

Tennessee Sierran

SIERRA CLUB
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

Photo by Ron Shrieves.

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

Volume 57, Number 5—September / October 2024

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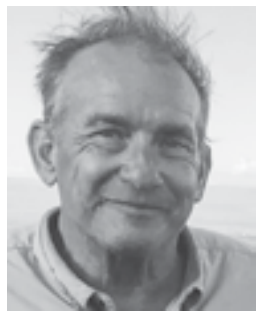
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Explore, Enjoy, and Protect

From Tennessee Chair Cris Corley

Early Morning Thoughts: A Breath of Fresh Air, Please!



Opening my eyes this morning at dawn and realizing I had slept the entire night without distress was indeed a welcomed relief. The last five days have been a little unpleasant, to say the least. We often forget the true pleasure of normal, rhythmic, full and complete respiration. The dreaded N1/N2 SARS-CoV-2 variant successfully invaded my upper respiratory system last Wednesday.

The last two weeks seemed to roar past, in similar fashion to the blurred image of the roadrunner leaving the coyote in his dust. My brother Mike had called late Saturday afternoon inquiring if I was up to flying "right seat" to Northern Michigan and the fresh air and cool waters of the Great Lakes. With our outdoor temps hovering at nearly

100 degrees, and the relative humidity nearing 80 percent, the answer was a quick yes. Already sweaty before the next morning's early departure. I couldn't recall a late spring and early summer with so many repeated days of near record-breaking temperatures.

After a climb to a welcomed smooth cruising altitude of 9,000 feet, I opened the fresh air vent overhead and enjoyed deep inhalations of 60-degree fresh air. In my opinion, not even a glass of champagne compares to the sensory exhilaration of taking in regular deep breaths of clean, fresh air. My favorite air vintage is 60 degrees with 20 percent humidity at 9,000 feet above sea level.

Our air standards are still suboptimal, even years after the New Year's Eve gift President Richard Nixon gave us when he signed the Clean Air Act on December 31st, 1970. Tennessee air is much improved since I was a kid. I remember rolling up the window in our Chevrolet station wagon (with no air conditioning) to avoid smoke from the coal-fired smelters while traveling through the boom steel town of Rockwood. When we made our annual camping trip to the Smokies during the heat of summer, we could see the black haze miles away. Chattanooga was even worse on our trips to Rock City.

As we landed in Traverse City, Michigan, two retired Russian Mig fighters zoomed less than 200 feet overhead with afterburners engaged, entrancing these two middle-aged pilots in our putt-putt Cessna 210. A cool northern breeze off Lake Michigan soon dispersed the burnt jet smell. Feeling like a kid on vacation in a new area of the country, I headed north to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Seashore while brother headed east on his bicycle which he had packed in the back of the 210.

The next few days we enjoyed steady, cool, clean winds out of the northeast at the helm of a 90-foot, three-masted schooner as we ran from a 27-knot gale enjoying the clean waters and white sands of the lands of the Chippewa. Knowing the Sierra Club was instrumental in passage of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act was especially satisfying.

My last day was spent on historic Mackinac Island, where the horse and wagon is king. The 2,800 acres of beautiful forest and several hundred century-old homes and businesses are a must-see. Automobiles were outlawed in 1902, making the state highway circling the island the only road in the U.S. to never have an auto accident. Horsedrawn taxis and FedEx delivery wagons are a mainstay. I had one last day to enjoy the fresh air (with just the faintest hint of horse manure).

After an early morning departure back to the Upper Cumberland, we experienced a few speed bumps, but I also noticed I wasn't enjoying the vented, fresh air. A headache ensued and, before landing, extreme nasal congestion. We rolled up to the hangar and were reminded that 100-degree days were hanging on for a while in Tennessee. Barely making it home to the couch, I lay down for a 12-hour nap. Still feeling less than optimal the following day, I made it through an all-day Zoom meeting with the Council of Club Leaders and the National Board. It also happened to be my birthday and I received the worst gift ever: a positive Covid test.

I spent the next several days longing for just a few good, deep breaths of the clean, atmospheric gasses that I enjoyed during the trip with my brother. Protecting the air we breathe is vital to our health. Remember the best birthday gift we can give to our friends and family is a donation to the Sierra Club.

Contact Cris at chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org.

I'm So Psyched About Our Sierra Club Defenders!

by Susan Johnston, Defenders Chair

It can be hard these days not to be downhearted about what we humans are doing to our beautiful world. As far as I'm concerned, the antidote for that is to get to work. Our Sierra Club Defender donations go toward the cost of supporting Scott Banbury, who does way more crucial work than you or I can accomplish alone.

Scott, our full-time lobbyist to the Tennessee State Legislature, is right there on hand when the legislators gather, doing a lot of talking and perhaps a little arm-twisting to accomplish vital goals for the environment. He knows exactly what the legislature is working on, because he tracks the bills daily. Through his lobbying, we have fought the Byhalia pipeline, halted the dumping of construction waste in our wetlands, worked to stop expansion of landfills in Rutherford and Davidson Counties, and raised concerns over multiple other critical causes. And we champion bills such as the Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act (TWRRA), Sierra Club's own proposal. Scott helped to get a scenic river designation for parts of the Duck River.

