



SIERRA CLUB

Howard County Group Annual Report 2023

ExCom Meetings - The Howard County Sierra Club ended the year with 8 seats of 9 filled. After the election in December, we gained one more member of the ExCom to start 2024 with a full board. We held 11 meetings.

All Member Meetings – All of our ExCom meetings are open to the membership, but our holiday meeting on December 7th was specifically scheduled as an All Member meeting with three speakers talking about Energy, Natural Places, and Advocacy.



Outreach Events: - Throughout the year, we tabled in many venues. Our new Zero Waste Team had a new display to engage the public on waste reduction.

- GreenFest -April 23rd Howard Community College (HCC)
- VeganFest – September – Clarksville
- Fall for All – October – HCC
- Youth Climate Event – December – Howard County Conservancy



Youth Climate Event



Fall for All Event

Outings: Pat Soffen, the Chapter Outings Leader, held 5 Outings in Howard County.



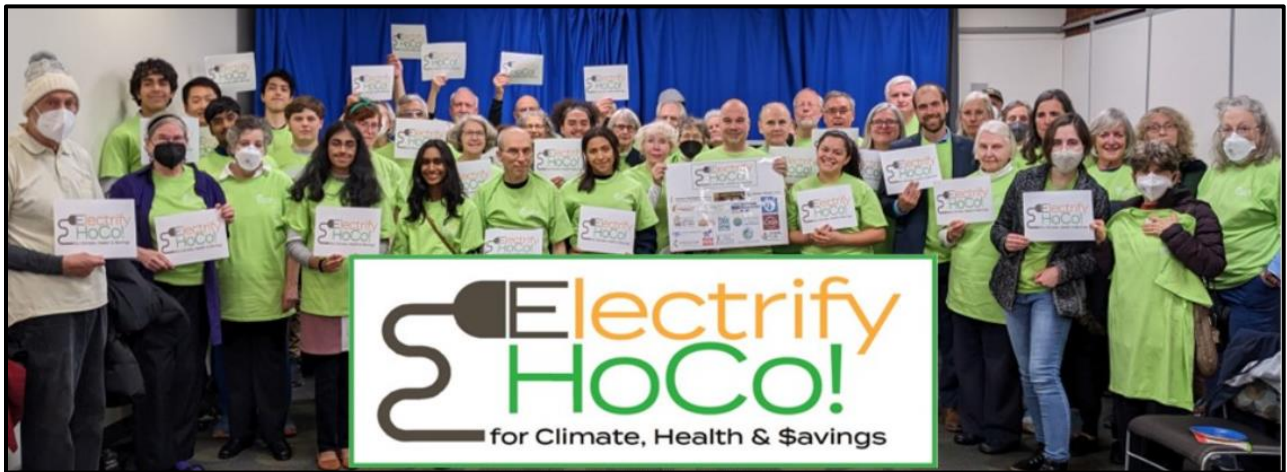
Pat Soffen leads the group on the Cascade Falls Trail in Patapsco State Park (left). White-Tailed Deer in Rockburn Park (right).

Zero Waste Committee: In January we held a kickoff meeting to launch a Howard County Zero Waste Committee. The committee meets monthly and discusses outreach, plastic reduction, synthetic turf, the plastic bag fee and many other topics relevant to the county. A flyer with information about the plastic reduction act has been created and translated into Spanish and Mandarin. The team is currently working on distribution of the flyer through the library system. During the Fall, the team conducted a shopper survey to look at what types of bags shoppers are using at the stores.



Advocacy:

- Continued to advocate for Electrify HoCo, a campaign to support buildings electrification on the county level, in partnership with HoCo Climate Action.
- The Zero Waste Team attended planning meetings where installation of new synthetic turf fields were proposed. The team talked to residents and members of the Recreation and Parks administration about the environmental and health dangers of the use of synthetic turf.
- Working on the complex issue of stream restoration projects at Lake Elkhorn and the Plumtree Branch of the Patuxent River, including meeting with Council member Liz Walsh.
- Lobby Night in Annapolis for state legislation was held virtually this year. Many of our members attended and discussed the Sierra Club priority bills with their representatives.



Supported County Bills in 2023:

1. CB4 – Transportation Legislation – to assess a small fee on each trip generated by a for-hire Transport Network Service to be used to boost public transportation projects. Passed with amendments – our position was support
2. CB5 – Electrify HoCo – requiring the Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits to report to the County Council with recommendations about changes to the building code that would be needed to require all-electric buildings. Passed with amendments – our position was support
3. CB30 - Forest Conservation Update – amending the purpose of the forest conservation act, altering the definition of a forest, increasing reforestation calculations and amending qualification for the use of forest mitigation banks. Did not pass – our position was support
4. CB40 – Stream Restoration – removing the exemption for stream restoration projects in the Forest Conservation Act. Tabled and expired – our position was support