Sierra Club ExCom Elections: Candidate Statements

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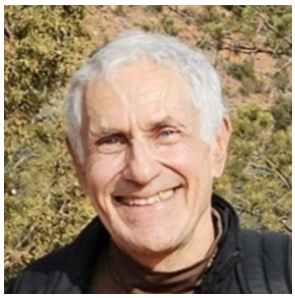
Candidates were asked to address three questions: 1) What would you like to accomplish as an Executive Committee member? 2) What skills, experience and/or new ideas will you bring to the Executive Committee? 3) How will your role on the Executive Committee reflect diversity? (Diversity can include ethnicity, age, regions within Maryland, affiliations with under-represented groups, etc.) All candidates were given the opportunity to contribute a photo.

Maryland Chapter (4 candidates)

Vote for Up to 3

Randy Lyon



I am seeking a second term on the ExCom to help lead our Chapter and environmental progress in Maryland. Over the past decade, I have served as the Chapter Vice Chair, Legislative Chair, and Treasurer, and on the Montgomery Group ExCom and National Political Team. I first became a Sierra Club member as a graduate student. Since that time, I have participated in our wide range of outings, lobbying, policy development, political, and organizational activities.

My professional background (federal, academic, and non-profit) is in the areas of environmental economics and financial management. If elected to the ExCom, I would like to continue that focus on improving environmental policy and our Chapter's organizational strength.

As Vice Chair and Legislative Chair, I have worked closely with our Issue Teams and staff to develop and advocate our policy positions. I care deeply about the change we are driving on biodiversity and natural places, clean energy, clean transportation, zero waste, and environmental justice. I would like to help achieve and build upon the goals our Chapter has recently articulated in these areas.

Building our membership strength – our numbers, breadth of representation, capabilities, and depth of engagement – is central to our organizational success. I would like to work with the ExCom on building our engagement and leadership pipeline, including by strengthening our opportunities for students and young adults. We have tremendous opportunities for participation, and I would like to help us realize this potential.

Namrata Patodia Rastogi



As a Maryland Chapter ExCom member, I would bring a two-pronged approach focused on advocacy and meaningful community engagement and action, with particular emphasis on youth. I would like to build on Sierra Club's environmental advocacy, including its work on data centers and their impacts on Maryland communities. I would also like to create more opportunities for young people to engage not only by learning about environmental issues, but through advocacy, civic engagement, outdoor activities, and hands-on action.

I bring more than 15 years of experience working on climate change, clean energy, and environmental policy across government, international organizations, and civil society, as well as local volunteer experience. These experiences have reinforced my appreciation for the importance of community-led environmental action.

A key contribution I would bring is strengthening youth engagement and Sierra Club's youth leadership efforts. I would explore opportunities to engage young people in understanding, respecting, and protecting the environment where they live, including potentially expanding efforts into middle schools. Several local elementary and middle schools already have "green teams," and my children have written letters advocating for environmental protection such as for the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Engaging young people early can empower them to take action and carry environmental stewardship forward.

As a minority, I would bring my lived perspective alongside professional, geographic, and community experiences gained through working across countries and sectors. My work on gender, climate, and environmental justice has reinforced the importance of ensuring that underrepresented voices are heard in environmental leadership.

Guy Djoken



Given the environmental challenges we are facing locally and globally, it is imperative that each of us contribute what we can for a chance to avoid the impending doom we're facing without a significant course correction on the way we treat nature. Believing in the slogan "Think Globally but Act locally", I would like to join the Maryland Chapter ExCom to use the activism skills I have accumulated over the last two decades. I would like to assist the organization in the best ways to engage in local and state politics in an effort to elect environmental champions and pass legislation to meet the demands of the climate emergency! As a Cameroonian American, who was President of the Frederick County NAACP for 11 years, Vice President of the Maryland State NAACP, member of the Maryland Governor Commission of African affairs and Board member of the Maryland State Chapter of the ACLU, I bring to the team the prospect of diversity that can be helpful.

Louise Taylor



Q.1. Promote Sierra Club goals including traditional core mission of protecting natural places and re-connecting separated habitats; Further our Generational Equity policy of ensuring that natural places are available to all and transmitted to future generations intact. Recruit new members and build leadership drawing on volunteer motivation; Promote County legislation to get developer money out of politics; Ensure that organizational actions protect biodiversity and natural places; Further develop action strategy to support community conservation initiatives; Strengthen Maryland legislation to protect natural land and streams; Promote composting.

Q.2. Experience: 30+ years Sierra Club activism: Maryland Chapter Executive Committee At-large member for the past two years with progress on previous goals; former Anne Arundel Group Executive Committee member; active member of current Biodiversity and Natural Places Issue Team; Coordinator (sub-team lead) of Land Protection Support Team; re-activated NJ

Hudson-Meadowlands Group and served as Chair and other roles; Canvassed for SC in NY Tri-state (PIRG canvas); recruited approx. 1000 members (often top Canvasser); Hudson River: worked to promote completion of urban shoreline walkway (NJ).

Knowledge of Sierra Club norms, history.

Employment history: College professor (gender, organizational psychology), employment discrimination investigator, paralegal-legal researcher, canvasser. Served as a municipal councilwoman for the Borough of Edgewater, NJ.

Skills: legal analysis; knowledge of organizational dynamics, increasing knowledge of land use law/zoning.

Ideas: See Q.1.

Q.3. Ally; Life member NAACP; Promoted coalition between NOW and NAACP (PA); Helped start “Eliminating Racism in NOW” Task Force (PA).

Anne Arundel Group (5 candidates)

Vote for Up to 5

Effie Gentry

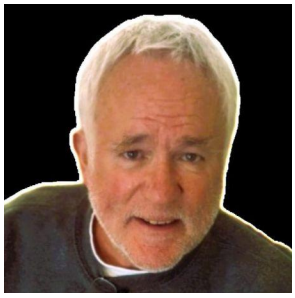


I would like to hold our county to a higher level of environmental stewardship that isn't limited in scope to the water, but also the shrinking, fragmented habitats and light pollution.