Whether you are a regular Defenders donor or just hearing about us for the first time, you can join the effort to support Scott's work here: <https://sc.org/TNDefenders> or mail your contribution to: TN Chapter Sierra Club, P.O. Box 113, Powell TN 37849 Attn: Defenders

Contact Susan at susan.johnston2011@gmail.com

The Tennes-Sierran

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Submissions

October issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by Sept 20

November Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by Oct 25

November/December Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by Sept 30

Chapter News Team

Communications Director: Gary Bowers sierra@totheforest.net

Tennes-Sierran Editor: Emily Ellis tnsierran.editor@gmail.com

E-Newsletter Editor: Allie Stafford enews.sierratn@gmail.com

Poetry Editor: Alan May <https://alan-may.com/>

TENNESSEE CHAPTER

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee>

Officers

Chair: Cris Corley
chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org

Vice Chair: Charlie High 615-500-5499
cahigh1722@aol.com

Secretary: open

Treasurer: Craig Brandt 865-924-0597
brandtcctn@gmail.com

Conservation
Co-Chairs: Bill Moll 404-401-7899
whmoll@aol.com

JoAnn McIntosh, 931-338-2530
mcijoann@gmail.com

Outings Chair: Ron Shrieves 865-924-8973
ronshrieves@gmail.com

Political Chair: Joanne Logan 865-310-1171
loganjojolo@gmail.com

Chapter Director

Pat Cupples pat.cupples@sierraclub.org

Conservation Director

Scott Banbury 901-619-8567 scott.banbury@sierraclub.org

Beyond Coal Campaign Staff

Bonnie Swinford, Senior Organizing Representative

bonnie.swinford@sierraclub.org

Amy Kelly, Field Organizing Strategist, Tenn. Valley Region

amy.kelly@sierraclub.org

Emily Sherwood, Campaign Organizer

emily.sherwood@sierraclub.org

GROUPS

Cherokee Group—Chattanooga
<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/cherokee>

Chair: David Hoot 423-503-9482

sierra.tn.cherokee@gmail.com

Harvey Broome Group—Knoxville

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/harvey-broome>

Chair: Jerry Thornton 865-719-9742

gatwildcat@aol.com

Chickasaw Group—Memphis

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/chickasaw>

Chair: Rita Harris 901-497-5798

rita2600@gmail.com

Middle Tennessee Group—Nashville

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/middle-tennessee>

Acting Chair: Tim Weeks 615-293-8178

timweekstn@gmail.com

GEOGRAPHIC CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

Clarksville-Montgomery County Geographic Conservation

Committee

Chair: JoAnn McIntosh 931-338-2530 mcijoann@gmail.com

Care NET Geographic Conservation Committee (Claiborne,

Grainger, Hancock, and Hawkins Counties)

Chair: Bill Kornrich 423-300-8764 bkornrich@gmail.com

Holston Valley Geographic Conservation Committee

Chair: Dan Firth 423-390-0882 dan.firth.sierraclub@gmail.com

Watauga Geographic Conservation Committee (Johnson &

Carter Counties)

Chair: Gloria Griffith 423-727-4798 gla4797@embarqmail.com

xAI Data Center in Memphis?

by Dennis Lynch, Chickasaw Group

MIT Technology Review says, “AI is sexy, cool, entrenching inequality, upending the job market, and wrecking education... AI is humanlike, and alien; it is super-smart and dumb as dirt...”

xAI, created by Elon Musk in 2023, says on its website it is “working on building artificial intelligence to accelerate human scientific discovery. We are guided by our mission to advance our collective understanding of the universe.” The company has attracted investors, rapidly building its valuation to \$24 billion.

xAI needed a data center with cheap electricity, cooling water, and methane gas. After an impressive presentation by the Memphis Chamber and Memphis Light, Gas and Water (MLGW), xAI chose to come to Memphis. But the City Council and the public didn’t know about it until a June 5 press conference. The Chamber’s economic development team demonstrated remarkable coordination, swiftly providing solutions and rallying partners faster than any other community,” said Chamber President and CEO Ted Townsend.

Do the Details Match the Hype?

xAI promised to benefit the local economy with lots of good paying jobs and a foundation to attract other high tech industries. But many critical details needed to be addressed: important community procedures were short cut, creating risks for the city; we need to protect our aquifer; we don’t want more gas-burning plants or pollution; community issues need to be addressed; we don’t want Memphis to be seduced by promises which don’t come true.

No contracts had been signed as of June 5, but some verbal commitments had been made. City Council members were aghast when they found out about such a big project being approved without City Council involvement. MLGW has planned meetings with Council and with the public. xAI has already signed a lease and moved into the abandoned Electrolux building; they have installed racks of computers, leased an aeroturbine and begun system testing. We are not sure whether or not they have the required Health Department permits.

Regarding electricity, immediate needs are satisfied with eight megawatts, but MLGW will need to install a 50-megawatt substation soon. Longer term, xAI will need 150 megawatts, which will require approval from TVA’s board. Concerned residents are urging MLGW to avoid the air pollution and climate issues associated with

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Tennessee Moving Forward with IRA Rebate Programs

by Tim Weeks, Co-Chair, Chapter Energy Committee

The Biden Administration has made climate change a priority through the Inflation Reduction Act, providing wide-ranging grants, tax credits, and rebates designed to reduce carbon emissions. Tennessee is moving forward with several programs to manage federal incentives for better energy choices in 2025, with programs designed mainly to help low-income households embrace energy efficiency and electrification.

