

phase of this program, states and local governments nationwide will be able to compete for \$4.9 billion in grant funds for projects covered by the priority plan.

The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund is also an example of the funding opportunities being implemented. The fund will go towards three programs: a National Clean Investment Fund to leverage private financing and capital for clean technology projects; a Clean Communities Investment Accelerator to build the clean financing capacity of local community lenders working in low-income and disadvantaged communities; and a Solar for All program to expand existing low-income solar programs or design and deploy new Solar for All programs.

Chapter staff and volunteers worked with Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign staff on the Georgia Power Rate Case hearings, the Fuel Costs Docket, and coal ash disposal. More detail can be found in the Beyond Coal Campaign article (see page 3). Though the Ready for 100 (RF100) program is being discontinued on the national level, other clean energy programs like Building Electrification, Clean Transportation, and Fossil-free Finance are being implemented. In Georgia, local efforts to transition to renewable energy continue in Atlanta, Athens-Clarke County, Augusta-Richmond County, Decatur, DeKalb County, Gwinnett County, and Savannah. Shout out to Gwinnett County and Cobb County for their current Solarize Gwinnett and Solarize Cobb campaigns. Go solar! Let's assure that Georgia takes full advantage of the opportunities to accelerate our progress away from fossil fuels.

Care to help us in any of these clean energy efforts? Have an interest in volunteering to help us move forward on climate action? Contact Clean Energy Committee Chair Scott Presson (spress51@gmail.com) for more information.

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LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Unfinished business in the 2024 GA Legislative session

BY MARK WOODALL, CHAIR,
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The 2023 Georgia Legislative session got off to a slow start with a new House Speaker, Jon Burns, and a new Lt. Governor, Burt Jones, and more than 50 new

members. The slow start resulted in many issues being punted to 2024, the second year of the two-year cycle.

Most Sierra Club priorities were not addressed, though two trust fund fixes did pass. HB 31 added

certain hazardous waste fees to those dedicated to the trust fund, and SB 95 moved the collection of tire disposal fees to the distributor level. With the trust funds finally fully funded, the Georgia

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EPD needs to get busy actually spending the money and cleaning up the hazardous waste sites and illegal tire dumps.

TWO PRIORITIES FOR 2024

A Sierra Club Georgia Chapter and Georgia Water Coalition priority, **HB 71** by Rep. Darlene Taylor (R-Thomasville), also known as the Okefenokee Protection Act, remains in the House Natural Resources Committee. The list of sponsors includes more than 90 state representatives and that number is still growing. The bill would outlaw mining along Trail Ridge, which forms the eastern boundary of the Okefenokee Swamp. HB 71 finally got a two-hour hearing on Tuesday, March 14, but did not get voted to the floor for a full House vote.

Another Water Coalition priority, **HB 477** by Rep. Rob Leverett (R-Elberton), requires the Department of Agriculture to cooperate in getting control over the state's "soil amendment" program, which is allowing for industrial and agricultural waste to be sprayed all over northeast and east Georgia. The state allows these "soil amendments" without much oversight. Since new Agricultural Commissioner Tyler Harper gutted the current law as a state Senator with SB 260 a couple of years ago, the Agriculture Department joined Big Chicken (the Georgia Poultry Federation) in opposing the bill. Commissioner Harper sent a letter to legislators saying that the new regs promulgated by his now-retired predecessor should be given a chance. No action was taken on the bill beyond a hearing.

The House added \$550,000 to the FY 2024 budget to fund two more staffers in the Ag Department and other support for the soil amendment program. The increased attention to this issue seems to

be helping. However, the need for more transparency and the power of local governments to act still requires legislation to pass.

SOLAR POWER

Another Sierra Club priority is passage of a solar net metering measure, **SB 210**, to deal with Georgia Power's 5,000 customer cap on a fair price for homeowners with solar panels who generate excess electricity that is sent back to the grid. Genuine solar rooftop reform, over the wishes of Georgia Power and state regulators at the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC), is needed to get Georgia moving faster toward a clean energy future. SB 210 by Sen. Jason Anavitate (R-Dallas) is in the Senate Regulated Industries Committee awaiting action.

There are several other bills that address problems holding back the growth of solar power in Georgia: HB 355, HB 552, and HB 536.

- **HB 355** by Rep. Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) challenges Homeowner Associations' ability to block solar power and adds natural gas/methane to the list of stuff protected from being blocked by HOA petty tyrants.
- **HB 522** by Rep. Spencer Frye (D-Athens) and others is similar to HB 355 in limiting the power of Homeowners Associations to create or enforce covenants which infringe upon a homeowner's right to install a solar energy device or to display the United States flag.
- **HB 536** by Rep. Mandisha Thomas (D-South Fulton) is a tax credit for installing solar power at warehouses or residential dwellings. With a boost from tax incentives and a fair price for solar energy returned back to the grid, huge warehouses and parking

lots all over Georgia could be covered in solar panels.

Unfortunately, there are also at least three bills attacking solar power still alive for the 2024 session: HB 73, HB 300 and HB 449.

HB 73 by Rep. Joseph Gullett (R-Dallas) is supposedly designed to provide consumer protection for residential solar customers from flim-flam operators. Unfortunately, HB 73 assigned this job to the Georgia PSC, Georgia Power Company's best friends. Georgia Power hates residential solar, viewing its own customers as unwanted competitors instead of captive monopoly victims. Georgia Power having its own taxpayer-funded police force to torment solar installers is a fine way to prevent residential solar expansion in its service area.

HB 73 passed the House with 44 no votes. Solar installers hate the bill. There certainly are problems with out-of-state flim-flam companies ripping people off. The solution for that is for the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Board to do their job. If the Dept. of Agriculture can set up a special website link for reporting stinking chicken guts and sludge, why can't the Consumer Protection Division do the same for solar installation scammers?

Georgia is one of the worst states in the United States for rooftop solar solely because of Georgia Power and the PSC. Under the undue influence of Georgia Power, the PSC kept the "net metering" cap in place in 2022. Only 5,000 customers are allowed a fair price for rooftop solar. Putting the PSC in charge of rooftop solar is like putting the Southern Baptists in charge of alcohol sales. The Sierra Club strongly OPPOSES HB 73 as

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an attack on rooftop solar.