I hold an Associate's of Business degree and an Associate's of Landscape Architecture degree, a Level one Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certificate, and I am an Anne Arundel County Watershed Steward. I am working on a Bachelor's degree of Landscape Architecture at University of Maryland. I believe in active participation in environmental stewardship and love encouraging others to engage with our natural world. I strive to cultivate a network of individuals and organizations who steward our ecosystem.

I am still involved with the capitalized science club of Anne Arundel Community College, of which I was an officer for three years and have contacts with the advisors to bring Sierra Club topics to a young and environmentally friendly group of people.

A. Bernard "Bernie" Robinson



I plan to continue building the grassroots power of the Sierra Club by networking with people and engaging them in our mission. Together we can address climate change for a clean and healthy environment through lobbying for environmental legislation, endorsing and supporting candidates for county and state offices, and raising public awareness of the environmental challenges we face.

I have served on the Anne Arundel Group ExCom since 2019, advocating for the Forest Conservation Bill in our county and personally spearheaded the development and passage of the county's Reusable Bag Bill. I have led this group as Chair since 2023, building a strong ExCom of volunteer leaders who work as a team. I also build close relationships with key government officials at the county, city, and state levels and leverage those relationships to further attain Sierra Club priorities.

Specific future goals include the Maryland Bottle Bill, to reduce litter and increase recycling of beverage containers; "Skip the Stuff" legislation, which would require carryout customers to ask for plasticware and straws rather than receiving them automatically with their order; and legislation to replace unhealthy plastic athletic fields with natural turf fields.

As a retired community banker for over 40 years, I worked with diverse clients from all walks of life in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County. In the process of getting to know my clients and their needs, I gained deep insights into their lives and learned how to work together with them to achieve shared goals.

JoAnne Zoller

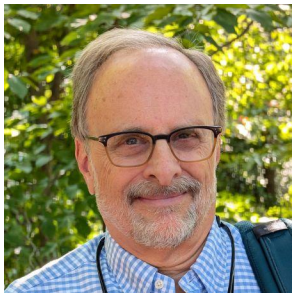


As a member of the Anne Arundel Group Executive Committee, I would like to support all the environmental legislative policies of the Chapter. We need to address climate change on many fronts, including renewable energy, public transportation, land conservation and environmental waste control in order to have a future with clean air, green land, and blue waters. I would like to build our grassroots power so that we can accomplish our goals.

I am a retired English Language Development teacher. I have three master's degrees: a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary, an MA in TESOL from the University of Illinois, and a Master's in Teaching Spanish from Notre Dame University. I earned a Doctorate of Education from West Virginia University. I taught English as a Second Language for 35 years to students from kindergarten age through college, including two years teaching English in Spain. As a result, I can communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds as well as diverse experiences. I am a good listener and have the ability to synthesize ideas in a discussion.

I would appreciate the opportunity to continue serving on the Anne Arundel Executive Committee. I have served as secretary of the Anne Arundel Group ExCom since January 2020, currently take the minutes for the Maryland Chapter Zero Waste Leadership meetings, as well as the Maryland Chapter meetings. I work with those teams to advocate for a healthy natural environment through public outreach and lobbying for environmental legislation. Vote for me!

Martin Schroeder



I want to see our local Anne Arundel Group become more visible as a positive force to protect our environment, especially for the preservation of forests including those in urban town centers, and as a stronger voice promoting public transportation. To do this, we need to provide a more welcoming environment for our members to get involved in outings, social events and campaigns. I would like to explore development of public educational seminars on the threats we face, and possible solutions offered by Sierra Club and by other regions and states. I want to preserve urban forests by influencing the development of town-center master plans and I want to see growth of integrated public transportation systems through stakeholder win-win strategies.

I bring extensive leadership experience as current chairman for the AAG and Chapter transportation Committees, and the Chapter Nominating Committee. I am spearheading a campaign to educate the public on the value of urban forests, while bringing together experiences from other states, and Sierra Club experts in a seminar framework. I am also vice-chair of the Odenton Town Center Advisory Council, providing leadership on transportation and urban forests as part of Master Plan development, and a seasoned professional engineer in public transportation.

Throughout my career I have led, and continue to lead, diverse teams of varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds, while valuing everyone's contributions, and promoting a team where all

have a voice. I am committed to promoting environmental justice and connecting all communities to our natural world.

Christina (Nina) Fleureton



I'm eager to serve on the Anne Arundel Group Executive Committee to help strengthen our chapter's impact on the issues I care most about, like Maryland's Bottle Bill, while supporting our broader work, including renewable energy and legislative advocacy across the state.

I bring an unusual combination of skills to this role. I'm currently pursuing a master's degree in natural resources with coursework in urban ecology and conservation governance, alongside years of professional experience in mortgage underwriting and management. My financial and operational background equips me with risk assessment, clear stakeholder communication, and comprehensive organizational skills that I can apply across all areas of committee business. My graduate research has examined recycling policy, including a case study on aseptic carton recycling, directly relevant to our Zero Waste priorities. I've also been active in citizen science through the Monarch Joint Venture, continually completing IMMP surveys at Kinder Farm's Pollinator Garden and Apiary, giving me hands-on practical skills alongside the associated clerical work.

As a mature graduate student, I bring a non-traditional path to this role. Having had a full career in mortgage underwriting and management before returning to school gives me a cross-generational perspective. As a career-switcher, I bring an outside-industry viewpoint that can widen how we approach funding and partnerships. I recognize my own background doesn't span every dimension of diversity in our chapter's values, and I'm committed to actively recruiting and amplifying voices from underrepresented communities and regions across Maryland as we carry this work forward.

