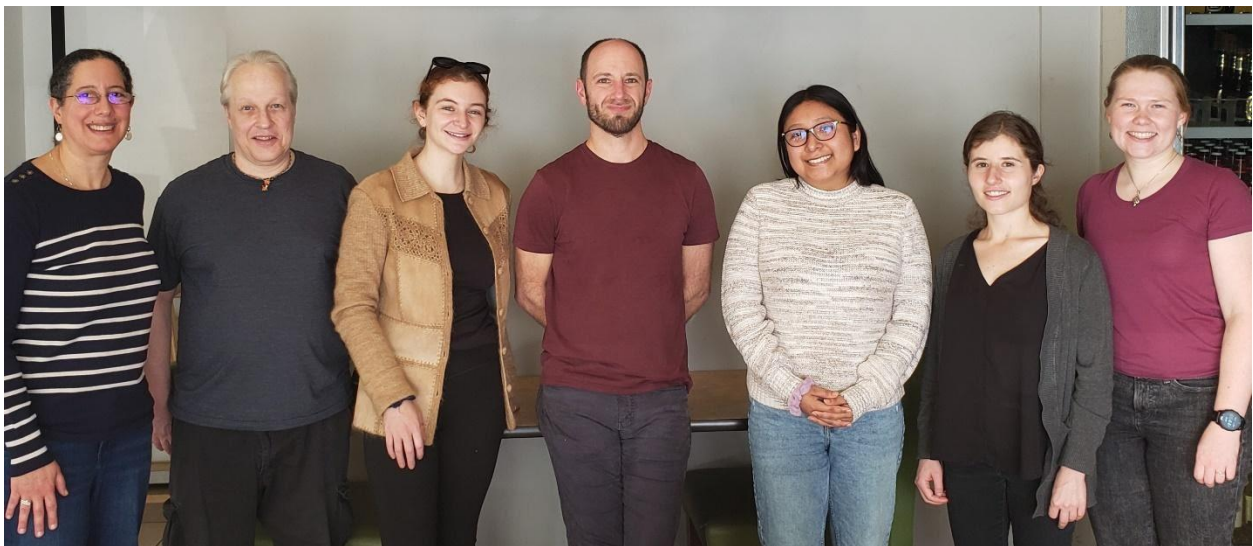


Maryland Sierra Club Milestones of 2023

January 25, 2024

2023 was a year of transformation and inspiration for the state of Maryland and for the Maryland Sierra Club. We won many environmental victories and advanced an array of campaigns this year, which we are excited to share, but we are particularly proud of how we've grown our team, honed our skills, strengthened our partnerships, and shifted into new relationships with the new administration. With a new pro-environment governor in Annapolis and momentum from federal and state climate legislation, we hit the ground running in January and haven't slowed down since.

We are thrilled to share our 2023 highlights newsletter, we hope it inspires you too. **Growing Our Team.** We were able to grow our Chapter staff team by three this year! Climate Campaign Representative [Mariah Shriner](#), Communications Associate [Lesley Paredes Hernandez](#), and Organizer Danielle Levi have all thrown themselves into their roles from day 1 with outstanding results. So many successes could not have happened without them. We cannot wait to see what more we can achieve in 2024 with our expanded staff team and amazing volunteers around the state!



Staff photo, left to right: Paula Posas, Gary Young, Danielle Levi, Josh Tulkin, Lesley Paredes Hernandez, Lindsey Mendelson, and Mariah Shriner

Passing and Advancing Impactful State Legislation. 2023 Lobby Night was a great success. Over 220 Sierra Club members and supporters met with more than 130 legislative offices. Thank you for helping make that happen! The results speak for themselves. During the 2023 Legislative Session, we had some big wins including:

- Helping make the [Community Solar Program](#) permanent and more accessible for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households.
- Passing a bill requiring Maryland to adopt the [Advanced Clean Trucks Rule](#)
- Passing the [Maryland the Beautiful Act](#), which sets goals of protecting 30 percent of Maryland's lands from development by 2030 and 40 percent by 2040.

- Launching a multi-year campaign to pass [beverage container deposit legislation](#) that would sharply reduce litter and plastic pollution, and capture 90% of beverage containers for recycling.
- Legislation to save homeowners money on utility bills and help folks transition off gas appliances (by updating EmPOWER) passed out of the house but stalled in the senate. We'll be [back again in 2024](#).
- [The POWER Act](#), which will facilitate bringing 8,500 megawatts of clean offshore wind energy onto the grid in Maryland.
- [The Energy Storage Act](#), which establishes an energy storage program in the state, supporting the transition to renewable electricity sources.
- Bills that will facilitate [mail-in voting](#) and strengthen the [environmental monitoring capacity](#) of the Office of Attorney General.