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), through its Office of Energy Programs (OEP), expects to apply for: (1) the Home Efficiency Rebate Program (any household is eligible with rebate amounts based on energy saved and income); and (2) the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate Program, targeted to low- and moderate-income households. Appliance purchases must be part of new construction, replacement of a non-electric appliance, or the first of that type of appliance in the household. Rebate amounts are set by the Inflation Reduction Act. The programs are anticipated to impact one to two percent of Tennessee households.

TDEC OEP proposes to contract with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) which will leverage its existing energy efficiency programs and its Quality Contractor Network (QCN), licensed and insured contractors trained to meet TVA’s quality guidelines. TVA will cover its own program implementation costs, which will result in approximately \$8 million additional dollars that can be applied to Tennessee households.

TDEC OEP held a virtual meeting in May to solicit public input. Critics pointed out that: (1) even though TVA has been running a similar home energy program called “Energy Right,” it may not be best suited to manage these programs; (2) TVA’s QCN is not very robust, especially in the areas of lower-income households the programs are targeting; and (3) who would be responsible to train contractors, especially since they will be handling all the rebate paperwork and the money.

TDEC OEP is finalizing the program applications. Once approved, TDEC OEP will share additional information through an email list. Learn more and sign up at: www.tn.gov/homeenergyrebates.

Tennessee consumers cannot apply directly for the rebates. Contact Tim at timweekstn@gmail.com

TVA Previews Its Draft IRP

by Todd Waterman, Harvey Broome Group

TVA presented updates on its delayed and not yet finalized draft Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to its advisory Regional Energy Resource Council (RERC) in Knoxville on July 16, with slides, discussion, questions, and public comments. About a dozen Sierra Club members and supporters, and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), gave comments on TVA’s IRP. The IRP is TVA’s projection until 2050 of its customers’ energy needs and its plan for how it will generate electricity in the future. TVA received an F in the 2023 edition of Sierra Club’s *The Dirty Truth About Utility Climate Pledges* for failing to transition to clean energy. Instead, TVA is planning the largest methane gas buildout of this decade, which will increase the cost burden to customers and negatively impact local communities. And, far beyond the Valley and 2050, irrevocably and incalculably, everywhere and for all time, TVA’s carbon emissions will harm billions of humans yet unborn, and every species and fragile ecosystem on which their lives will depend.

The twenty RERC members TVA picked to reflect the diverse interests of the Valley’s people include Chapter Environmental Justice Chair Marquita Bradshaw, KUB Sustainability and Government Relations VP Erin Gill, and Citizens Climate Education’s Jan Berry, who said, “I believe that TVA is working to be responsive to public comments as they develop their IRP. According to TVA’s presentation, they will compare ‘baseline-utility planning with five alternative strategies that promote certain resource types to evaluate tradeoffs across least-cost planning principles — low cost, risk informed, environmentally responsible, reliable and resilient, diverse and flexible.’ These strategies form a good basis for planning; however, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently finalized a rule limiting greenhouse gas emissions for existing coal and new gas-fired power plants. This rule is not reflected in all of these strategies. This rule requires that Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) be installed on some fossil fuel generation. The Inflation Reduction Act’s CCS tax credit allowed the EPA to make the case that it’s a cost-effective solution for power plants to install CCS. However, installing CCS would likely still drive up cost and make fossil fuel generation less likely to meet least-cost planning principals. As information is presented to the public, TVA should make it clear when the EPA rule is followed and when it is not followed.”

Jan further commented, “On July 23rd, Tennessee’s and 24 other Republican states’ attorneys general asked the Supreme Court to halt the Biden climate rule for power plants.”

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Update: PFAS Testing in Tennessee

by Dan Firth, Chair, Solid Waste and Mining Committee

Recent sampling and analysis of soils and groundwater for toxic per and poly fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), commonly known as “forever chemicals,” shows clear evidence that applying toxic wastewater treatment sludge containing PFAS to land contaminates both the land and the underlying groundwater:

<https://bit.ly/2024-SC-NETN-PFAS-Soils-Report>

In this study, we sampled both a farm field where sludge was historically applied and an adjacent water well.

The field, which had sludge applied for years as a soil amendment, had a concentration of 14,100 ppt total PFAS, approximately 1000 times higher than the adjacent well where total PFAS was measured to be 20.2 ppt. The PFOA concentration in the well water was 7 ppt which is greater than the new EPA drinking water standard of 4 ppt. That same standard provides a maximum contaminant goal level of 0 ppt — essentially saying that no level of PFOA is safe. The high levels of toxic PFAS in the soil serve as a large reservoir of PFAS that can continue to leach into the ground and surface water.

