



SIERRA CLUB
VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Falls of the James Group

October/November 2026 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group

October 13th FOJG Program - Lessons Learned from Virginia's Data Center Boom and Pathways Forward



Left is Mary Finley-Brook and right is Tim Cywinski. Photos courtesy of Mary Finley-Brook and Tim Cywinski, respectively.

October 13, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm – Lessons Learned from Virginia's Data Center Boom and Pathways Forward with Dr. Mary Finley-Brook at the University of Richmond and Tim Cywinski, Communications Director of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter. Science Museum of Virginia R F & P Forum, 2500 W Broad St, Richmond, VA 23220. Register here [Richmond - Lessons Learned from Virginia's Data Center Boom and Pathways Forward](#)

As Virginia continues to attract large-scale data center development, communities across Central Virginia—including Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Chesterfield, and Petersburg—are increasingly asking whether local infrastructure and natural resources can keep pace.

This program explores how data centers use water and electricity, the different cooling technologies they employ, and the potential impacts on groundwater, municipal water supplies, energy demand, rural landscapes, and quality of life. Experts will also discuss why hyperscalers in Chesterfield VA are not inevitable and the need for government to call for a moratorium. Participants will be invited to engage and take action. There will be calls to action and how citizens can engage their government officials and community members to balance economic development with environmental stewardship and community interests.

Marv Finlev-Brook is a Professor of Geography and Global Studies at the University of

Richmond, where she has taught since 2006. Finley-Brook has decades of experience conducting participatory action research and collaborates regularly with community-based organizations and frontline populations to advance climate justice in energy sector transformation. Her interests include environmental policy, climate justice, public health, energy transition, affordable access to renewable energy technologies, and equity in environmental, climate and energy governance.

She has served on review panels for the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation. Finley-Brook is co-author of the textbook *Climate Crisis, Energy Violence* with Elsevier Press (2024). Her research has been published in *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Energy Research and Social Science*, *Geopolitics*, *International Forestry Review*, *Water Alternatives* and *William and Mary Environmental Law and Policy Review*. Finley-Brook recommended creation of the Virginia Governor's Advisory Council on Environmental Justice to the Northam Administration and was a founding member.

She conducted participatory research with the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative (2015-2023). Current collaborations with community partners include green workforce training with [Bridging the Gap in Virginia](#) and energy justice initiatives in Puerto Rico with [Comité Diálogo Ambiental](#).

Tim Cywinski currently leads communications for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, where he promotes environmental justice at the local, state, and federal levels while helping communities stand up to Big Industry and Big Tech polluting projects. Tim is a political communications specialist dedicated to building a livable, fair future for every community. For more than 14 years, he has advanced policies on poverty, student rights, education, economic security, sustainability, and environmental justice.

Previously, Tim worked on electoral campaigns, community organizing, and lobbying at both the state and federal levels. He also offers free trainings to civic and community groups on strategic communications, grassroots organizing, and legislative advocacy.

Tim holds a B.A. in Political Science from Roanoke College and an M.A. in Political Communications, Public Relations, and Media from Johns Hopkins University. He has called central Virginia home since 2015.

Outside of work, Tim enjoys kickball, karaoke, movies, and long walks with his sweet but stubborn hound, Lady Bones.

November 10th FOJG Program: Energy, Climate, and Ratepayer Protections with Josephus Allmond





FOJG November 10th speaker Josephus Allmond, Chief Energy Officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Photo courtesy of Josephus Allmond.

11/10/26 7:00 - 8:30 PM FOJG Program: Energy, Climate, and Ratepayer Protections with Josephus Allmond, VA Chief Energy Officer at the Science Museum of Virginia R F & P Forum, 2500 W. Broad St. Richmond VA 23220. Register here [Richmond - Energy, Climate, and Ratepayer Protections with Josephus Allmond](#)

Join Josephus Allmond, Virginia's inaugural Chief Energy Officer, for a discussion on energy, climate, and ratepayer protections. He will share updates on renewable energy and distributed resources, energy efficiency, grid modernization, and other efforts to deliver cleaner, affordable, reliable, and locally generated energy. The discussion will also preview major legislative and policy issues and include time for audience questions.

Josephus Allmond serves as Chief Energy Officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia in the Office of Governor Abigail Spanberger, where he leverages his extensive legal and advocacy experience in energy policy, utility regulation, and environmental justice to advance the Governor's priorities to make affordable, reliable, clean, and local power to Virginia residents.