HB 300 from Rep. Trey Kelley (R-Cedartown) puts a tax on all new retail solar for a trust fund to manage the scrap. Someone has generated a fear that retired solar panels are going to be a big solid waste problem in the future. HB 300 is in House Energy where it needs to stay. Solar decommissioning is not an issue at this time. If it becomes an issue, then insurance or other options are much better than a new tax on solar. North Carolina passed a decommissioning bill after six years of discussion. That legislation may be a guide for Georgia

HB 449 by Reps. David Knight (R-Griffin), John Corbett (R-Lake Park), Trey Rhodes (R-Greensboro), Chas Cannon (R-Moultrie), Clay Pirkle (R-Ashburn) is another part of Georgia Power's drive to limit renewable power, particularly sources they don't control. This bill increases the penalty for breaking the covenant on conservation property being used for solar power. Currently, there is only a penalty on the portion removed from the 10-year covenant for solar. HB 449 would require a penalty payment for the entire acreage. The solar panels will not last forever, nor is the soil deeply disturbed by installation. Why take away incentives for solar power? To maintain Georgia Power's control of the price of power someone has induced the offering of this legislation.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVS)

Now that Georgia is well on its way to becoming the electric mobility capital of the United States, we hoped that a study committee on electrification of transportation would result in better policies for Georgia electric vehicle (EV) buyers and owners. The bill that emerged from that study commit-

tee, **SB 146** by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), had some good elements, but it also contained several policies that will harm electric vehicle growth in Georgia, policies that the Sierra Club and our allies are looking to change or reverse with new legislation.

One of the changes made by SB 146 is a requirement that those who use commercial EV charging stations pay per kilowatt hour, instead of the old system where EV owners paid based on the amount of time they were plugged in to the charger. This is an important change because it allows EV owners to pay for the amount of electricity they consume, just like gas-powered vehicle owners pay for the amount of gasoline they pump. Additionally, all EV chargers work at different power levels, so 30 minutes on a fast charger consumes much more electricity than 30 minutes on a low-level charger. This change was also said to be needed so that the state can receive millions of dollars from federal infrastructure funding to install new EV chargers.

Other aspects of the bill are more troubling. It requires all public EV charging stations to collect a new tax based on the amount of electricity consumed. The bill's sponsors saw this new tax as equivalent to the gas tax paid by drivers of gas-powered vehicles, most of which is used to fund road and bridge construction. However, EV owners already pay an annual fee of more than \$200 that was designed as EV owners "paying in" to the road and bridges fund. This new public charging fee is a double tax on EV owners.

A consequence of this legislation will be the impact it will have on free EV chargers around the state in locations like hotels, shopping centers, and other places of business. Some business owners

offer free EV charging to their employees as a perk. Regardless of a charging station's owner or customer base, the legislation requires all chargers except those located at "residences" to collect the new tax starting in 2025. Many free chargers do not have meters to measure the kWh they are using and retrofitting them to add meters is estimated to cost at least \$1,000 per charger. The "free chargers" at supermarkets and workplaces, including those for city and county vehicle fleets, will be forced to collect the new tax and pay for the expensive new meters to measure something they are giving away. Most will abandon their enthusiasm for promoting electric mobility since their good turn will not go unpunished.

Sierra Club's primary argument with the EV commercial charging tax is that it is inadequate to solve Georgia's problem: funding roads and bridges. Although we can all agree on the fact that Georgia must fund most existing roads and bridges, the bill brings a lot of unintended consequences and ends up being an anti-EV bill in a state that will receive \$23 billion dollars in investment and 28,000 new jobs related to the EV industry. Some of the unintended consequences include that it will primarily tax folks that do not have charging at home, which is inequitable. Legislative fixes to SB 146 are needed.

Lastly, the Sierra Club will spend a lot of time and effort during the 2024 session fighting attacks on environmental protection (roll-backs). A favorite tactic of corporate polluters is preemption of local control. Preemption projects come from cases in which a local initiative has offended some wealthy interest, which then hires lobbyists to suppress it. Most of

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what is suppressed are things that may have occurred elsewhere, often in California, or that are possible but unlikely based on what has actually occurred in Georgia communities.

Some of the most dangerous rollbacks are associated with the Wall Street takeover of single-family housing in Georgia. **HB 514** by Rep. Dale Washburn (R-Macon) and others would prohibit local governments from adopting or enforcing ordinances designed to maintain the quality of construction, including safety and energy efficiency for one and two-family buildings. This attempts to take control over local permitting to the advantage of developers and their financiers. HB 514 passed the House and is awaiting Senate action.

SB 188 by Sen. Russ Goodman (R-Cogdell) is the most extreme preemption bill. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries, this is the Senate version of **HB 514** and **HB 517**.

The bill describes a certain type

of “rental agreement” that is a contract between a landlord and any tenant desperate for housing. As soon as such an agreement is executed, virtually all local regulation of residential construction is removed.

This is a sweeping giveaway to the hedge fund operators who have already bought a massive number of the houses in the Atlanta Metro market to convert them all to rental properties. SB 188 is phase 2 of the hedge fund operators' plan for American misery: Build more new houses with no quality standards, in new neighborhoods, all for rent, none for sale. This bill almost prescribes construction that will be shoddy firetraps. Build to rent will be cheaply built with flammable vinyl siding, but still leased at high rents. Tenants will have to sign contracts that will make their eviction a simple matter of a rent increase. Owner-occupied housing will disappear under this regime. Thankfully, SB 188 remains in the Senate Regulated Industries committee.

You can make a big difference in

the legislative process without going to the Capitol. Please contact your state senator and state representative about legislation of concern to the Sierra Club. Go to the Sierra Club website at sierraclub.org/georgia/legislative to see the legislative tracker and other resources. Go to legis.ga.gov to get the latest on committee agendas and to watch the session or committees and find the office number for your legislator. Click on Issues at gawater.org to get the latest news on Georgia Water Coalition priority issues.

The Georgia Chapter plans to be actively involved in next year's legislative session. We're always looking for volunteers who want to engage in this work and have several ways for folks to get involved, from sending a pre-written email to your lawmakers to meeting with them one-on-one to lobby for environmental legislation.

If you're interested in helping us out, email Senior Communications & Policy Coordinator Ricky Leroux at ricky.leroux@sierraclub.org.

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OUTINGS

Special thanks to all of our Chapter's Outings Leaders!

BY GRANT BROWN, OUTINGS CHAIR

On behalf of the Georgia Chapter, I would like to express our appreciation for the outstanding efforts of our volunteer Outings Leaders this year. Without you, none of this would be possible. We have led a wide range of excursions, taking us to remarkable places such as Pine Log Mountain, Arabia Mountain, Congaree National Park, and the Augusta Central Canal.

In suburban Atlanta, we have been actively involved in removing invasive plants from Stone Mountain,



Photo courtesy Grant Brown

Sierra Club Outings Leaders have been leading hikes up Stone Mountain in order to remove invasive plants along the trail.

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seeking rare birds along the Doll's Head Trail with Max Brown, and Luke Warren has continued his after-work hiking sessions at the Island Ford and Vickery Creek units of the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area.

Additionally, Steve Mintz and I had the pleasure of conducting a free hiking and backpacking class for the public. I also had a wonderful experience leading a family-oriented outing and private tour at the Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary, where we were able to visit and learn about animals undergoing rehabilitation.

In Central Georgia, the Middle Chattahoochee Group, under the leadership of Outings Chair Laura Breyfogle, organized outings where participants delved into the world of solarized homes and explored the workings of organic agriculture at Jennyjack Farm.