These numbers do not tell the whole story, though, because standard test methods measure the levels of only 40-50 individual PFAS compounds out of approximately 15,000 known. To get an idea of all PFAS, we had the samples analyzed for total organic fluorine (TOF). Since all PFAS, and some other compounds referred to as organic fluorine are manmade, measuring the TOF gives an indication of the amount of these pollutants in the samples. In the cases of the historical field and the well sample, we found 32,000 ppb and 2.040 ppb TOF, respectively. When compared to the amount of total organic fluorine expected, organic fluorine in the soil was 3305 times higher and the well water sample was 156 times higher. This extra organic fluorine supports

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Nashville's Highland Rim Forest

Saving the trees through a mycorrhizal-like network of people

by Karen McIntyre, Middle Tennessee Group

How do you get a former mayor, residents of the upscale West Meade neighborhood, blue-collar Whites Creek, the NAACP, and Vanderbilt professors working together to save a forest? The Nashville Highland Rim Forest Alliance, a group of dedicated naturalists, first met around a kitchen table in Kathleen Williams' home in Nashville a little over a year ago. Williams, retired CEO of TennGreen Land Conservancy, identified Nashville's former mayor Karl Dean as the person who might best represent the effort and help leverage his connections and knowledge of government to save the forest that skirts Nashville and is under pressure from developers.

The Alliance plotted to preserve this unique, old-growth gem that protects the head waters of Nashville's streams, purifying its air, cooling its heat, sequestering its carbon, and adding beauty to the city. The individuals in this group were diverse: a conservation biologist who, as a young boy, hiked the hills of West Meade and wrote a book; a Vanderbilt professor emeritus who grew up in the mountains of Bavaria; a twice-elected mayor of Nashville who fought for environmental responsibility; and, of course, the retired CEO of TennGreen.

The Boy: Noah Charney, an Assistant Professor at the University of Maine and recently published author of *These Trees Tell a Story*, spent his childhood exploring the forested hills of West Meade. Noah was one of the first to articulate the need for an arc of forest for animal migration around Nashville. He and his mother wrote *Noah and the Arc*, a book introducing children to their natural surroundings in West Meade and inviting them to help preserve nature.

The Professor: For Dr. Hans-Willi Honegger, the forest around his Nashville home reminded him of his childhood in Germany where he learned to love nature early. He remembers wearing himself out trying to keep up on one of his father's forest hikes. When young Willi sat down and refused to go further, his father would scoop him up into his rucksack and carry him home!



Four year old Hans-Willi Honegger and father hiking in Bavaria. Photo courtesy of Honegger.

Honegger's tenacity and commitment saved Nashville's Belle Forest Cave, located in the forest that abuts the West Meade Waterfall. He laughed as he recalled the story of its acquisition. The owner, who lived in Alabama, won the property in a card game. Honegger bargained with the owner who finally agreed to sell for \$25,000. Honegger raised the funds and offered it to TennGreen, saving it from developers. He continues to care for the land, organizing the removal of invasives and restoring native species.

The Public Servant: Like the others, former Mayor Karl Dean identified the roots of his love of nature as a child wandering the hills and lakes



Fourth grade students experience nature in Nashville's Highland Rim Forest at Percy Warner Park. Photo by Karen McIntyre.

of his native Massachusetts. He was further inspired by a junior high school teacher who belonged to a committed recycling and environmental organization. Those early experiences of stewardship and service shaped Karl. "By the time I was elected mayor of Nashville in 2007, environmental issues were on a collision course with developers and many other urban issues." Dean initiated a Green Ribbon Commission to strategize dealing with these issues and laid the groundwork for "Nashville Next," a document that now guides policy in the city. "Protecting this land is something we can do as a city. We need a public/private partnership to move forward to achieve this laudable goal," Dean said.

The CEO: Kathleen Williams founded TennGreen in 1999 to protect the wild areas of Tennessee and connect them. In retirement, her skills were needed right here in Nashville, and she used her connections to pull together committed people to help.

In each case, it is clear that experiencing nature in childhood was the unifying factor. Kathleen, for example, lovingly remembers her mother's awe at the natural world, and her gospel-singing father's 'holy-rolling' connection to God in the grand cathedral of the forests of East Tennessee. "Growing up in that paradise where I swam in the rivers and had the freedom to wander where there were no trails, I found a deep spiritual connection to nature. I experience this connection anew each time I walk in the woods."

Supporting this important preservation has been the Swan Conservation Trust, whose mission is to "preserve, protect and restore native hardwood forests and scenic natural areas, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and water quality on the Western Highland Rim of Tennessee."

In the next installment, we will learn about the plan this dedicated band of nature lovers created to give Nashville one of the largest urban forests in the country.

Contact Karen at kjmcinty@comcast.net

State Director Pat Cupples Has Clear Vision for Tennessee

by Aaron Butler, Guest Writer

The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, now boasting over 44,000 supporters and members, continues to grow as more Tennesseans recognize the importance of dedicated stewardship of our state's pristine resources, forests, and water. In line with its commitment to improving that stewardship, the Sierra Club added a new fulltime Chapter Director position, who came on board in June.

Having worked in the music industry as both an artist and producer for much of his life, Cupples had the opportunity to visit Nashville previously and found the area to be beautiful and the people to be hospitable. In addition to his tenure in the music industry, he has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, an experience he describes as pivotal due to its focus on action rather than mere talk. Pat earned a Bachelor's degree in history from the University of Michigan and, most relevant to his latest career move, founded the Mastic Beach Conservancy in New York, an organization dedicated to environmental awareness and engagement for the South Shore of Long Island. "They treated our water horribly," Cupples recounts as he thinks back to what he saw that inspired his transition into a career centered upon environmental stewardship and motivated him to launch the Conservancy.