Catoctin Group (3 candidates)

Vote for Up to 3

Vanessa Gress



As a member of the Catoctin Group executive committee, I would like to continue serving the and help get the word out on issues or goals of the group/chapter. I am good at taking notes during meetings, I am organized, and I communicate well with people. These skills help with volunteering and getting the word out to people. I am more progressive than some of the people in Frederick County and I would like to get more involved with local progressive groups like the Democratic Socialists of America. I am hoping in the future to help elect more progressive politicians who will work towards environmental goals for the state and county.

Ron Kaltenbaugh



As a member of the ExCom, I would like to see the Catoctin Group reach more people and engage them in learning about the issues impacting the climate crisis. We need to convey that addressing climate is not an economic sacrifice, it is a path to better health and financial savings. Climate change impacts intersect with almost every issue facing us today including health, inequity, energy, waste, and our economy. In all these areas, there are positive changes we need to fight for as well as negative impacts we need to fight against. Without plans for solutions and better options, we cannot be effective in the fights that are before us.

My IT background plus training with the Climate Reality Project give me real world experience related to addressing climate change. Since 2017, I have given hundreds of presentations on climate change, electric vehicles, and related topics. Other related technical experience includes work on the YouTube channel for the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter and as the Energy, Buildings, and Transportation subgroup chair for Frederick's Climate Emergency Mobilization Workgroup.

Diversity is one of the strengths of America. As a middle-aged white guy, I don't bring obvious added diversity to the Catoctin Group ExCom. However, I grew up in a low-income household and I understand how one's circumstances have impacts. It is of utmost importance that environmental justice be part of Sierra Club goals and actions.

Patty O'Malley



When I moved to Frederick County, I looked for active organizations that work to protect nature and the overall environment. The Sierra Club-Catoctin Group has provided an avenue for me to be involved and to learn about the County. Since joining the Group five years ago, I have been appointed the Treasurer for the Group, taken part in the

interviewing of Frederick County candidates for State and local offices for endorsement purposes, assisted in the effort to find speakers for the monthly meetings and helped ensure there is proper staffing at the Group's booths at events.

My relevant experience mirrors the activities of the Group and includes: Board service, most notably Nature Forward and the Greater Washington Society of CPAs, membership retention and recruitment, recruitment of speakers for meetings, and founding the Task Force that developed www.nonprofitaccountingbasics.org. I am also a CPA (inactive) and a Master Naturalist.

As a Board member, I hope to broaden my role by helping with the effort to revitalize and grow the membership of the Group by adapting to changing methods of communication and identifying ways and opportunities such as conservation efforts to become relevant to diverse segments of the population with the help of feedback from those we wish to engage. I believe that raising the Group's profile will also be important.

Greater Baltimore Group (5 candidates)

Vote for Up to 5

Deborah 'Spice' Kleinmann



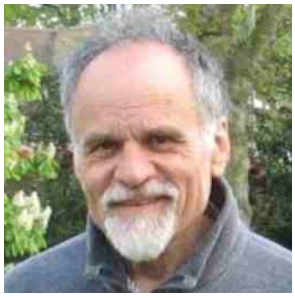
I am currently the chair of the Greater Baltimore Group of the Sierra Club. I bring diversity to the group because I am a Jewish Lesbian grandmother. My role as an Arts Integration Educator gives me the opportunity to teach many children about the Earth they live on through music, drama and movement. I would love to continue for another term because I believe we are at the tipping point of the climate catastrophe and want to help turn the clock back as long as possible, with all the strength that I have. My leadership roles on the Executive Committee include: facilitating the monthly meetings, helping interview candidates for endorsements, testifying on environmental bills, tabling at events handing out vital literature, working with the Zero Waste team, fighting data centers in Baltimore County, working against environmental racism in Baltimore city as well as speaking and singing at rallies. I love planting native plants in my yard and sharing my abundance with others. My whole life has focused on activism in many areas, and I believe that at this time in human history there is nothing more important than working on helping all living things, including us survive. For these reasons and many more, I would like to continue as the chair of the Greater Baltimore Group of this Sierra Club.

Rob Frier



If re-elected to serve as a member of the Executive Committee of the Greater Baltimore Group (GBG), I would like to promote the Chapter and group goals in as many areas as possible. I am particularly interested in building electrification and renewable energy. I am actively involved in promoting legislation for the electrification of new construction in Baltimore and Maryland. I serve as the GBG Energy Chair and I participate in the Maryland Chapter team meetings on Clean Renewable Energy. I am involved in local politics and have many contacts with elected officials. This can help to gain access to discuss issues that are important to the Sierra Club. I am also on the board of some other local and national organizations that are involved in activities that promote Sierra Club goals. Personally, I enjoy the outdoors with my favorite activities such as: running, cycling, skiing and hiking.

Richard (Rich) Reis



As a Greater Baltimore Group (GBG) Executive Committee member and Transportation Chair, I am committed to making walking, bicycling, and transit safer, cleaner, and attractive. I advocate before the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland Transit Administration for improved transit and for the electrification of school buses, transit buses, and

other vehicles. I also put these values into practice by walking, bicycling, and using transit whenever possible.

I first joined the Sierra Club through hiking events, and I now support our transit-to-trails hikes. From 2010 to 2016, I served on the Maryland Chapter's Executive Committee, including three years as the Chapter's delegate to the national Council of Club Leaders. I introduced the successful 2016 resolution calling for stronger walking, bicycling, and transit infrastructure in the Club's 100% Clean Energy Vision Statement. In 2022, I was elected to the GBG Executive Committee.

Our advocacy encouraged Baltimore City to transition many school buses from diesel to electric, and we continue to support school and transit bus electrification across the greater Baltimore region.

If elected to continue serving, I will keep participating in GBG committee meetings and events, tabling for our group, and sharing practical opportunities for members and supporters to advocate for reducing transportation's environmental impact. I look forward to helping the Greater Baltimore Group advance its goals while attracting and engaging a broad, diverse community of members and supporters.