In Augusta, the Savannah River Group, led by Cathy Black and her dedicated team, conducted captivating outings that involved learning about wild mushrooms and observing migratory birds at the National Audubon Society's Silver Bluff property.

Up in North Georgia, our leaders have been embarking on adventurous hikes along the Appalachian Trail near Blood Mountain with Lee Graham. We also have plans for a driving/hiking tour of the Cherohala Highway and a visit to the Project Chimps Sanctuary in Blue Ridge.

Our Georgia Chapter recently organized a social event at Pontoon Brewing Company in Sandy Springs. It was a delightful gathering with live music and generous door prizes from Patagonia. We were honored to have Chapter Director Gina Webber join us, along with their adorable puppy Pearl. The band, Bushcraft, which includes some of our very own musically talented Outings Leaders, provided



Photo courtesy Grant Brown

Georgia Chapter Outings Chair Grant Brown recently led a family-friendly outing to the Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary.

great entertainment. We were also delighted by a visit from Chattahoochee River Keeper founder and author Sally Bethea.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to announce that I will be leading a Sierra Club National Outing to Cumberland Island in October. This presents a fantastic opportunity to introduce Sierrans from across the country to one of our state's crown jewels. As you may know, in the early 1970s, Sierra Club National Executive Director David Brower, alongside other environmental groups, played a pivotal role in preventing developers from turning Cumberland Island into another Hilton Head.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a local or national outings leader, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your ongoing support, and we look forward to seeing you on the trail!

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POLITICAL COMMITTEE

"Off year" elections are an opportunity for local change

**BY EDDIE EHLERT, CHAIR,
POLITICAL COMMITTEE**

It's election season again, a season that no longer seems to end. This year's "off year" ballots feature local municipal elections. Municipal elections have become more common, driven by the

ever increasing number of new municipalities that have come into existence due to the General Assembly's decision to change the law and allow creation of new cities with very limited burdens. So it goes.

The Georgia Chapter is at a disad-

vantage in ferreting out the most environmentally sound candidates in each of these races since the most important issues are broad and different from one town to another. Still, basic concerns such as appropriate planning and

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implementation for stormwater (a problem that grows with the frequency of heavy rains), protection of stream buffers (allowing for as much natural management of runoff and prevention of contamination as possible), ensuring protection of tree canopy (to prevent the continued expansion of the heat island effect) and, when possible, expanding public transit and clean energy adoption. Few candidates seeking office in smaller towns have these issues top of mind. This places greater importance on the Sierra Club Members getting to know the candidates and asking them important and sometimes uncomfortable questions.

Small and medium cities usually include numerous “meet and greet” and “town hall” opportunities. When these happen, SHOW UP! Let the candidates know who you are and what is most dear to you. With luck they will agree and will work to earn your vote and support. If it is clear they disagree,

make sure to share that information with your friends and neighbors. Seeking to diminish environmental protections (which may be considered too expensive) in order to foist a potentially unwanted development on a community is not a legitimate reason to seek or attain elective office. If you think stream buffer “variances” should be eliminated, SPEAK UP! Large fines for damage to specimen trees are entirely possible with adequate public support. The current trend of every city undertaking projects like constructing a palatial city hall is not a given, especially if a sufficient number of voters make clear this is not in their best interest.

In the event you encounter a candidate who really gives you pause, take a minute to look them up on the State Ethics Commission’s campaign contribution disclosure site. Find out who is funding their candidacy to get a better idea of why they are really running for office. This is public information,

but unfortunately, most people never check to see who is buying the office. Again, let your friends and neighbors know what you have found so you can speak with a greater collective voice.

If you need help, reach out to me (edehlert@mindspring.com) or the Chapter Political Committee member from your Sierra Club Local Group. We are all listed on the Chapter website. The dispersal of members around the state makes it difficult to have much influence in smaller communities. But the strategies to identify the good, the bad, and the ugly are the same. It just takes a little time, but it is so worth it!

Lastly, Election Day is November 7 — be sure to VOTE and make your environmental voice heard! Go to the Georgia Secretary of State’s website at mvp.sos.ga.gov to find a personalized sample ballot that will show all the races you are qualified to vote in.



TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Expansions in the works for Cobb & Gwinnett counties

BY JASON LATHBURY, CHAIR, TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Both Cobb County and Gwinnett County have recently made headlines as they progress towards potential major 2024 transit expansion efforts.

In August, Cobb County’s Board of Commissioners received an update on the ongoing “Mobility SPLOST” planning for up to 1% sales tax to last up to 30 years, which is expected to be voted on in November 2024.

The plan includes seven Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes and three Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) routes, totaling 108 miles. Additionally, many new local routes, skip-stop ‘rapid’ routes, and on-demand zones would be funded, providing coverage across much of Cobb and into neighboring counties.

Included in these plans was the proposed I-285 ‘Top End’ BRT line, which would make use of the infamous I-285 high-occupancy toll lanes. Exactly how those lanes would be used has not been decided, and the lanes themselves have been delayed by multiple financing issues.

Earlier this September, Gwinnett County also announced that it was examining a potential 2024 transit referendum, making use of their recently finalized revised transit plan. That plan would provide full-county coverage through on-demand zones, greatly expanded local bus routes, the creation of a pair of new BRT lines serving the central county, and new airport-specific services. Some of these routes will reach into neighboring DeKalb to provide connections to MARTA.

Neither plan includes any rail components, nor are they expansions of MARTA.

The Georgia Sierra Club Transportation Committee is working with local advocates and political leaders to support transit expansion efforts in both counties. Email us at gasctransportationcommittee@gmail.com if you’re interested in getting involved with this work.

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For a complete listing of conservation committee chairs and issue leaders, please visit: sierraclub.org/georgia/directory.

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Mark Woodall
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Outings Chair

Grant Brown
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Personnel Chair

Vacant

Political Chair

Eddie Ehlert
edehlert@mindspring.com

CHAPTER STAFF

Chapter Director

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Senior Communications & Policy Coordinator

Ricky Leroux
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Senior Campaign Representative, Military Outdoors

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Social Media:

@GASierraClub on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair

Curt Thompson
CurtBThompson@bellsouth.net
Greater Gwinnett Group Delegate

Vice Chair, Administration

Jumana Master
Jumana.m.master@gmail.com
At-Large Elected Member

At-Large Elected Member

William Bryan
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At-Large Elected Member

Haseena Charania
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At-Large Elected Member

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Metro Atlanta Group Delegate

Eddie Ehlert
edehlert@mindspring.com

Middle Chattahoochee Group Delegate

Judy Lawrence
bjlawrence02@yahoo.com

Savannah River Group Delegate

Jeffrey Holder
JeffreyHolder1978@comcast.net

2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

The Sierra Club Georgia Chapter's Executive Committee (ExCom) meets every other month. The meetings are being held virtually until further notice.

Georgia Chapter ExCom meetings are open to the public, and all are welcome to attend.