But our involvement didn't stop there. Led by Legislative Chair Randy Lyon, the legislative committee submitted [written testimony on over 150 bills](#) and more than a dozen volunteers provided oral testimony and consultation on many of these. These included bills to protect voter participation in elections and a variety of cross-cutting bills to protect public health and the environment.

Read more about our wins in Annapolis [here](#).



October 1st, 2023: Campaign for Climate Action Event with speakers Secretary of the Environment Serena McIlwain, Maryland Energy Administration Director Paul Pinsky, and Delegate Marc Korman, Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee (Photo credit: Maryland Sierra Club)

Reducing Single-Use Plastic and Encouraging Re-Use. This year local Sierra Club activists and their allies have passed ordinances across the state to prohibit retailers and restaurants from providing single-use plastic carryout bags and incentivize

customers to bring their own bag when they shop. Since September 2022 [Anne Arundel County](#), [Baltimore County](#), [Prince George's County](#), and seven municipalities (Centreville, College Park, Easton, Frederick, Greenbelt, Laurel, and Salisbury) have passed local “bring your own bag” ordinances. As of January 2024, half of Maryland's population lives in communities that have banned plastic carryout bags! Even after passage of the ordinances, local activists have been distributing reusable bags to low-income residents (see photo). Local successes are building blocks for statewide action and would not have been possible without the incredible leadership of Zero Waste volunteers (such as these featured in the [Howard Group Annual Report](#)) in the local Sierra Club Groups and their allies, supported and coordinated by Chapter Zero Waste Chair Martha Ainsworth. Onward to 2024 and a statewide bottle bill!



December 12th, 2023: Bernie Robinson, Zero Waste Lead for the Anne Arundel Sierra Club Group, holding flyer provides reusable shopping bags (Photo credit: JoAnne Zoller)

Clean Transportation For All. This year we have been continuing to push the state to properly fund and expand public transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure. We succeeded in encouraging the [state to shift some federal funds](#) from highway expansion to transit and set a goal to reduce vehicle traffic (measured as vehicle miles traveled) by investing in more clean transportation options. In addition to the adoption of the Advanced Clean Trucks rule, we also advocated for a complementary regulation known as [Advanced Clean Cars II](#) standard that was adopted earlier this year. This rule will accelerate the sale of electric passenger vehicles cutting carbon pollution from passenger cars 63% by 2035. In June, we released a report about the impacts of deadly [pollution from vehicles](#) in the state.

Taking Legal Action to Protect Marylanders and the Environment. This year we continued one of our flagship efforts, a legal challenge to the I-495 and I-270 toll lane widening plan. In a development no one saw coming, in March 2023, the private

partner [withdrew](#) from the toll lanes project, dealing a major blow to the state’s plan. Lawsuits were cited among the reasons for the withdrawal. In June, Maryland Sierra Club along with Friends of Moses Hall, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) asked a federal court to [put the brakes on](#) Maryland’s plan to build new toll lanes along the Capital Beltway and I-270. We filed another brief in September, and we expect a decision from the court in 2024. This has been one of our most supported and broad-based campaigns, and we thank abundantly all organizations and individuals who have generously supported this effort, including [advocacy](#) and at recent open houses for the project.



December 2nd, 2023: A broad coalition of groups and individuals holding signs to urge the Maryland Department of Transportation to cancel the I-495 and I-270 widening project at an open house (Photo credit: Maryland Sierra Club)

We have also been involved in several other legal efforts this year including in relation to [Washington Gas](#) and [data centers](#). With the assistance of the law firm [Jill Grant & Associates, LLC](#), we provided [comments](#) on the Maglev water quality certification application and supplemental materials and recently learned of the [planned denial](#) of the certification!

Advocating Collectively with Climate Partners. One of the shining achievements of the year was our work with Climate Partners, a group of which Maryland Sierra Club is a founding member and steering committee member. The coalition – made up of over 100 organizations – came together to help pass and then push forward implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. In 2023, Sierra Club helped the coalition fundraise over \$400,000 to support individual partners’ climate work, including new positions dedicated to climate. We had robust staff and volunteer participation in biweekly meetings, numerous meetings with cabinet secretaries and other state leaders, and in producing and presenting two impactful reports that provided input and guidance for the state’s [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) for reducing carbon dioxide

emissions by 60% by 2031. Read our reports: [Climate Partners' Preliminary Priorities](#) and [Climate Partners' Recommendations for Achieving Maryland's Climate Goals](#). Our achievements in the climate realm build on the fundraising and momentum of the special three-year campaign for climate action we [launched](#) in 2022.