Cupples described his core responsibilities as Director of the Chapter as 1) being the backstop for all communication for the Tennessee Chapter, whether it be with individuals, organizations interested in collaborating, companies, as well as politicians and government officials;

2) effective project management for local, state and, at times, national initiatives and volunteer efforts; and 3) fundraising, marketing and elevating awareness of both our victories as well as future initiatives.

Cupples plans to focus on having in each of Tennessee's 95 counties a stakeholder who is a driver and partner of the Chapter's annual Conservation Education Day. "We have thousands of members in the state. How do we engage them?" He described the benefits of creating and facilitating outing programs for rural, suburban and inner-city youth. For Cupples the key to longterm change is helping our youth understand the need for change and showing them how to take action to make that change a reality.

Also critical for Cupples is seeing bill HR550, known as the Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act, become a reality. "This law would require sellers, distributors, and importers of certain packaging materials to reduce the amount of packaging material that ends up in landfills," he said.

But Cupples can't do it alone. "Get in touch with your legislators," he urges. "Make them aware of your concerns and don't assume they are already aware. Use your talents. Go to your local city council meetings, zoning meetings and TVA meetings, etc. Listen, learn and speak up and report back to us about what you're hearing and what's happening in your community."

Contact Pat at pat.cupples@sierraclub.org

Contact Aaron at Aaron.butler@adeconna.com

Dr. David Padgett Receives Prestigious Dr Robert Bullard Environmental Justice Award

by Rita Harris, Board of Directors, National Sierra Club, and Chickasaw Group member



Dr. David Padgett, Associate Professor of Geography at Nashville's Tennessee State University (TSU), is the recipient of the prestigious 2024 Robert Bullard Environmental Justice Award. The Award, established in 2014 by the Sierra Club, honors individuals and groups that have done outstanding work in the area of environmental justice, at the local or national level. Dr. Bullard is known nationally and internationally as a distinguished professor, author, and advocate for social and environmental justice.

I have known and worked with Padgett for many years. He is an ideal choice for the Robert Bullard Environmental Justice Award. He is an individual who has consistently done outstanding work in the field of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping to offer technical support to environmental justice communities and agencies working to lessen environmental hazards, unwanted land uses, toxic air and water pollution problems, etc., that plague low wealth and people-of-color communities.

Director of the Geographic Information Sciences Laboratory at TSU, Padgett is often asked to speak on various topics where GIS mapping can be applied to help analyze and strategize planning and remediation of community issues. Padgett has worked collaboratively over the years with Sierra Club in Memphis and presented workshops at Memphis Environmental Conferences.

In 2019, Padgett was named an Ethical GEO Fellow by the American Geographical Society in support of his project "Democratizing Geospatial Technology: A Model for Providing Technical Assistance in Community Based Participatory Mapping to Environmental Justice Stakeholder Communities."

Padgett is a native of Baltimore, Maryland and a graduate of Western Kentucky University (BS) and the University of Florida at Gainesville (MS/PhD).

We are proud that Dr. Padgett lives and works in Tennessee, while serving people nationwide with his amazing work.

Dr. David Padgett, Associate Professor of Geography at Nashville's Tennessee State University, is the recipient of the prestigious 2024 Robert Bullard Environmental Justice Award.

Contact Rita at Rita2600@gmail.com



Children in the Nashville area take a break during a hike in Radnor Lake State Park organized by the Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors. Photo by Charlie High.

Connecting Children with Nature

Charlie High, along with other members of the Sierra Club Middle Tennessee Group's Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO), took 33 elementary school students and chaperones on a creek walk in Beaman Park on July 11. Sierra Club's ICO contributes to the creation of outdoor equity by connecting youth who have limited access to the outdoors. The group hiked a half mile with nets to catch and release crawfish, minnows, snails and insects. After an hour of wading and searching, the group hiked back to the Nature Center for lunch outside on the raised deck, followed by a discussion of why outings are beneficial and how wildlife in streams reflects the health of the stream.

On July 17, ICO volunteers hiked with 41 elementary school students and chaperones at Radnor Lake State Park. The children did a scavenger hunt identifying wildlife features. They found deer, ducks, herons, fish, tree stumps, caterpillars, spiders and snakes. The contest energized the children to see and record what they saw. The hike continued to the valve house of the dam where the group learned about the history and operation of the lake. ICO volunteers Susan Stark, Craig Jervis, David High, Jay Norman, Bill Thrasher, Ralph Maxson and Cassie Moungey accompanied children on outings all summer including kayaking and paddleboarding. Volunteer leaders are trained in first aid and safety as well as outdoor leadership.

Contact Charlie at cahigh1722@aol.com



Citico Creek South Fork by Cris M (<https://bit.ly/SFCiticoCreek>).

Harvey Broome Group Swim with the Fishes

The Harvey Broome Group invites you to "Swim with the Fishes," Saturday, September 14, 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, in Citico Creek in the Cherokee National Forest. Participants will use masks and snorkels to search for fishes and invertebrates in the creek and should provide their own masks, snorkels, swimwear, sandals, sneakers, or other footwear that can get wet, a wet suit if you have one, a towel, and dry clothes to change into after swimming.