Meeting dates are subject to change, so email gasierraclub@gmail.com to confirm the dates.

Upcoming 2023 ExCom meeting dates:

- Saturday, Nov. 18, 10 AM

FALL/WINTER 2023

GROUP NEWS

CENTENNIAL GROUP

SERVING COBB, CHEROKEE & NORTH FULTON

BY LYNN WALSTON, CHAIR, CENTENNIAL GROUP,
LEE GRAHAM, CENTENNIAL GROUP OUTINGS
CHAIR, & BETTYE HARRIS, CENTENNIAL GROUP
VOLUNTEER

In case you forgot: The Centennial Group proudly celebrated its milestone 30-Year Anniversary last year (2022) as we were slowly emerging from pandemic restrictions. Our holiday party & awards ceremony held last December honored Centennial history, successes, and several new & veteran volunteers.

We continued our commemoration this year (2023) and will again in 2024 as we expand our membership, group boundaries, number of outings; and promote our mission. Please join us!

Please consider helping us with any of these committees or activities: membership support, outings, conservation, political, transit, equity, newsletter writing/editing, website/social media support, and historian. For details, contact Lynn Walston (lynnwalston22@yahoo.com) or Linda Bell (lbell51@yahoo.com).

Thanks for attending our monthly hybrid group meetings, our outings, and our recent social gatherings (including "Solarize Cobb" on 8/31). We have another meeting planned for November 7 and our Holiday Party is tentatively scheduled for

December 7. Check our Centennial newsletter, Facebook, and webpage to confirm details.

Be sure to vote in our October ExCom elections (on both the Centennial Group and the GA Chapter ballots). Thank you to all candidates who agreed to run.

Meanwhile, the Centennial Group has been busy on the trails. Centennial Outings leaders led seven outings in the spring and five in the summer. Leaders included Connie Dassinger, Lee Graham and Hayden Kepner, Steve Mintz.

We welcome new Centennial Group Outing Leader Hayden Kepner, who has led hikes to Island Ford and Gold Branch units on the Chattahoochee River

Summer outings included: Appalachian Trail to Blood Mountain (Lee Graham), a hike to Island Ford (Hayden Kepner), a hike at Pickett's Mill (Connie Dassinger), Appalachian Trail to Siler Bald (Connie Dassinger & Lee Graham), and Appalachian Trail to Wayah Bald (Lee Graham). In September, Centennial Outing Leaders scouted trips to Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, Cherohala Skyway, and Project Chimps, a 230 acre preserve in north Georgia.

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GROUP INFORMATION

Website: sierraclub.org/georgia/centennial
Facebook: facebook.com/Centennial.Sierra.Club
MeetUp: meetup.com/Georgia-Sierra-Club



Photo courtesy of Lee Graham

Sierrans stop for a photo while hiking the Appalachian Trail to Wayah Bald during an outing in August.

GREATER GWINNETT GROUP

SERVING GWINNETT COUNTY & SURROUNDING AREAS

BY MICHAEL HALLEN AND CURT THOMPSON, CO-CHAIRS, GREATER GWINNETT GROUP, & SCOTT PRESSON, EXCOM MEMBER, GREATER GWINNETT GROUP

The Greater Gwinnett Group of the Sierra Club now includes Gwinnett, Barrow, Forsyth, Hall, Rockdale, and Walton Counties. We meet monthly, typically in a hybrid fashion with both in-person and virtual options depending on the circumstances. Meetings are generally held at 7 PM on the second Thursday of the month. Our recent outings have included monthly stream cleanups in the Martins Farm and Suwanee Greenway area of Gwinnett County; they are held on the third Sunday of the month.

Our advocacy work has resulted in the establishment of an Environmental Sustainability Officer position within the Gwinnett County government. We expect a selection to fill that role to be made in the near future as a step towards a full Office of Sustainability.

Our monthly meetings have covered a variety of topics, including a presentation in July by Scott Presson and Kaveh Kamooneh on the Solarize Gwinnett campaign; a presentation in August by Nina Dutton, Chair of the Metro Atlanta Group of the Sierra Club, about the Stop Cop City movement to stop a police training center from being built in a historic forest area near the South River in DeKalb County; and a September presentation by Kathe Gowland on the current priorities and actions of the Forsyth/Gwinnett County Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby to promote effective climate action on the national level.

Our clean energy projects include the Solarize Gwinnett program, an effort to expand rooftop solar with optional battery storage at a discounted group rate in Gwinnett County and nearby. The discount is on top of the federal tax credits. Sign-ups for a free evaluation have been extended through November 30. You can learn more about this opportunity at solarizegwinnett.com. Rooftop solar is being offered through this program for residents, businesses, and nonprofits, like churches. We are also providing education and outreach to the public and business community in our area about the benefits available in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) programs. In addition, we educate and collaborate with nonprofits, local



Photo courtesy Max Brown

Sierra Club leaders (from left to right) Michael and Gloria Hallen, Scott Presson, and Carolyn and Max Brown recently volunteered at the Ray Day event at Serenbe.

government and school system officials to encourage them to take full advantage of the grants and programs in the IRA and Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA). We also continue to give input to the Gwinnett County Sustainability Commission, the Transportation Department, and Gwinnett County Public Schools.

For those wanting to get more involved please contact Michael Hallen or Curt Thompson. You are also welcome to drop in on our meetings or attend one of our Group ExCom meetings, which take place on 7 PM the third Thursday of the month at Boulder Creek Coffee in Lawrenceville. Please check the Sierra Club Chapter calendar on the Chapter website or MeetUp pages to sign up or look for an event on our Facebook Page. We'd love to see you there.

Finally a special shout out to our Group Excom members: Curt Thompson (Co-Chair), Michael Hallen (Co-Chair), Art Sheldon, Scott Presson, and Jorge Granados.

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GROUP INFORMATION

Website: sierraclub.org/georgia/Gwinnett

Facebook: facebook.com/Gwinnett-Sierra-Club-109645614080930

METRO ATLANTA GROUP

SERVING ATLANTA, DEKALB & SOUTH FULTON

BY NINA DUTTON, CHAIR, METRO ATLANTA GROUP

We are on the lookout for a new treasurer and a new webmaster! Do either of these roles sound interesting to you? Do you know someone who might be interested? Curious about other ways to get involved with planning our group's events, outings, and more? Please feel free to reach out to our group chair, Nina Dutton (nddutton@gmail.com) to find out more.

RECENT GROUP MEETINGS

At our (in-person!) Aug. 8 meeting, we heard from Adam Betuel, director of conservation for Georgia Audubon, as he introduced us to amazing birds he has spotted around the globe and the environments where they live. This presentation was an invitation into the world of birdwatching, an activity through which we can learn so much about the ecosystems around us, not to mention the ever-fascinating antics of our feathered friends.