He most recently served as a Staff Attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) in Charlottesville, where he litigated dozens of utility regulatory cases before the State Corporation Commission. His expertise encompasses a wide range of complex energy issues, including rate cases, integrated resource plans, net energy metering, interconnection, and Renewable Portfolio Standard proceedings.

Beyond the courtroom, Josephus plays a significant role in Virginia's legislative landscape. He has successfully advocated for efforts to bring Virginia into the energy future, including virtual power plants, distributed generation expansion, and storage expansion. He was appointed by the Speaker of the House as a citizen member to the Commission on Electric Utility Regulation, where he provided advice on energy affordability and ratepayer issues.

December 8th FOJG Potluck Dinner and 2026 Green Giant Awards



We had a great group of Sierrans and Green Giant Awardees at last year's FOJG Potluck Dinner at the Science Museum of Virginia. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

12/8/26 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG Potluck Dinner and 2026 Green Giant Awards. Science Museum of Virginia, RF & P Forum Room, 2500 W. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220. See more information here. [Sierra Club FOJG Potluck Dinner and 2026 Green Giant Awards](#). Our Green Giant awards go to members of the community or organizations who have made significant contributions in the area of environmental conservation. Each individual awardee receives a certificate and \$250. Please RSVP for the dinner by 12/7 if you are attending so we can be sure we have enough tables and chairs. [Signup for the December 8th FOJG Potluck Dinner and Green Giant Awards](#)

Interested in Serving on the Falls of the James Group Executive Committee?

Are you a Sierra Club member who would like to get more involved with the Falls of the James Group?

We are seeking members interested in running for a position on the Falls of the James Group Executive Committee (ExCom). The ExCom helps guide FOJG's work and priorities across a range of environmental issues, meets monthly to discuss local and regional concerns, and identifies campaigns to support through people power, policy, and direct resources. Members also help advance conservation and environmental justice through advocacy, organizing, and community action.

All areas of expertise and lived experience are welcome. We aim to build a geographically diverse group representing communities across the Falls of the James region.

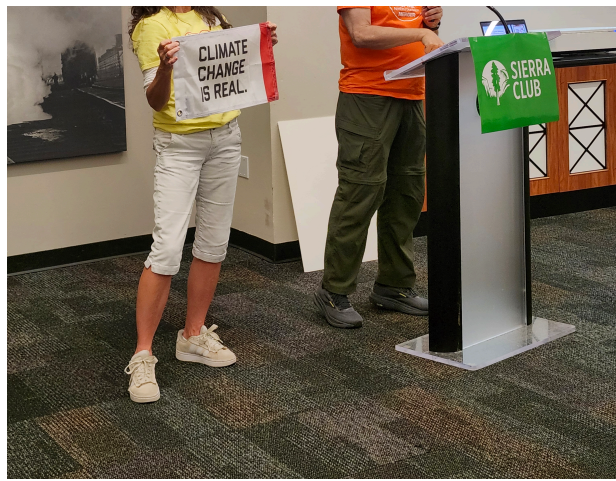
If you are interested in running, please submit a brief bio and a statement about why you would like to serve to Nominations Chair Sheri Shannon at sherishannon27@gmail.com by October 15.

Sierra Club Voting Guide: Your Environmental Voting Questions Answered

Be sure to get your vote in for this important mid-term November 3rd election. See the Sierra Club guide below on early voting, voting by mail, environmental issues, how you can protect the people and the planet, how to combat disinformation, and what to say when someone claims elections don't matter. They do! [Your Environmental Voting Questions Answered | Sierra Club](#)

September 8th's FOJG Program Sierra Club Chapter and FOJG Updates





Left photo is Jamie Hongkin, Director of Guest Services for the Science Museum of Virginia. The right photo shows Lee Williams and Glen Besa, star advocates for FOJG. Photos courtesy of Shavon Peacock.