The creek originates in the Citico Creek Wilderness and flows to the Tennessee River. It is one of the cleanest streams in the Southeast and is known as the "hillbilly reef" for its rich fauna of fishes and invertebrates.

Participants must be in good physical shape and know how to swim. Children must be supervised directly by a parent or guardian. Directions and meeting time and place will be provided to those accepted for this event.

If you'd like to participate, call Jerry Thornton 865-719-9742.

Tennessee Chapter Fall Retreat at Beautiful Fall Creek Falls State Park October 18 to 20, 2024

The Harvey Broome Group cordially invites *you* to the Tennessee Chapter's Fall Retreat at beautiful Fall Creek Falls State Park! Enjoy the company of other nature lovers during the peak of autumn leaf season! Come for hikes, fire-place chats, the Saturday evening program, the silent auction, live music, and special nature activities just for kids. If the weather cooperates, we will have a bonfire where kids (of all ages) can make s'mores!

RETREAT MEALS: Full registration includes breakfast Saturday & Sunday and Saturday supper, prepared in the group lodge kitchen and served in the open dining area. Friday evening and lunches Saturday and Sunday are "on your own." — use the lodge kitchen for any preparation you need, or go to the hotel dining room or the park snack bar, which serves sandwiches and ice cream. There is ample space in the lodge refrigerators and freezers for your personal foods and drinks. When you register, please advise of any dietary restrictions (vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, etc.). Feel free to bring snacks or drinks to share on Friday evening.

OUTINGS: A Park or a Sierra Club naturalist will lead dayhikes Saturday morning and afternoon and Sunday morning after cleanup of the bunk lodge. The autumn leaves should be beautiful! Saturday morning will be an experiential hike with presentations about environmental and natural history subjects out in the woods instead of inside a meeting room. Other trails will probably include: a descent to the base of Fall Creek Falls, less than a mile, but steep, rough and rocky; the 2.6-mile Paw Paw Trail (a loop trail) and a 2-mile walk on Wheeler Farm Trail (which features a spectacular Natural Arch, a sink, and a waterfall). A daypack with water, lunch, and rain gear is recommended.

SILENT AUCTION: Please bring a good item or two you can part with. Extra outdoors equipment or clothing, nature books, or artwork are good things to auction. Proceeds go to support our Chapter Conservation Director Scott Banbury,

LOCATION: Newton Ford Bunk Lodge (formerly Group Lodge #1). Centrally located 35 miles southwest of Crossville and 44 miles southeast of Cookeville. Venue information and directions are available online. The Bunk Lodge has separate bunkhouse wings and separate toilets for males and females. If bunkhouse living is not for you, you can rent a park cabin or a room at the park hotel (Lodge Fall Creek Falls), or camp in your tent or RV in the designated campgrounds.

ABOUT THE PARK: Fall Creek Falls State Park has spectacular water features, mature forests, and many miles of trails. In 1937, when the federal government began purchasing land for a park, much of it was badly eroded. The Works Project Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began conservation programs to restore the ecosystem. After the National Park Service determined the acquired land was too small for a national park, it was transferred to the state in 1944 and became a state park. The park was recently expanded to over 30,000 acres with many waterfalls and cascades, gorges, caves, and extensive forests, with some stands of virgin timber. Fall Creek Falls has a 256-foot vertical drop. A dam on Fall Creek created a 300-acre lake good for fishing and boating. Canoes, kayaks, paddleboats, and johnboats are available for rent. Average late October weather at the park — highs in the mid-70s, lows in the low 50s. In 2022 the new Lodge Fall Creek Falls opened to replace an older lodge that was razed in 2019. The lodge restaurant serves lunch and dinner to the general public, but has breakfast for lodge guests only.



SATURDAY EVENING PROGRAM: After dinner, we will hear from our new Chapter Director, Pat Cupples, then live music by Maggie Longmire and some of her talented musical friends.

WHAT TO BRING: For the bunkhouses: linens or sleeping bag, pillow, towels, toiletries. Hiking boots, trail lunches, water bottle or beverage, daypack, rain gear, flashlight, first aid kit, a drinking cup with your name on it. Personal adult beverages are allowed within the group lodge. Bring wine or beer to share if you like.

DUTY ROSTER: We will ask all participants to sign up for a job or two when you sign-in. Jobs include cooking meals, meal cleanup, and cleaning up the facilities at the end of the retreat. "Leave no trace!"

OUTDOOR LEADER TRAINING: There will be an Outdoor Leader Training program on Saturday from Noon to 5:30 pm. If you would like to be an outings leader of hikes, backpack trips, or float trips, please sign up for training when you register or contact Chapter Outings Chair Ron Shrieves (865-924-8973

(or ronshrieves@gmail.com). This training also covers part of ICO volunteer training for children's outings.

HEALTH PROTOCOL: If you are sick the week of the retreat, do not attend. If you have any Covid symptoms, including an elevated temperature, test, and stay home if the test is positive. Covid tests will be available at the retreat also. FCF is infamous for its abundance of ticks and chiggers, so bring insect repellent and/or insect-resistant clothing.

REGISTRATION: Register online by Saturday, October 12, to receive an early-bird discount at: <https://bit.ly/SCTN-Fall2024Retreat> Or pay at the retreat by cash or check (no credit cards). Make checks to "Tennessee Chapter Sierra Club."