At our Sep. 12 meeting, we heard from featured speakers Kathryn Kolb and Howard Katzman with City in the Forest. We learned from them about the current Atlanta tree protection ordinance, amendments to the ordinance as proposed by City in the Forest, and how we can get involved to improve the

tree protection ordinance and protect the forest around us. For the most up-to-date action opportunities regarding the amendments, please check out the City in the Forest website (cityintheforest.org.)

Video recordings are available from Metro Atlanta Group meetings that we held online, including the Sep. 12 meeting.

STAY UP TO DATE

If you don't get our monthly meeting announcements but would like to, sign up for email updates through the Georgia Chapter website (sierraclub.org/georgia) and be sure to include your zipcode.

The Metro Atlanta Group generally meets on the second Tuesday of each month. Typically our meetings feature a speaker on a timely topic. Then, we discuss and present info on how to take action on important issues. Some months we do not hold a regular meeting, so please check the Chapter calendar, our webpage, and our Facebook page for updates. Our executive committee meetings are open and generally held on the evening of the first Tuesday of the month. Contact Nina Dutton (nddutton@gmail.com) to confirm details.

GROUP INFORMATION

Website: sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta

Facebook: facebook.com/SierraClubATL

MIDDLE CHATTAHOOCHEE GROUP

SERVING WEST GEORGIA

BY THE MIDDLE CHATTAHOOCHEE GROUP LEADERSHIP

The Middle Chattahoochee Group continues to work on expanding to include nine West Georgia counties. This has increased our membership from 48 members to more than 400 members! Our Group Co-Chair Cathy Knight now sends out monthly email bulletins to all members. Anyone interested in our meetings, outings, and projects may join our Facebook page and/or Meetup page to get announcements of upcoming events. We are working on growing our Group not only in age, gender, and race diversity, but also geographic diversity!



Photo courtesy Mary Lou Dabbs

Middle Chattahoochee Sierrans enjoyed a tour of a unique earthen-sheltered solar-powered home in east Alabama in August.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

During hot summer months, our outings have been more educational than strenuous with tours of two pollinator gardens in Muscogee and Troup Counties, an organic vegetable garden in Harris County, and an Earth-sheltered solar-powered home in East Alabama. Fall, winter, and spring outings will be focused on hiking and biking in West Georgia and East Alabama.

Since meetings offer Zoom options, we invite you to join us online if it's not convenient to join us in LaGrange on 3rd Tuesdays at 7-8 pm (6:30 for social

time and refreshments). Check out the calendar on the chapter website or join our Facebook or Meetup for announcements.

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GROUP INFORMATION

Website: sierraclub.org/georgia/middle-chattahoochee
Facebook: facebook.com/groups/300840033370271
MeetUp: meetup.com/middle-chattahoochee-group-ga-sierra-club-new

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SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP

SERVING AUGUSTA & SURROUNDING AREAS

BY CATHY BLACK, CO-CHAIR, SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP

The Savannah River Group took a hiatus during July and August except for Chris Hall, our Transportation Chair. He was busy organizing an event with Walton Options, a nonprofit, non-residential center that provides services and resources to help people with all types of disabilities to live independently within the community.

On Saturday, August 26, several members from the Savannah River Group Sierra Club, Augusta Transit Citizens Advisory Board, Augusta Unitarian Universalist Church (UU), and staff from Walton Options gathered together to talk about the challenges people with disabilities face when relying on public transportation. We were also joined by Georgia State Rep. Lynn Gladney. We had several speakers includ-

ing Deputy Director Dr. Oliver Page of Augusta Transit, Reverend Nic Filzen of the Augusta UU Church, Heather Morales, and Jensens Jennings, both of Walton Options. Among the many topics discussed were locations of bus stops and ADA compliance, sidewalk repairs, and the need for more reliable and timely bus service.

In September, we started up our monthly programs and our outings. New Outings Leader Cheryl Murga held an indoor Foraging 101 class in conjunction with the Savannah River Group Sierra Club and the Aiken Senior Citizens Center. Cheryl also held an outdoor mushroom walk and talk teaching us all about mushrooms. The group found numerous varieties of mushrooms on our walk.

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GROUP INFORMATION

Website: sierraclub.org/georgia/Savannah-River
Facebook: facebook.com/groups/241982449162866

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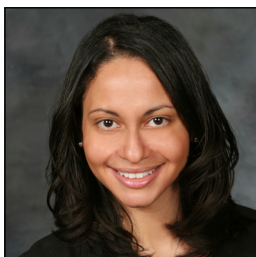
CHAPTER & GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

CANDIDATE BIOS

GEORGIA CHAPTER

ALICIA APONTE

I offer a unique blend of skills, experience, and accomplishments that would contribute significantly to the chapter's mission and initiatives. With over 15 years of experience as a data-driven strategy and operations leader, I have a proven track record of leveraging data to inform strategic initiatives. My focus on operations excellence means I am adept at translating strategic visions into actionable plans. This skill is crucial for implementing initiatives and projects effectively. My experience in evaluating climate-related risks and opportunities, particularly in energy and water domains, equips me to provide valuable contributions to initiatives focused on climate resilience. Notably, I have co-authored research studies on the energy-water nexus, efficiency in power generation, and urban transport energy use, even contributing to White House briefings. This underscores my ability to generate pertinent insights for high-level policy discussions. Eager to serve on the Executive Committee, I'm driven by the belief in local actions propelling broader positive changes. Collaborating with fellow professionals who share my dedication to sustainable energy, water management, and transportation promises enriching networking and personal growth opportunities.



HASEENA CHARANIA

I have appreciated the opportunity to serve on the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club over the past year and am excited to run for reelection! I would continue to use my diversity, equity, and inclusion experience to infuse environmental justice in our work and would continue to apply my consulting experience to personalize the Sierra Club's 2030 Strategic Framework to Georgia. Working alongside the Sierra Club has personally been



one of the most rewarding parts of the last year and I hope to continue contributing to our mission. By way of background, I have multi-sectoral expertise in international sustainability communications, science and business. Before joining Quantis as a senior ESG reporting and communications consultant, I owned my own sustainability education consulting company where I designed a digital sustainability 101 course for Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport employees and facilitated a packaging company's first sustainability report. I have also worked with UPS, Park Pride, and the United Nations, and I attended Emory and Duke for my undergraduate and graduate degrees, respectively. For my dedication to the field of sustainability, I earned GreenBiz's 30 under 30 award.

AMANDA HOWARD

As an advocate for sustainable ecosystems, I bring vital skills in sustainability leadership, reporting, mentorship, analysis, and community engagement to propel the Sierra Club's Georgia Chapter forward. My role as an ESG Consultant at SIG has showcased my alignment-managed 20+ ESG surveys and certified 2.5 million sq ft of sustainable buildings, aligning with the Sierra Club's mission for responsible reporting and sustainable growth. I co-founded the "Green Team" across four companies, leading sub-committees focused on Carbon Tracking, Sustainable Habits, Green Education, and Zero Waste. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Economics & Management and a Bachelor of Arts in Ecology from the University of Georgia. My studies, complemented by a minor in Environmental Law and a certificate in Sustainability, equipped me with an understanding of the complex interrelations of our environment. In addition, I am deeply committed to promoting environmental justice and equity. This includes ensuring equal access to a healthy environment and addressing systemic injustices that have disproportionately affected marginalized communities. I resonate deeply with the Sierra Club's vision, which advocates for a world anchored in environmental, racial, economic, and gender justice. Serving on the Sierra Club's Executive Committee for the Georgia Chapter would enable me to further catalyze meaningful, positive change.