Rachel Combelic



I have participated in Sierra Club meetings in Baltimore for the past 5 months. When I hear the commitment and values shared in meetings, I have new hope for the environment and future generations of this planet. Being on the Greater Baltimore Group ExCom would allow me to help advance campaigns such as Skip-the-Stuff, Better Bottle Bill and recycling, composting, reusing/reducing. I see Sierra Club as a voice to create the political will to prioritize these efforts in the entire county, not just the more affluent areas.

Over the years, I have found myself involved in the peace movement, anti-fracking work (town halls, door-to-door canvassing) and good trouble relating to climate change. I got involved with a small group of women fighting the local incinerator. I ran for City Council in Rochester, NY. I spent five years protesting the war in Afghanistan in Longmont, CO. I also became a member of Third Act and participated in the Summer of Heat in New York. I have learned how to speak at city council meetings.

I raised 3 wonderful people, mostly as a single mom, and now have 7 grandkids who calmly explain the nuances of modern social media to me (and beat me regularly at board games). The skills I bring are a willingness to participate and remain vulnerable. I am not afraid to ask for directions and I believe questioning authority is healthy. I am an elderly, white female who strongly believes in diversity, equity and inclusion.

Tyrod Haynes



Photo by Tyrod Haynes

My commitment to environmental protection comes from my belief that we have a responsibility to be good stewards of the communities, land, water, and natural resources entrusted to us. I believe environmental

issues are not separate from everyday life—they affect our energy bills, flooding, tree canopy, clean air and water, development, public health, and the overall quality of our neighborhoods.

I currently serve as Chair of the Environmental and Code Enforcement Committee for the Reisterstown–Owings Mills–Glyndon (ROG) Coordinating Council. In this role, I work to bring greater attention to environmental concerns, responsible development, code enforcement, watershed protection, tree canopy, and environmental justice. I believe residents should have a meaningful voice in decisions that directly affect where they live.

My environmental priorities are advancing clean energy, protecting our watersheds and tree canopy, addressing environmental injustice, and ensuring that development is responsible and accountable to the communities it impacts.

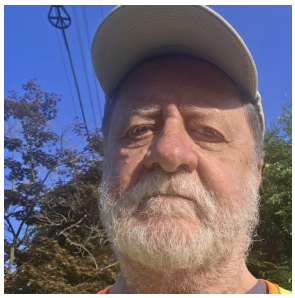
I bring a community-centered perspective shaped by my experience in union labor, civic engagement, faith-based leadership, and neighborhood advocacy. I believe effective environmental leadership requires listening to residents, building partnerships, educating our communities, and turning concerns into action.

I am seeking to serve on the Greater Baltimore Group Executive Committee because I want to help strengthen the connection between environmental advocacy and the people and communities we serve. For me, environmental protection is about stewardship, justice, and leaving a healthier Maryland for the next generation.

Howard County Group (3 candidates)

Vote for Up to 5

Bob Marietta



Q.1. If elected to serve as an Executive Committee member of the Howard County Group, I would encourage and facilitate collaboration among the club members, local government and non-government organizations (NGOs).

Q.2. In my 45 years directing safety and sustainability efforts at Howard Community College, I was able to help make Howard County and the college more sustainable. With the Columbia Association Open Space staff, we got the Weed Warrior program established. I became certified as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Advocate (LEED GA) and Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP1). Since retiring I have become a Watershed Steward and plan to become both a Master Gardener and Master Naturalist. I currently serve on the Howard County Sustainability Board and represent Oakland Mills on the CA Watershed Resident Advisory Panel (WRAP).

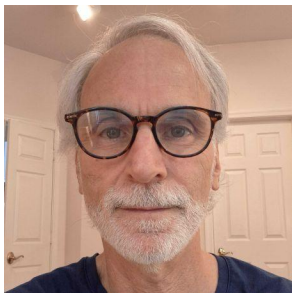
Q.3. At Howard Community College I worked on sustainability efforts with all areas of the college community and the community at large. There are still many groups of folks we are not reaching and our efforts on education and communication should increase our efforts to reach everyone where they live, work and play.

Carolyn Parsa



As a Howard County Group ExCom member I have seen how working with local leadership both in government and nonprofit organizations creates valuable partners in conservation, environmental policy and behavior changes. The Howard County Group has supported programs like curbside composting, recycling, waste reduction, clean energy usage and wildlife habitat conservation. Moving forward, there is more work to be done in forest and land conservation, increasing clean energy development and reducing pesticides and single use plastic. The Sierra Club supports these goals while bringing people together with educational programs and social activities where people can explore the outdoors. I want to continue on the Howard County Group ExCom so I can actively promote all of these programs and more. I have a bachelor's degree in Plant Science and a master's degree in Environmental Science, both from Rutgers University in NJ. In a leadership role in the Sierra Club I would promote diversity by reaching out to various types of groups that span different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. I am always working on new ideas for projects that create connections and opportunities to work towards common goals. Staying connected and promoting a positive action-oriented message has shown to be effective in Howard County and I would like to continue that momentum by increasing our collective experience, knowledge and skill sets so that we put forth a well-rounded, diverse and effective grassroots conservation effort.

Carl Latkin



A primary motivation for seeking reelection to the Howard County Sierra Club Group's Executive Committee is to contribute to the fight against climate change. To enact the sweeping changes required for a carbon-neutral society, we must leverage the Sierra Club's influence with policymakers to pass policies that expand renewable energy and restore natural environments. Currently, I serve on the Maryland Chapter's political committee and represent the Howard County Group.