On the left are Tyla Matteson, FOJG member and York River Chair, Billy Davies, Sierra Club VA Chapter Grassroots Program Lead, and Connor Kish, Director of the Virginia Sierra Club. On the right is Michael Smart, Sustainability Manager of the Richmond Office of Sustainability. Photos courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

The September 8th Falls of the James Group program, held at the Science Museum of Virginia, began the 26-27 program season with a great turnout of 45 people. Jamie Hongkin, Director of Guest Services for the museum, started off discussing expansion plans for the Science Museum of Virginia, including a Northern Virginia Science Center, Broad Street Station - East Green, and gift shop renovation. See her PowerPoint presentation here [Science Museum of Virginia Presentation](#)

Glen Besa, FOJG ExCom member, presented the concerns for data centers and the Dominion/NextEra merger. Tyla Matteson, FOJG member and chair of the York River Group, talked about some of the new environmental laws. Billy Davies, Grassroots Program Lead for the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, discussed how volunteers can get involved with the Sierra Club, and Connor Kish, Director for the Chapter, shared what the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter does legally to advocate for environmental causes. See their PowerPoint presentation here [Building a Movement to Meet This Moment](#)

Finally. Michael Smart. Sustainability Manager of the Richmond Office of Sustainability.

reviewed vision priorities for the office. See his presentation here. [Richmond Office of Sustainability Presentation](#)

September 19th Trash Cleanup at Ancarrow's Landing and Slave Trail Talk by Ralph White



Volunteers and their recyclables collected at Ancarrow's Landing on the left. Right photo is Ralph White sharing the history of Ancarrow's Landing with the group. Photos courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

The Sierra Club Falls of the James Group had a productive and fun day picking up trash at Ancarrow's Landing on 9/19/26. We partnered with members of the Quaker community, who served drinks and bagels and had a silent worship before our trash pickup. We separated the trash from recyclables to keep more stuff out of the landfill.

Ralph White, former director of the James River Park System, shared the history of Ancarrow's Landing and the slave trade. The Slave Trail begins at Ancarrow's Landing, formerly the Manchester Docks, a major port in the massive downriver Slave Trade that made Richmond the largest source of enslaved Africans on the east coast of America from 1830 to 1860.

September 26th Tabling at the RVA East End Festival in Richmond and Mountainfilm on Tour Festival at Dorey Park





Top left photo shows Joe Brancoli and Aileen Rivera tabling at the RVA East End Festival. Photo courtesy of Aileen Rivera. Andy Sidell and Shavon Peacock are shown tabling at the Dorey Park Mountainfilm on Tour Festival on the right. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock. Joe, Aileen and Richmond Mayor Danny Avula at the RVA East End Festival are seen in the bottom photo. Photo courtesy of Aileen Rivera.

The RVA East End Festival is a community-based event that supports the music and arts programs in Richmond's East End schools. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with community members in a festival environment, but also to support and connect with other community partners in this great cause.

The Mountainfilm on Tour Festival at Dorey Park shows a sampling of incredible outdoor films from the Telluride, Colorado Mountainfilm festival held each year. The Co. film festival celebrates cultures unique to mountain communities with an international rendezvous of legendary mountaineers, environmentalists, filmmakers, authors, scientists, and artists. Prior to the outdoor films attendees could engage in fun outdoor activities, meet vendors, and dine from food trucks.

What is tabling anyway? Tablers share information about the Falls of the James Group Sierra Club programs, outings, and our local advocacy issues. Current hot issues include stopping the NextEra-Dominion merger and advocating for a pause on data centers so they can develop comprehensive environmental protection requirements. We also engage people in fun nature activities like learning about birds, flowers and local Richmond fauna. Those who are interested in the Sierra Club are added to our email newsletter database and hopefully grow engagement in the environment.

If you are interested in tabling at future events like the 10/24/26 Dorey Park Plant Native Festival, ~~Plant Native Festival~~, ~~Henrico County, Virginia~~, contact Shavon Peacock at