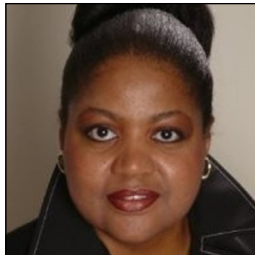
SHIREEN KHAN

I have significant leadership experience with non-profits and corporations, and I am deeply committed to environmental issues. In my last nonprofit role, I served as Chief Operating Officer and thus, I am very familiar with governance and operations. I am currently finishing up a Master's degree in Sustainability at Georgia Tech. I am a Georgia native and would love to have the opportunity to make a positive difference in Georgia. You can see my complete profile at shireenkhan.com.



CHARLOTTE KING

I'm humbled to apply to the Sierra Club Executive Committee. I have a Master's degree in Sustainable Energy & Environmental Management from Georgia Tech. Since 1996, I've worked in parks, greenspace, and forestry across Georgia, serving on the Georgia Tree Council Board, Georgia Conservancy, NUCFAC project manager drafting Reports for the Secretary of Agriculture following Legislative Forums for Tropical Storms & Katrina. I have worked across many topography, 14 states and reached 1.2 million tree topping consumers in PA. My work has included studies ("Impact of COVID19 on Global Aviation Carbon Emissions – NA, EU, China" and "Global Sustainability Chemical Nylons & Polymers – NA, EU, China" for INVISTA), peer-reviewed research ("The persistence of high energy burdens: A bibliometric analysis of vulnerability, poverty, and exclusion in the United States"), and a book chapter ("The Future of Work at the Intersection of Climate & Equity"). I have served as Chief Environmental Advisor for The Lot Water Project in Zimbabwe, Chair of Sustainable Neighborhood Development Strategies Inc./Beltline community, and I'm an IGEL & Leadership Atlanta alum. I'm unapologetically committed to increasing the representation of Black, Brown, and Indigenous scholars, scientists, researchers, and policymakers across the sector. My purpose: meaningful climate change leadership.



CRAIG MEYER

I have been a member of the Sierra Club since 1993. I served in the U.S. Army with the 82nd Airborne

Division at Ft. Bragg, NC. I was fortunate to attend college on the GI Bill program. I attended Arizona State University, where I obtained a B.S. in Political Science with an emphasis in political philosophy and law. I was also a member of Model United Nations. Arizona State University is ranked #1 on Sierra Club's annual "coolest schools" ranking of the most environmentally friendly colleges and universities in North America. I am a member of the GA – ASU Chapter Alumni. I currently live in Cumming, GA (North Atlanta). I am a member of the Johns Creek Chamber of Commerce. I work for General Real Estate performing commercial real estate sales. I have worked with corporate America and many institutional clients that own and operate commercial real estate all over the U.S. Corporate real estate is always concerned about environmental issues. I worked for the FDIC as an asset manager. I handled many REO assets with environmental soil contamination. I worked for Sprint Site Development building cell towers. Many of the sites I worked on had to have EPA and FAA clearance. I currently work from home as an independent contractor. This will allow me flexible time to dedicate to the job description for the Sierra Club. I maintain a consistent workout program at LA Fitness in Johns Creek. I am a big sports fan and I like to read books in my free time. My wife and I like going to dinner and the movies. I am a big Turner Classic Movies fan. I look forward to working with the Executive Committee. I am very passionate about trying to protect planet Earth. I fear that our generation will take the blame for leaving earth in such a mess.



ALI MITHAVAYANI

Currently, I'm helping to lead an initiative across 11 religious centers in the Southeast region to meet their target of being net-zero by 2030, hoping our strategy can be a framework for various other religious centers nationwide under the Aga Khan Foundation guidelines. Previously, I worked at Southface from 2015-2022, where I was introduced to the field of sustainability and also to Sierra Club. I assisted with educational and advocacy efforts, as well as leading energy training projects and technology infrastructure implementations to support our nonprofit impact reporting. Being part



of the Executive Committee would help keep me accountable and invested in my interests, as well as contribute to a goal that I share with many others. While I share many of the same values that us as advocates for sustainability possess, I want to be more intentional about my own efforts in this space and set a better example in and out of my sphere of influence as I work to fill in my own knowledge gaps.

STEPHANIE TETA

I am grateful for the opportunity to run for the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter Executive Committee. I have a background in Political Science and Environmental Policy and have utilized skills learned in a variety of roles, in both the private and public sector, finding creative solutions to influence sustainability efforts and environmental impact, and building partnerships to encourage climate justice for all. I currently work in Global Sustainability at Novelis, focusing on connecting employees with our sustainability mission. I previously supported sustainability and conservation programs at Interface, Southface, and The Georgia Chapter of The Nature Conservancy while serving in board leadership positions at Georgia Conservancy, Concrete Jungle, and USGBC of Georgia. With the potential to serve on the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter ExCom, I'm thrilled to again focus on and work toward Georgia-specific conservation efforts and affect change, both environmental and social, here in our beautiful state! I plan to utilize my extensive experience in sustainability education, environmental



justice, and community engagement, coupled with my deep passion for making the world a better place, to support Sierra Club's efforts in Georgia.

AYLA (RAMIE) VAGAL

With a rich background in sustainability, I've worked with global giants like Mohawk and Mars Incorporated. My expertise blends technical acumen, leadership, and deep commitment to sustainable practices. At Mohawk, I spearheaded the Living Building Challenge for our 33,000-square-foot Light Lab in Georgia, emphasizing detailed collaboration and strict standards. My portfolio includes corporate sustainability reports, green building certifications, product transparency, and wellness initiatives, all approached with a comprehensive methodology. Skillfully navigating challenges of complex projects, I've built collaborations across varied functional areas, enhanced by my strategic communication abilities. My professional expertise includes corporate strategy, ESG, carbon credits, and understanding the broader implications of sustainability projects. My academic credentials from Sir JJ College of Architecture and the Illinois Institute of Technology bolster my practical experience, offering deep insights into architecture and sustainability. My diverse background enriches my perspective. Passionate about aligning sustainability with corporate goals, I strongly align with the Sierra Club's mission and am eager to contribute to their executive board, aiming for lasting change.



CENTENNIAL GROUP

LEE GRAHAM

I have led over 100 Sierra Club Outings, trained a number of Sierra Outings leaders, and have compiled the monthly Sierra Centennial group newsletters since 2015. Serving on the Centennial Group Executive Committee would be a natural continuation of my assistance with the programs of the Centennial Group.