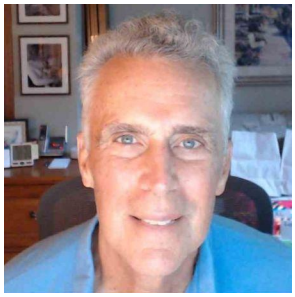
To foster a more inclusive environment within the Sierra Club, we must work to eliminate financial obstacles that inhibit participation. Collaborating with organizations with diverse memberships will enable more individuals to become acquainted with the Sierra Club and its initiatives. As a senior faculty member at a local university, one of my responsibilities includes promoting diversity and mentoring for diversity.

My academic training in public health also equipped me to advocate on behalf of the Sierra Club for a moratorium on data centers in Howard County, which the County Council successfully passed and enacted into law. I have also helped lead the Howard County Group's political committee. I have worked with the Howard County Group to survey and interview candidates for the Howard County Public School System Board of Education and County Council, resulting in several Maryland Chapter endorsements.

Lower Eastern Shore Group (5 candidates)

Vote for Up to 5

Joe Jankowski



I am the Director of the Protectors of the St. Martin River which opposes Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) and other development which would adversely impact the water quality of the river. The Protectors have established an expanding group of oyster gardeners (presently 114), which raise oysters for restoration purposes in the coastal bays of Maryland and the surrounding waters.

I am the commissioner of the Geezer Golf group which provides a weekly golf outing for 32 weeks each year plus holds a picnic and banquet each year.

I am presently the Treasurer of the Lower Eastern Shore Group.

As an ExCom member I would work to ensure that the Lower Eastern Shore Group continues to operate within its budget, and has adequate finances to support its goals and objectives. My analytical skills and experience as Treasurer since 2022 make me well suited for the position as Treasurer.

I have always explored new ideas to improve our environment. I have designed and built a passive solar house and added a solar atrium to my current home.

I worked for 27 years in an international organization with hundreds of ethnically diverse staff and hired then managed numerous staff from many ethnic groups.

Cindy Dillon



In 2019 I volunteered to serve as an ExCom member to facilitate the chartering of the Lower Eastern Shore (LES) Group. I have served as Group Treasurer for one year, Group Chair the next three years, Group Zero Waste Lead and representative to the Chapter's Zero Waste Leadership Team for six years, and representative to the Bottle Bill Coalition for the last two years. I am excited about our progress and would appreciate the opportunity to further our efforts to protect our beautiful Lower Eastern Shore environment. To do this, I will champion:

- outreach to expand our membership
- educational offerings, i.e., webinars, informational presentations, tabling events
- promotion of environmental, climate, and racial justice
- support of environmental legislation
- active outings programs

- goals of the Chapter's Zero Waste Leadership Team, especially decreasing plastic pollution by promoting Maryland's Bottle Bill.

As a nurse and psychotherapist, I sharpened my skills in communication, delegation, problem solving, and teamwork. My experience as Group Chair and as LES representative to the Chapter's Zero Waste Leadership Team, networking, lobbying legislators, and providing oral testimony to the Maryland General Assembly have further improved the skills needed in our work to save our planet.

I have lived in Montgomery, Cecil, and Worcester Counties. I have become very familiar with the challenges of promoting positive environmental measures in Worcester, which has such a diverse population.

Christina Hulslander



My favorite place to be is outside. I plan to complete the Sierra Club Outings Leader training to facilitate opportunities for our members to convene together in natural settings and enjoy, explore and protect the natural resources of the Lower Eastern Shore. I believe there is healing power in spending time in nature and "unplugged" from screens and technology. I would like to foster a community of people that feel safe, connected and healthy through ample time shared in nature.

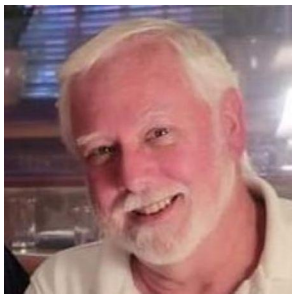
I am passionate about ecological systems and the interconnectedness of life forms of all kinds. Nature offers constant opportunities to be in awe of natural systems and encourages me to be a lifelong learner. As a former environmental educator, I have a strong desire to continue studying, observing, and teaching about the natural environment. I bring strong public speaking, curiosity and diplomacy skills. I am skilled at facilitating group discussions, synthesizing information and am comfortable in leadership roles and collaborative actions. I am a creative thinker and enjoy exploring new ideas and considering diverse viewpoints.

I desire to fortify relationships with likeminded people and other environmental organizations. I enjoy being mentored by others to discover the impact of legislation and community activism. I have served as Chair and Secretary and thoroughly have enjoyed the friendships and knowledge I have gained through involvement with the Lower Eastern Shore Group.

My hobbies include hiking, birdwatching/feeding, cooking and reading.

I am a middle-aged white female.

Patrick Foley



I've been passionate about the environment since joining my high school Ecology Club. My generation helped make recycling a priority long before it became mainstream, yet we still have much work to do. While our chapter is making progress toward Zero-Waste, I believe we should take a stronger, more visible stance in promoting offshore wind as part of our commitment to a cleaner, more sustainable future.

Before retiring, I managed hotels throughout the DC, Maryland, and Virginia region and spent 16 years on the Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association Board. I served two years as President of the Virginia Hotel & Lodging Association and four years as Government Relations Director. Despite political differences, I built strong bipartisan relationships and effectively educated legislators on how proposed legislation affected our industry. I look forward to bringing my leadership, relationship-building, and advocacy skills to our chapter.

As an openly gay man and Worcester County resident, I bring a personal commitment to inclusion and service. For 13 years, I was a licensed foster parent in Washington, DC, specializing in providing homes for gay teenage boys. I fostered 12 young men and adopted five who could not return to their birth families. This experience shaped my belief in the importance of compassion, acceptance, and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Suzanne Russell



I love being outdoors as much as possible observing our natural habitat and beautiful resources. So, I am very passionate about protecting the environment and preserving it for future generations! I enjoyed being on the Executive Committee this past year as Fundraising Chair and look forward to expanding our fundraising events if I am re-elected to the LES ExCom.