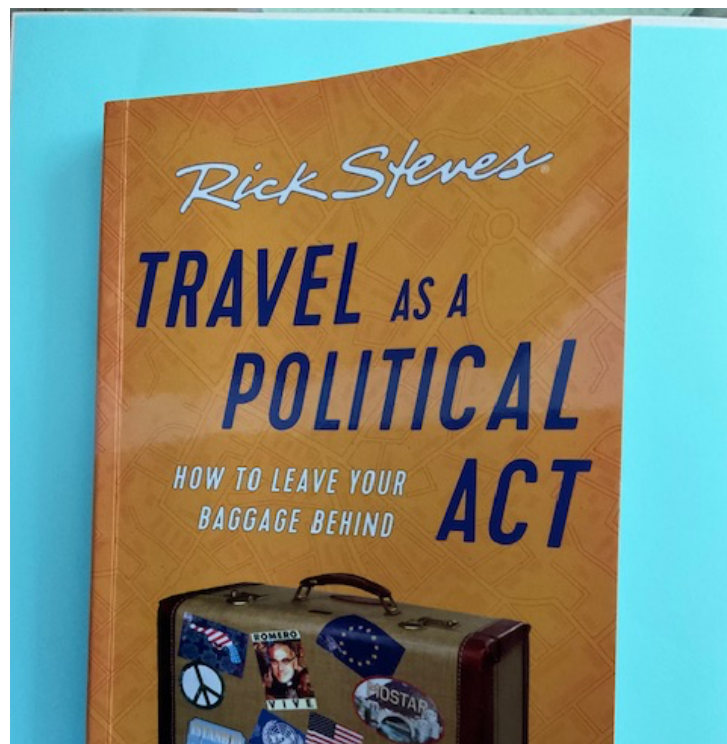
October 18th FOJG Hike: Riverside Drive Along the James River

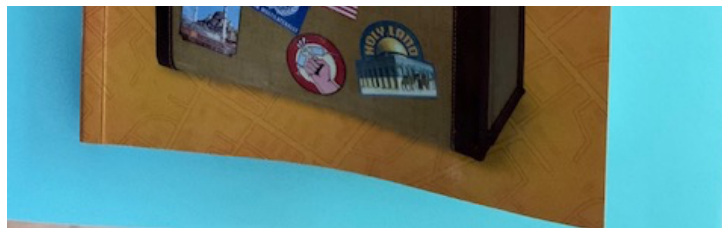


Scene from Riverside Drive at the Pony Pasture. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

10/18/26 9:30 am - 12:00 pm. 7300 Riverside Dr, Richmond, VA 23225. We will meet at the Pony Pasture Rapids parking lot and then walk along Riverside Drive, through the Huguenot Woods and to the Huguenot Flatwater parking lot. We will proceed along Riverside Drive until it ends. We will then retrace our steps to the Pony Pasture. We will have great views of the James River and see the remains of the Westham Bridge, go over Rattlesnake Creek (no rattlesnakes!), pass a few islands, the Z-Dam, and if lucky, we will see some eagles. We will hike about 4 miles for about 2 1/2 hours. There is a limit of 10 participants. Dogs on a leash are allowed but their waste must be picked up. Shavon Peacock is the Outing Leader. Register here [FOJG Hike: Riverside Drive Along the James River](#)

Joe's Book Nook





Travel As a Political Act book cover. Photo courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

Hello eager readers,

For the first Book Nook of Fall, I recommend 'Travel as a Political Act' by Rick Steves.

If his name is familiar, that is likely because you have watched his PBS show on European travel. I have also flipped past that show over the years, as he does his nerdy trips through cathedrals, museums and sights. This book from 2021 is an entirely more bracing and enlightening read. While he doesn't spend much time on environmental issues per se, he covers indigenous peoples' rights and supports democratic governance and self-determination for people and nations. In addition, without undue grandiosity, he tells some of the good actions that his company does with its profits, and like Dolly Parton, they are a refreshing comparison to the actions of certain inherited-wealth people who are mismanaging the world currently.

Rick Steves, I was selling you short, until this book opened my mind!

Join our Sierra Club FOJG Meetup Group and Get Notifications of Upcoming Hikes

[Sierra Club - Falls of the James Group | Meetup](#) We now have 878 Meetup members.

If you are willing to travel to northern VA and surrounding areas, the **Sierra Club Potomac Outings Group** has many outings each month. Check them out here [Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings \(SCPRO\) | Meetup](#)

Check out national and international Sierra Club Outings here [Search Trips](#)

You can check out other local free virtual and in-person events at:

FOJG Calendar [Events/Calendar | Sierra Club](#)

Virginia Chapter Sierra Club calendar here [Events Calendar | Sierra Club](#)

Check out more environmental events on our FOJG Facebook page thanks to FOJG member Daryl Downing's frequent sharing of environmental events! [\(4\) Sierra Club - Falls of the James | Facebook](#)

Join the Sierra Club

If you are not a member and are interested in joining the oldest, largest grassroots environmental organization in the country, you can join for as little as \$15 here. [Join Today.](#)

[Become a champion. \(sierraclub.org\)](https://sierraclub.org) Once you join the national Sierra Club, you are automatically a member of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Falls of the James Group Sierra Club.

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet

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