Note: Scholarships for young adults and first-time attendees are available. Contact HBG Chair Jerry Thornton gatwildcat@aol.com

RATES: Adult registration fee (18 years and older, non-student) covers lodging (women's dorms, men's dorms, showers & restrooms, 2 breakfasts, and Saturday dinner).

- Adult Early Bird Discount (by October 12) \$60
- Adult late registration (after October 12) \$70
- Adult first Chapter retreat attendees \$40
- High school or college students 16 or older \$30
- Adult Saturday only (registration, dinner) \$35
- Sunday only- (registration, breakfast, no lodging) \$10
- Sunday Only--(registration only, no lodging or breakfast) \$5
- Children under 16 No Charge

The retreat will begin at 4 PM (CDT) Friday, October 18, and end at 12 PM Central Daylight Time on Sunday, October 20th. All participants will be required to sign an outings liability waiver at the retreat location or online.

Come have a great time at Fall Creek Falls! Questions? Contact Jerry Thornton, Chair, HBG, at gatwildcat@aol.com or 865-719-9742.

Fall, leaves, fall

by Emily Bronte

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

Emily Bronte (1818 - 1848) was an English poet best known for her novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Report from MTG

by Antoinette Olesen, Middle Tennessee Group

The Middle Tennessee Group of the Tennessee Chapter is active with boots on the ground! Here's just some of what has been going on:

- ▷ MTG's Sustainability Chair Karen McIntyre continues to work toward adopting sustainability practices in Metro Nashville schools involving redirection of food that is currently being thrown away.
 - ▷ Twelve schools have been selected for the compost scrap collection by Metro Waste in a pilot program.
 - ▷ MTG's Nancy Stetten has prepared a curriculum about sustainability for Nashville Metro schools, emphasizing the importance of biodiversity and the benefits of trees on school campuses.
 - ▷ Sara Welz is working with campuses to install more trees, using the funds from the grant managed by Cumberland River Compact.
 - ▷ The Tennessee Environmental Council continues to plant pollinator gardens at various school campuses.
 - ▷ Dr. Robert Wingfield, Chair of MTG's Environmental Justice Committee, presented about environmental sustainability to elementary school students in the Lee Chapel AME Summer Enrichment Program, as part of his Fisk Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Program.
- Contact Antoinette at time4nashville@gmail.com

TVA's IRP Draft (continued from page 3)

Chapter Energy Co-Chair Joe Schiller believes, "The current IRP document relies on exaggerated growth projections and inadequate fuel risk assumptions. Any consideration of nuclear power is absurd given its known costs and build times. Similarly, it is a foregone conclusion that coal generation must be eliminated from further consideration due to costs, climate disruption, and other negative environmental impacts. Frame CT methane turbines would presumably be used to ramp generation when renewables and storage were insufficient but methane has a checkered reliability record in this application. TVA would be placing a risky bet with ratepayer's pocketbooks by increasing its dependency on methane fuel."

Also, Schiller adds, "As was the case in the 2019 IRP, TVA has imposed completely arbitrary limits on the annual build capacity of 1000 MW of renewables and 500 MW of storage. In my opinion, there is no objective, quantifiable justification for these arbitrary limits but they do allow TVA to continue the absurd argument that it would take them too long to add these resources to its system. For example, given the Cumberland and Kingston coal plant sites consist of over 3500 acres, TVA could potentially add hundreds of MW of new solar on these sites. This allows faster, lower-cost installation because the grid and related infrastructure are already present. This is why utilities around the country are installing solar on retiring coal plant sites."

Beyond Coal Campaign Deputy Director Dave Rogers says "TVA simply isn't building the renewables that they claim they need all of the gas to 'balance.' TVA is moving way too slowly on renewables, in particular solar. TVA lags behind essentially every other utility in the Southeast." He cites Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE)'s 2024 Solar in the Southeast report, which labeled TVA a "SunBlocker": "TVA solar plans sadly fall below its peers, but an upcoming Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) represents a key opportunity for the nation's largest public power entity to exhibit higher solar ambition."

In SACE's 2022 report, the Knoxville Utilities Board (KUB) had earned "the top SunRiser slot." Now, says Chapter Transportation Chair Kent Minault, "Community solar-powered microgrids with battery storage provide an opportunity for people to save money on their electric bills even when they can't put the solar panels on their roofs. Here in Knoxville, KUB has emerged as a leader in TVA territory with its 1 Megawatt community solar array next to our Public Works Building." Kent is a proud subscriber. And, "Further projects are under consideration."

When TVA releases their draft IRP, it will serve as a blueprint for how they plan to produce energy over the coming decades, and this will be our opportunity to give feedback to TVA about our energy future. Soon, it will be your turn to weigh in.

All statements are the opinions of the individuals and should not be interpreted to represent the Sierra Club's position on TVA's IRP.

Contact Todd at jtoddw@gmail.com

xAI in Memphis? (continued from page 3)

gas-burning aeroturbines, and accelerate installation of solar panels and utility-scale megapack batteries instead. MLGW has \$120 million budgeted for batteries and solar panels citywide. The City Council's role as a "Rate Board" should be followed if any pricing or discounts other than MLGW published rate sheets are proposed.