My background combines finance, leadership, and sustainability. A CPA, I began my career with Deloitte, later working in sales and instruction with Dale Carnegie, and then as Marketing Manager for an A/E firm. In that role, I served as an officer and committee chair for organizations including AWWA, CWEA, APWA, and CEAM. As Chair of AWWA's National Membership Committee, I was recognized as the top global recruiter. I later founded a solar company for residential systems, and I transformed my own home into a model of sustainability with solar PV, solar hot water, energy-efficient upgrades, composting and rain barrels.

Currently I am the Energy Manager in the Office of Energy and Sustainability for the State of Maryland, ensuring that the purchase of energy in state operations of $23 million annually meets the state's Renewable Portfolio Standards, reduces costs and advances clean energy goals.

I have always supported diversity and inclusion. My experiences include teaching free tennis lessons to underprivileged youth, ensuring minority-owned businesses were engaged in public contracts, and chairing a major fundraising event for Water for People, a nonprofit focused on building lasting solutions to end the global water crisis.

Montgomery County Group (6 candidates)

Vote for Up to 4

James Sterrett



My name is James Sterrett and I'm nominating myself for a Montgomery Group Executive Committee position. I plan on accomplishing the following as an Executive Committee member: protecting national parks, protecting endangered species, removing coal, developing solar technology, and developing more balcony solar. My skills include financial modeling, economic analysis, environmental analysis and being a strong writer. My experience includes a political position in my town, I volunteered on Kamala Harris campaign; and also, I bring new ideas due to my age (26). My role on the Executive Committee represents diversity because of my unique background and political experience.

I have written climate policy before. In addition, I just wrote a policy piece on solar panels for my website. I am a senior at UMD graduating this winter as a history major and economics minor. In addition, I worked on Kamala Harris's campaign, volunteered for Planned Parenthood, and volunteered for the Democratic National Committee. I write political policy for my website. In addition, I have been on Fox News three times.

Finally, I have political experience as a committee member on my town's Land Use Committee. I have experience at the Sierra Club on the MD Chapter Energy Committee, offshore wind farms, data centers, and participating in the SEIF campaign. I have contributed to legislation passed in Congress.

Al Carr



I've served on the Executive Committee for 4 years. I am proud of our work and wish to continue. Professionally I work on policy for renewable energy and clean transportation at the state and local government level. I formerly served as a Maryland state legislator. In that role I wrote and successfully negotiated passage of over 60 bills on environmental protection, transportation, utilities, healthcare, housing, economic fairness and open government. I served as House Chair for the Joint Committee on Federal Relations, Vice Chair of the Montgomery County delegation and chair of its committee with jurisdiction over WSSC and MNCPPC. I was also active in the Black, Latino and Transit Caucuses. The Speaker appointed me to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Climate, Environment and Energy Policy Committee.

As an electrical engineer with utility issue experience, I've testified before the PSC.

As an African American I bring a perspective not always represented in environmental circles.

As an ExCom member, I promise to continue advancing and implementing:

- Better transportation, environmental and land use policies through improvement of transit, and stronger forest conservation and street tree laws;

- Smarter infrastructure to address climate change through improved coordination of County response to stormwater infrastructure needs, electrification and energy efficiency;
- Efficient, transparent and ethical government, particularly for land use decisions
- A strong climate policy, implemented with economic fairness and equity.

I will continue to advocate for effective participation of members, improved communication and transparency of decisions within the Group.

Namrata Patodia Rastogi
(Maryland Chapter Nominee and Montgomery Group Nominee)



As a Montgomery Group ExCom member, I would bring a two-pronged approach focused on advocacy and meaningful community engagement and action, with particular emphasis on youth. I would like to build on Sierra Club's environmental advocacy, including its work on data centers and their impacts on Maryland communities. I would also like to create more opportunities for young people to engage not only by learning about environmental issues, but through advocacy, civic engagement, outdoor activities, and hands-on action.

I bring more than 15 years of experience working on climate change, clean energy, and environmental policy across government, international organizations, and civil society, as well as local volunteer experience. These experiences have reinforced my appreciation for the importance of community-led environmental action.

A key contribution I would bring is strengthening youth engagement and Sierra Club's youth leadership efforts. I would explore opportunities to engage young people in understanding, respecting, and protecting the environment where they live, including potentially expanding efforts into middle schools. Several local elementary and middle schools already have "green teams," and my children have written letters advocating for environmental protection such as for the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Engaging young people early can empower them to take action and carry environmental stewardship forward.

As a minority, I would bring my lived perspective alongside professional, geographic, and community experiences gained through working across countries and sectors. My work on gender, climate, and environmental justice has reinforced the importance of ensuring that underrepresented voices are heard in environmental leadership.

Marion Edey



I've been an environmental activist all my life. In 1970 I founded the national League of Conservation Voters, the first political action committee supporting environmental candidates. Nature and politics are my passions.

For 10 years I've volunteered for the Sierra Club at the county and/or state level. I helped start the Chapter's new Biodiversity and Natural Places Committee, which increased the priority we give to defending nature.

I'm Sierra's lead volunteer on water, working to reform storm water policies which rely too much on stream "restorations" which tear up stream valleys, while not doing enough to control pollution and runoff at the source. I've also worked and/or testified about deforestation, pesticides, plastic pollution, artificial turf, and stopping subsidies for false climate "solutions" such as burning forests or trash for electricity.

We do lots to promote wind and solar, but must do more to address skyrocketing energy demand, especially from data centers.

At the Threshold Foundation, I steer money to climate activists and groups working to protect voting rights for people of color, and keep elections fair, secure and transparent.

The Sierra Club process is complex, which can slow reaction time. We need to be nimble while remaining democratic and empowering our volunteers. Decisions should be based more on the merits of an issue rather than on political relationships. I'm happy to talk with anyone about anything.