June 1st, 2023: Sierra Club hosted a children's activity table to decorate a flowerpot and plant seeds at the Long Branch Power in the Park event (Photo credit: Maryland Sierra Club)

Supporting Community Events. We continued expanding our support of community events, from [Power in the Park](#) to the inspiring [December 5 action](#) for health, housing, and green jobs, alongside coalition partners. On December 5th, twenty-seven Sierra Club members from three counties showed up to support the event, including five Chapter staff. See the photos [here](#). This built on efforts earlier in the year with other partners that culminated in a [report](#) tackling electrifying homes in Maryland, especially for low-income households.



December 5th, 2023: Action event for health, housing, and green jobs (Photo credit: David F. Choy)

We also continued the [Growing for Change Small Grant Program](#) and gave out 15 grants totaling \$10,000 including for community gardens to address food insecurity, access to fresh fruit and green space, a greening initiative and native plant education at a Title 1 elementary school, reusable shopping bags, educational materials about reducing plastic usage, a community cleanup, and support for an in-person [community forum](#) about environmental justice and local stormwater management.

Outings to Explore and Enjoy the Outdoors. In 2023 there were a total of 39 outings conducted with 271 participants for the Chapter, getting people outdoors and enjoying nature around the state. Outings included several trainings for new outings leaders as well as trail hikes, park exploration, gardening, tree planting, the City Nature Challenge, spring flowers, and winter walks.



May 28th, 2023: Outing to Jug Bay Natural Area in Prince George's County (Photo Credit: Outings Leader Janet Gingold)

Continuing to Help Maryland Move Beyond Coal. Communities in Maryland will be able to breathe easier before the end of the decade with AES Corporation's announcement of its intent to retire the Warrior Run coal plant in June 2024. With this, Maryland joins 14 other states that either no longer have operating coal plants or where all remaining coal plants in operation have committed to retirement. That is a very big deal! [Read more about it here.](#)

Seizing New Leadership Opportunities. Staff and volunteers also took on new roles in the past year including on the Chesapeake Conservation Corps and Critical Areas Commission and transition teams for governor, attorney general, and comptroller. State Director Josh Tulkin was appointed by Governor Moore to the [Transportation Commission on Revenue and Infrastructure Needs](#); former Chapter Chair Rosa Hance served on Attorney General Anthony Brown's transition team and was given the

honor of being appointed to the Chesapeake Conservation Corps and Critical Areas Commission. Deputy Director Paula Posas served on Governor Moore's transition team on the [Climate and Environment Executive Policy Committee](#). Chapter Treasurer Julia Nichols was invited to serve on Comptroller Brooke Lierman's transition team and continues to serve as an advisor. Shruti Bhatnagar was voted onto the National Sierra Club Board and became the Chapter Conservation Chair, and Jane Lyons-Raeder succeeded the long-serving Brian Ditzler as Transportation Chair. We are grateful to all serving and leading statewide!

Inspiring Others and Making A Difference. In 2023 the Prince George's Group celebrated a good outcome for a large tract of forest that the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital wanted to sell for development. An [article in the PGSC](#) online issues forum, a [Washington Post op-ed](#), and an AddUp campaign that generated over a thousand letters seemed to have little effect on the Girl Scout corporate decision makers. However, when a very committed Virginia Girl Scout found these items online, she activated her troop and other Virginia scouts to create their own campaign to protect the forest. With such vigorous advocacy from within their own organization, the Girl Scouts eventually came to an [agreement](#) with M-NCPPC through which 537 acres will become part of Charles Branch Stream Valley Park instead of being sold to developers! Kudos to our young friends across the Potomac, to Prince George's Group Chair Janet Gingold, Natural Places Chair Lily Fountain, the Prince George's County Sierra Club ([see their year in review here](#)), and to everyone who signed the petitions and sent letters to the Girl Scouts! Read more in this [Bay Journal](#) article about how Janet's words inspired young Girl Scouts to raise their voices and help keep this land forested.

We invite you to join us as we carry forward this important work and more in 2024.

Sierra Club's power, our ability to make change, comes from all of you. We are strong and effective because of our amazing volunteer leaders and our staff, and because we help everyone learn the tools to make change. If you are inspired, please [volunteer](#) and join us. Be the change.

If you are proud of our collective work and you have capacity, please make a generous gift. Make a [tax deductible donation](#) to support our education and outreach, or a non [tax deductible donation](#) which we can use for all purposes, including legislative and political work.

We invite you to join us as we carry forward this important work and more in 2024. Forward and share this email with your friends and family to help increase our impact by growing the number of Sierrans in Maryland.

Your support of the Maryland Sierra Club makes a very big impact. Thank you so much for all you do.

Josh Tulkin, State Director
Paula Posas, Deputy Director
Carlo Sanchez, Acting Chapter Chair