MLGW and TVA are urging xAI to sign a "Demand Response Agreement," which will allow TVA to reduce the amount of power provided to xAI if needed during extreme winter or summer peaks. We are also urging xAI to schedule high-energy processes to run during off-peak periods.

Regarding immediate cooling needs, apparently xAI is already getting Memphis aquifer water from MLGW. This approach is not satisfactory to meet the long-term need of 1.3 million gallons per day. Plans are being engineered to reprocess wastewater from the nearby Maxson plant. Concerns include the size, timeline, ownership, management, and whether Maxson could also provide cooling water to TVA's gas-burning Allen Fossil Plant. Note that water supply is a growing national risk factor — data center demands are growing by up to 10 percent a year.

xAI has promised many high-tech jobs, but only eight of the 28 jobs advertised on xAI's website will be Memphis technicians for hardware installation and management. The highest paid jobs are in Palo Alto, San Francisco, and London. It is not known whether xAI will follow Memphis's M/WBE (minority and women owned business) hiring policies.

So, bottom line, the xAI data center should provide some economic benefits, but not without significant concerns. Moreover, demands for energy and water are growing nationwide. Memphis should review the story in Loudon County, Virginia, where new data centers will push infrastructure needs and customer electricity bills will likely increase 30 percent by 2030.

Contact Dennis at dmlynch1@gmail.com

PFAS Testing (continued from page 3)

the existence of a very large reservoir of unknown PFAS available to leach into ground and surface waters.

At this point, toxic PFAS are largely unregulated nationally and in Tennessee. No laws exist preventing the contamination that places our lands and waters and those that depend on them for their livelihoods, such as farmers, at risk. This is exactly what has happened in other states such as Michigan, Maine and Texas. Now, partly because of this work, Tennesseans are learning of the hazards posed by the land application of PFAS contaminated wastewater treatment sludge. The first step must be to end the land application of these sludges. Additionally, we need to end the use of non-essential PFAS and hold manufacturers accountable for the costs of cleanup and remediation.

To see the PFAS journey: <https://bit.ly/PFAS-journey>

You can help. All of our PFAS testing, to date, has been enabled by generous funding and expertise from the Grassroots Network Toxic Issue Team/PFAS Subteam. This work is expensive, especially when testing solid samples such as soils, sludges and composts. The Northeast Tennessee testing cost several thousands of dollars. To expand testing beyond Northeast Tennessee, we need funding beyond what the Grassroots PFAS Subteam can provide. If you would like to help end the scourge of PFAS contamination in Tennessee, please sponsor one or more samples or even a just a portion (Water sample - \$100, Total Organic Fluorine water sample - \$140, Soil Sample - \$550, or Soil Total Organic Fluorine Sample - \$220) Donate here: sc.org/TNPFAS
Contact Dan at dan.firth.sierraclub@gmail.com

JOIN THE RALLY FOR THE VALLEY

SEPT 21, 1 PM CENTRAL
CENTENNIAL PARK – NASHVILLE, TN

We deserve a future that is free from fossil fuels. Join us to demand TVA stop the gas buildout!

bit.ly/rallyforvalley



Be a champion for the environment. Join today for \$15.

From TVA's planned methane gas plants to species extinction to climate change to coal ash to drilling for dirty tar sands, the threats to our environment have never been greater. Your support is absolutely essential to preserving our most precious natural resources - join the nation's largest and most effective grassroots movement today.

We'll thank you with this free insulated trail cooler tote (limited time!) and these exciting Members-only benefits:

- One-year subscription to Sierra magazine
- Worldwide Members-only outdoor trips
- Automatic membership in your local Chapter and Group
- Discounts on Sierra Club calendars, books, and other merchandise.



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Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

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HALLELUJAH! A REVIVAL!

THE MIDDLE TENNESSEE GROUP is reviving **Sierra & Suds**

Join fellow Middle Tennessee Group folks for Sierra & Suds, a fun social that languished during Covid. A monthly meet-and-greet for people who want to learn more about local Sierra issues and activities, share ideas, and just enjoy a cold beverage with like-minded conservationists. Every pint raises \$1 for MTG. Sierra & Suds is happening **from 6 to 8 pm the first Wednesday of each month at Fat Bottom Brewery, 800 44th Avenue North, Nashville.**

Questions? Call or email Rebecca Newton rebeccanewton8@icloud.com 615-579-1327

See You There!

JOIN US for Sierra & Suds Fat Bottom Brewery Every 1st Wednesday, 6-8pm
 A monthly Idea Exchange meet-and-greet for people who want to save the planet (or make a difference in their neck of the woods). Every pint raised raises \$1 for the Middle Tennessee Group, which is Sierra Club's boots on the ground on critical local environmental issues.

Hold the Dates: Chapter Winter Retreat

January 17-19, 2025, the Middle Tennessee Group will host the Chapter's annual Winter Retreat at Cedars of Lebanon State Park, featuring hikes, interactive activities, a guest speaker and great cabin-cooked food. This is a family event with crafts and activities for all ages. Please plan to attend and stay tuned for more details.

Our ability to participate in government, to elect our leaders and to improve our lives is contingent upon our ability to access the ballot. We know in our heart of hearts that voting is a sacred right — the fount from which all other rights flow.

--Stacey Abrams, Georgia State Representative