HAYDEN KLEPNER

I've been a member of the Sierra Club off and on for the last 20 years, but have only recently gotten more active in it. My main focus is on promoting local hikes and other outdoor activities. I've been a volunteer with the National Park Service for the last few years doing trail building and maintenance in the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and related activities. I'd like to help get more Sierra Club members active with the CRNRA.



TANIA ROBINSON

Tania K. Robinson has over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, working for MetLife, MassMutual, and Prudential. Her personal goal is to become a lifetime resource for each person. She is a Prudential Pathways certified speaker and has conducted monthly financial workshops to City of Atlanta employees and the National Veterans Administration as well as other local and national organizations and conferences. Tania is a graduate of Syracuse University, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Information, Management and Technology and became a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. through the Kappa Lambda chapter in 1999. She is also pursuing a master's degree in project management at Syracuse University. Tania is active in her community as a parishioner at St. Joseph's Catholic Church Marietta, a member of the Atlanta chapter of Women in Insurance and Financial Services, ExCom member of the Centennial Group and the transit liaison for Centennial, the Atlanta Alumni Club of Syracuse University, and serves as a manager at an election polling location as well as an election trainer in her community. She is the widow of Retired Army Sergeant Major Robert



A. Robinson and resides in Mableton, GA, with her 16-year-old daughter Nia. I would like to continue the work that Sierra Club promotes for environmental health, safety, and justice in our communities. I am particularly interested in continuing partnerships with organizations like Delta Sigma Theta, CHAR-TER, and others to provide valuable information and action items to our community, particularly around expanded transit.

LYNN WALSTON

I'm the current Chair of the Centennial Group and have been a member of Sierra Club for over 30 years. I have served on the ExCom for the past 11 years and look forward to our campaigns and initiatives going forward. The issues we are dealing with are extremely important, such as climate change, clean air and water, and environmental equity and justice. Activism has become a longtime passion and concern for me. Currently, I am particularly passionate about preserving land for parks and hiking, transit expansion, coal ash, and other toxic waste removal. These issues affect us all, regardless of age or income distinctions, and I hope to continue to work to advance these initiatives.



GREATER GWINNETT GROUP

MICHAEL HALLEN

I am an ExCom candidate for the Greater Gwinnett Group seeking reelection to the Gwinnett ExCom. I have been an active member of the Sierra Club for Twenty plus years and volunteer at Sierra Club events, along with volunteering with other groups in Gwinnett and around Georgia. Primary interests are solar, better transportation for all of Gwinnett County, Adopt-a-Stream, Adopt-a-Road, and helping keep our Gwinnett Parks & Park lands clean and accessible for all.



joint Sierra Club members since 1988, and we have resided in Lawrenceville for over 20 years. I am retired from a career in public health. I have become an active volunteer in the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter for the past six years, currently volunteering as Chair of the Clean Energy for All Committee on the Chapter level and as a member of the Gwinnett Group ExCom. My focus is working with Sierra Club staff and members and other environmental organizations to create as robust a response to the climate emergency as we can. Examples include past work with Sierra Club's Ready for 100 program and the Beyond Coal Campaign. One current focus is educating our members and the public on the current benefits in the Inflation Reduction Act, which offers programs and incentives to accelerate our transition to a sustainable, clean en-



SCOTT PRESSON

I am Scott M. Presson, and I am a candidate for the Greater Gwinnett ExCom. My wife and I have been

ergy future. I regularly attend the Greater Gwinnett Group meetings, and I look forward to continuing to contribute as a member of the Gwinnett ExCom.

CURT THOMPSON

I'm a lifelong Gwinnettian, current GDOT Board Member, and former State Senator who represented parts of Gwinnett, where I earned several Conservation Voter Awards. I have been a longtime member of the Sierra Club and currently serve as the Co-Leader of that Greater Gwinnett Group, having served in that role since 2021. In 2022, my level of involvement increased when I became Chair of the State Executive Committee of the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter. During that time I've seen the Greater Gwinnett Group change its name to reflect the 5

counties we serve. Additionally, I have been part of our group's transition back to having both in-person and hybrid in-person/virtual meetings and restarting our stream clean up monitoring and outings programs. I'd like to continue giving back to my county and the Greater Gwinnett Group of the Sierra Club as we work on improving attendance at in person gatherings, increase our active membership as well as help us focus on upcoming transit initiatives in Gwinnett County. I have the time and energy to devote to continuing this work and hope you will give me that opportunity.



METRO ATLANTA GROUP

MAX H. BROWN

I have been a Sierra Club member since 1984 and have served my Metro Atlanta Group as Outings Leader for six years now. We have enjoyed events at Arabia Mountain, Panola Mountain, Gold Branch, Vickery Creek, Constitution Lakes, Intrinchment Creek, Mason Mill, Emory at Lullwater Lake, Sweetwater Creek, and the Okefenokee NWR. I worked on habitat projects at Stone Mountain and Panola Mountain and also for Sweep the Hooch. I served on the Wildlands Committee, as well as volunteered to table events such as the Banff Film Festival and the Hemlock Festival. I support our Sierra Club frequently at rallies and protests and attend DNR meetings. I also volunteer for the Georgia Audubon Society. These activities allow me the opportunity to promote my love of nature and to defend our public lands. Being a part of Sierra Club is the very best way to explore, enjoy and protect the planet.



NINA DUTTON

In 2014, along with Marinangeles Gutiérrez Rivera, I responded to a request from the Chapter to host a rally against the Keystone XL pipeline. I then began to help with local events and clean energy campaigns. After joining Metro Atlanta Group's executive committee in 2015, I became chair and was elected to three additional terms (2017, 2019, 2021). As chair, I maintain group communications and facilitate our meetings. Since 2015, I've aimed to connect the Sierra Club community with ways to make a difference by plugging into Chapter campaigns and local aligned efforts. Since 2021, I've dedicated a fair amount of my Sierra Club time to bringing our organization into the broad movement to protect the Weelaunee (South River) forest and to stop Cop City. In my 2019 candidate statement, I described aims to build relationships more intentionally between Sierra Club and aligned groups, as well as to do better at helping people in our area become effective environmental activists. As I still have more to do in each regard, I would appreciate another opportunity to continue this work. Finally, thank you to all the Sierra Club volunteers and staff I've had the pleasure of working with over the past decade!



MIDDLE CHATTAHOOCHEE GROUP

ASHLEY DESENSI

A Columbus, Georgia, native, Ashley is a biology graduate of the Natural Sciences Master's Program at Columbus State University. A passionate naturalist with a love for botany and all things wild, Ashley has completed environmental surveys and projects in the Bahamas, Tanzania, and the Southeastern United States. She is a member of the Georgia Native Plant Conservation Alliance and the Georgia Botanical Society and works with local groups on conservation and restoration projects using native plants. She works full-time for Chattahoochee Riverkeeper as their Technical Programs Specialist, is a part-time lecturer at Columbus State University and is co-founder of Native Plant Coalition. Ashley, her wife Veronica, and three children currently reside in Columbus. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, camping, roadside botanizing, and gardening with plant species native to Georgia.