Alex Stavitsky-Zeineddin



Serving on the Montgomery County Group ExCom for the past four years with my colleagues has been deeply fulfilling. We work well together to successfully advocate for sound environmental legislation in Montgomery County and at the state level.

I've testified, organized events, communicated with, and educated Montgomery County residents to help make our county a healthier and more environmentally sustainable place.

As a member of the Political Committee, I have also helped with the endorsement of Sierra Club Maryland's state, federal, and county legislative candidates.

From advocating for a data center moratorium and the removal of the proposed M-83 highway to helping pass the plastic bag tax, I know that my work in communications and environmental advocacy has made a difference.

My experiences as a war journalist, producer, and news editor have also taught me the urgency of protecting our environment. War zones can devastate ecosystems, and conflicts are often driven by competition for natural resources such as water, oil, and precious metals. Those experiences have reinforced my belief that protecting our environment is essential to protecting our communities and our future.

If re-elected, I will continue working to strengthen Sierra Club communications, develop more outings and events that engage, educate, and connect people with the outdoors, and expand education about native plants and stormwater management that residents can practice in their own backyards.

Thank you for your support.

Darian Unger



I'm running for reelection to the Montgomery County ExCom so that I can help continue the strong work our team has accomplished over the last three years. Our local successes stand in sharp contrast to the environmental and political disasters occurring federally. We've worked hard and played instrumental roles in:

- Eliminating millions of plastic bags in Montgomery County
- Removing the M83 highway from the County's master plans
- Passing new building efficiency regulations
- Passing a moratorium on large data centers
- Banning gas-powered leaf blowers
- Passing native plant bills
- Running natural outings, activities, and educational events
- Helping – and pressuring – lawmakers to do the right things

But there is (always) much more work to do. We need to continue supporting natural grass over artificial turf, reducing solid waste, closing the county incinerator, protecting our waterways, protecting natural places, supporting smart growth, and improving public transportation. Collaboration and teamwork are key, and I welcome the chance to work with everyone who shares our environmental concerns, hopes, and values.

Prince George's County (4 candidates)

Vote for Up to 4

Margery Jones



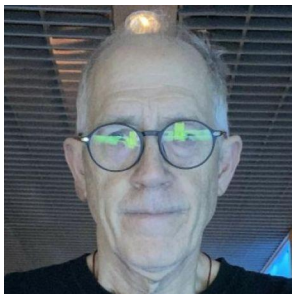
As an Executive Committee member, my top priority will be protecting Maryland's water resources and infrastructure from heavy industrial facilities like hyperscale data centers and advancing environmental justice.

The Potomac River recently hit a historic 130-year low, revealing extreme regional vulnerabilities. If our water supply is compromised, Washington D.C. has only a 24-hour backup supply, and Prince George's County has 24 to 48 hours. Since our water systems are interconnected, a regional failure would threaten public health and sanitation, cripple local healthcare, close businesses, and cause an estimated $6.5 billion in economic damage within two weeks—rising to $15 billion in one month. This is why I actively champion the $25 million WSSC, Army Corps of Engineers, and Fairfax Water "Secure the Source" study: we must rigorously evaluate baseline capacity before introducing unprecedented demands from heavy industrial facilities.

My background in strategic partnerships and executive leadership enables me to build coalitions, negotiate with leaders, and turn high-level strategy into actual results. Whether delivering public comments at committee meetings, meeting one-on-one with lawmakers, or building bridges between residents and policymakers, I focus on constructing broad coalitions around climate resilience.

As a Black female professional with lived experience across multiple regions, I bring a crucial perspective to our leadership. Diversity is not an add-on to conservation—it is fundamental to it. I am committed to ensuring underrepresented communities, who are often hit first and hardest by environmental crises, are central drivers of our advocacy strategies across all of Maryland.

Ron Verdonk



As a Prince George's Group board member, I would expect to contribute to formulating strategy and to advocating vis-à-vis local and state government officials and legislators to advance Sierra Club objectives. I also look forward to building networks in Prince George's County with a range of interlocutors to widen buy-in and traction for SC priorities.

Through my career as a foreign service officer, I developed analytical, communication and negotiation skills that would prove useful in my role as a committee member. I also serve as President of the Oxon Hill Food Pantry and am a volunteer lead with Potomac Conservancy. In terms of ideas that can help move our goals forward, I think we need to tap into as many local organizations as possible to encourage their activism with pertinent legislators and officials, thereby creating and broadening the coalition working to move the needle on the issues at hand. On a county level, this could extend to the level of neighborhood organizations where applicable.

With regard to DEI, I would like to mention that I founded the Embassy Seoul DEI Committee and led the DEI team in my last assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Delhi. As a senior, white, cis male, I am a firm proponent of DEI and the transformative impacts it can have from an organizational level to the greater society. Indeed, I think that a broad, full implementation of DEI is in our national interest.

Nicole Jackson



Photo by Nicole Jackson

Q.1. I want to help build a Maryland Chapter as diverse as the communities most affected by climate change. As the first Black Chair of the Prince George's County Group, I have grown with a majority-Person of Color Executive Committee and built a culture where frontline voices lead. I want to strengthen coordination across groups, expand advocacy on data centers, building electrification, and transportation equity, support green workforce development, and ensure our conservation work centers communities historically left out of environmental decision-making.

Q.2. I bring over 15 years of experience in coalition building, policy advocacy, and leadership development. As Chair, I have led cross-sector partnerships with municipalities, faith institutions, and community organizations. I have organized legislative summits, trained climate ambassadors across 400+ congregations, and facilitated forums that equipped residents to testify before the County Council. I also bring experience with data-driven advocacy, having led community research and surveys that informed local environmental policy. My network across Maryland—from NAACP to HBCUs to faith communities—can help the Chapter grow membership and influence.