TROY KELLER

Troy Keller serves as a Professor of Environmental Science and Chair of the Department of Earth and Space Sciences at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia. He has dedicated his career to advancing sustainability in the southeastern U.S. He teaches graduate and undergraduate environmental science-focused courses. Dr. Keller's research includes bioremediation using algae to treat municipal wastewater, ecological restoration of streams,

and conservation and ecology of crayfish and other aquatic macroinvertebrates. He serves as a founding member of CSU's Sustainability Committee and the faculty advisor for CSU's Students for a Sustainable World. He has served one two-year term on the Executive Committee for the Middle Chattahoochee Group of the Georgia Sierra Club. He is a founding member and organizer of Clean Energy Columbus.



STACY RICHARDSON

My volunteer work over the last ten years has primarily been focused on human services. I was a Meals on Wheels coordinator and volunteer. I was on the executive board of Greater Augusta Presbyterian Ministries (GAP) and was a volunteer in GAP's food pantry and a shuttle driver for GAP's licenses and ID program. I also was a mentor for Augusta Locally Grown, and following the 2020 election, I did work for Fair Fight, documenting voter experiences in Georgia. Since moving to Pine Mountain in 2022, I have decided to focus on environmental work. To that end, I am excited about the opportunity to get more involved with the Sierra Club. In addition to volunteer work, I enjoy hiking, native plant gardening, running, reading, and photography.



SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP

CATHY BLACK

Hello Everyone! I'm your Co-Chair Cathy Black and I'm running for reelection to the Savannah River Group Executive Committee (ExCom) for the 2023-2024 term. I am a retired Forester with the Georgia Forestry Commission and consider myself to be a conservationist my entire life. I have been a Sierra Club member since 2001 when I took a Sierra Club hike into the Grand Canyon. I enjoyed it so much I became an outings leader and progressed to the

Savannah River Group Outings Chair. I have served on the Excom for 12 years. This year I was honored to be elected Co-Chair of the EXCOM. This group has made a lasting impact on my life and I wish to continue to give back by serving on the EXCOM for 2 more years. Together we can make a difference.



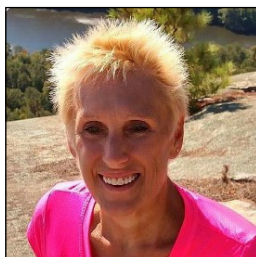
LAURI BOOHER

I have been actively involved in the local Sierra Club since 1992 acting as the main social coordinator for events. My experience has been in support of my husband, Sam Booher, who has served in many capacities at the local and chapter levels.



ANN BROWN

Avid cyclist, enjoys hiking, nature walks, kayaking. Member of Sierra Club since 2016, currently Savannah River Group's Treasurer.



BRIDGET BROWN

As the daughter of an environmentalist and a botanist, I grew up with a respect and reverence for the natural world. During my career as a nurse, I became increasingly aware of not only the therapeutic benefits of time spent in nature, but also the impact of our environment on human health. Concern over the effects of climate change on global wellness prompted me to return to school



for a master's degree in public health. I've been a member of the Sierra Club for more than 20 years and have recently served as an outings leader with the Sierra Club Military Outdoors program. I hope to serve the mission of the Savannah River Group as an EXCOM member!

MOIRA NONNWEILDER

I have worked on environmental solutions through community activism for more than 30 years, working for equitable and sustainable solutions to climate change. I served as an executive board member of two community organizations. In 1990, I served as the College Campus Coordinator for 11 campuses in California, rallying students and professors for Earth Day. More recently, I have been active with the Sierra Club, SustainableCSRA.org, and IFFA (Interfaith Fellowship of Augusta). My professional career includes working with NSF and NIH budgets for college research grants, working in biotechnology as a project administrator, executive assistant to VPs, and lab procurement and assistant for 18 years. I have a B.S. in Business and Management, M.S. in Education, a Teaching Credential in Special Education, and certifications in Hazardous Materials Management and Web Development. In 1990, I, along with a small group, founded the Green Party of California.



CHAPTER & GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

BALLOT & INSTRUCTIONS

Follow the steps outlined here to cast your vote in our annual elections for Georgia Chapter and Local Group Executive Committees positions. Georgia Chapter members may vote in these elections by filling out the ballot below and mailing it to the Chapter office **OR** using our online ballot system, **but not both**.

Members are encouraged to cast their ballots online at sierraclub.org/georgia/2023ExComElection. The online system is easy to use and does not require a stamp or envelope.

All members of the Georgia Chapter are eligible to vote for Chapter Executive Committee candidates. Members may also vote in **ONE** local group election.

Your ballot must be cast online or received at the Chapter office by **5 p.m. on Nov. 14, 2022**.

Mail ballot instructions:

- Vote for up to the number of candidates indicated below. If too many boxes are checked in either column, **the ballot will be declared invalid**.
- If there is only one name on your mailing label, please **vote in column A only**.
- If there are two names on the mailing label on the back of this magazine, you have a joint membership and get two votes. **One member should vote in column A, and the other should vote in column B**.
- After voting, mail this entire page to the Chapter office. **The page must contain your mailing label on the back**, which is used to verify your membership. After your ballot is verified, your label will be removed to ensure anonymity during counting.
- Mail your ballot to:
Sierra Club Georgia Chapter Elections
PO Box 1281
Decatur, GA 30031

| GEORGIA CHAPTER | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Vote for up to FOUR candidates 4 | | A | B |
| | Alicia Aponte | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Haseena Charania | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Amanda Howard | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Shireen Khan | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Charlotte King | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Craig Meyer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Ali Mithavayani | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Stephanie Teta | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Ayla (Ramie) Vagal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| CENTENNIAL GROUP | | | |
| Vote for up to THREE candidates 3 | | A | B |
| | Lee Graham | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Hayden Klepner | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Tania Robinson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Lynn Walston | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| GREATER GWINNETT GROUP | | | |
| Vote for up to THREE candidates 3 | | A | B |
| | Michael Hallen | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Scott Presson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Curt Thompson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| MIDDLE CHATTAHOOCHEE GROUP | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Vote for up to THREE candidates 3 | | A | B |
| | Ashley Desensi | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Troy Keller | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Stacy Richardson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| METRO ATLANTA GROUP | | | |
| Vote for up to TWO candidates 2 | | A | B |
| | Max Brown | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Nina Dutton | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP | | | |
| Vote for up to FOUR candidates 4 | | A | B |
| | Cathy Black | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Lauri Booher | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Ann Brown | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Bridget Brown | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Moirra Nonnweilder | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

QUESTIONS? Contact us at georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org or call 404-607-1262.

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Decatur, GA 30031

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