Q.3. I am a Black woman, U.S. Army Reserve veteran, mother of young adults, and resident of Prince George's County—one of the state's most diverse jurisdictions. I bring the perspective of frontline communities, faith-based organizations, and young people. I bring regional diversity, representing Prince George's County's unique challenges and opportunities within the broader Maryland Chapter. My leadership reflects the Sierra Club's commitment to equity, and I will ensure diversity is a practice, not just a statement.

G. Geoffrey Collins



As a candidate for reelection to the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club Maryland, Prince George’s Group for 2027, I remain deeply committed to environmental conservation, environmental justice, equitable sustainability, and community service. A 36-year resident of Prince George’s County, an African American, and a baby boomer, I bring decades of experience in community organizing, political action, and environmental advocacy to our leadership team.

My dedication to protecting natural resources is demonstrated through active service and concrete results. Having served as Vice Chair in 2025, I delivered testimony representing environmental interests before the County Council and Planning Board. Currently, I serve as our Group’s Delegate to the Maryland Chapter Sierra Club Executive Committee,

co-chair the 2026-2027 Annual Chapter Goals Planning Committee, and contribute to the Conservation, Biodiversity and Natural Places, and Political Committees. Additionally, I hold official credentials as a certified National Outings Leader.

Driven by a vision of community-led environmental stewardship, I founded the Route 202 Neighborhood Coalition to protect Upper Marlboro from sprawling, unchecked development. Our Coalition is actively challenging destructive projects, including the proposed 63-acre Total Civil Construction industrial site and the 168-acre Oakwood Preserve subdivision. Across Maryland, I partner with grassroots and civic allies to champion sustainable zoning and demand stronger legislative oversight of rapid data center expansion.

If reelected for 2027, I will continue championing policy safeguards for Maryland's Prince George's resources, expanding education and outreach, and building strong environmental partnerships to ensure equitable access to environmental benefits for all local communities.

Southern Maryland Group (4 candidates)

Vote for Up to 4

Rosa Hance



Photo by Emmie Hance

Supporting the Southern Maryland Sierra Club as an Executive Committee member is a responsibility I take very seriously. This year marks 10 years of dedicated service as a volunteer leader for the local Sierra Club. I was pregnant with my daughter when I watched the 2016 election and decided to get involved in a local environmental cause that mattered to me and my family. I rejuvenated the local movement and went on to lead both the Southern Maryland Group and Maryland Chapter as its chair for multiple years each. I began efforts to offer more bilingual programming and started the first Maryland Sierra Student Coalition.

Last year I founded a sustainable consulting firm to support the advocacy efforts of additional environmental nonprofits across the region and still teach as an adjunct at St Mary's College to encourage the next generation of leaders. It is my goal to continue to bring more young people into local advocacy efforts and encourage students to pursue sustainable careers. There is still so much to do locally. Espero poder ayudar al medio ambiente y apoyar a la comunidad.

Molly Shipley

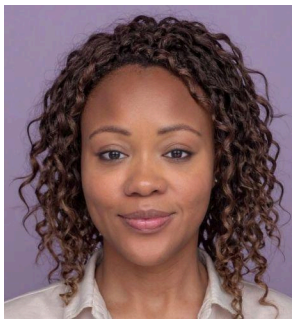


Q.1. As an Executive Committee member of the Southern MD Sierra Club, I would like to support Calvert County grassroots groups to reverse heavy industrial zoning which threatens to bring heavily polluting commercial projects to our biodiverse environment. On that same topic, I would like to support and collaborate with groups across the state to potentially instate a ban on new data center construction. I would also like to pursue action into increasing the menhaden populations for the ospreys to successfully reproduce. Additionally, I believe supporting and advocating for a MD bottle bill and incentivizing waste pickup could drastically decrease the levels of plastic waste and microplastics in our waterways.

Q.2. If I am selected to be an Executive Committee member, I will bring my volunteer and organizing experience from my time with Calvert Indivisible and Citizens for Calvert. I also bring organizational, collaborative, and detail-oriented skills from 8 years of experience of patient care and project management in my professional life.

Q.3. If selected, my role on the Executive Committee will reflect diversity through my perspective as a young professional living in Calvert County. I would offer a lens into the environmental issues trending with young adults, and I would be able to provide new and effective methods of community outreach and engagement with this demographic.

Shawna Marks



Q.1. My number one priority is to continue advocating against building data centers in our communities. My other three goals are to help plant more trees, create and expand community gardens, and organize community cleanups. I want to focus on projects that bring people together, improve our communities, and protect the environment.

Q.2. I bring experience working with different people, advocating for my community, and turning ideas into action. I'm not afraid to ask questions, speak up, or challenge decisions when needed. I also bring new ideas for getting more people involved, especially families and communities that are often left out of environmental conversations.

Q.3. I bring a different perspective as a woman, a mom, a Southern Maryland resident, and someone who is active in my community. I want to make sure communities that are often overlooked have a voice and a seat at the table when environmental decisions are being made.

Bob Boxwell



As an Executive Committee member of the Southern Maryland Group, I would like to:

- Recruit more Executive Committee (ExCom) members.
- Recruit more volunteers for projects and attendees for outings.
- Communicate with other like-minded organizations about our activities and seek areas of cooperation.
- Serve as alternate for the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust board (Sierra Club is a member group) and potentially as a Trustee if necessary.
- Cooperate with other ExCom members in achieving the goals set out by the group.
- Lead at least four outings a year.

My background includes the following:

- Over forty years of experience in conservation and environmental issues in the tri-county area.
- Past leadership skills in several local non-profits.
- Links to a variety of non-profit groups through board membership and volunteer efforts.
- Involvement in local political actions to preserve our resources and environment.

I serve people in need through my volunteer efforts at the Solomons Mission Center and providing environmental education through Camp Maria's programming with Building Bridges. I am officially a senior citizen.