



SIERRA CLUB
GEORGIA CHAPTER

Savannah River Group

September - October 2026 Newsletter

The Sierra Club mission statement is to Protect, Enjoy, and Explore the planet.

TGI September! It's still hot as h*ll, but fall approaches with the promise of less-hot weather, college football, and the annual SRG Ice Cream Social on September 15. We have a special evening planned for you to get to know the various aspects of your SRG Sierra Club; that is, information on how you can get involved with outings, conservation, legislation, and much more. Bring a friend and get involved.

This fall also brings the "off-year" elections, with all the associated mud-slinging. Do not fear, make your voice clear & vote! There is no better way to fight for the environment - air, water, forests, seashore, national parks, and federal lands - than by voting for candidates that share your values. Remember, there is no planet "B". We have to save the Earth for posterity.

Speaking of elections, your SRG has 3 openings on the Executive Committee for which we are soliciting candidates. The ExCom governs the planning and operation of the Group. We meet every other month to plan our Group's monthly meetings and review reports on membership, fundraising, outings, etc. Please reach out to Linda McBurney at srgsierraclub@gmail.com for more information; we would love to have you join the team!

Get outside, enjoy nature's beauty and stay hydrated.

Upcoming Meetings

The Savannah River Group is glad to offer our members and supporters the option to attend our hybrid meetings either in person or virtually via Zoom. For those attending in-person, we meet at the **Unitarian Universalist Church at 3501 Walton Way Extension, Augusta**. For those attending virtually, please click on the link for each meeting.

15 September, 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM. Ice Cream Social

Join us for our annual Ice Cream Social, reacquaint yourself with old friends, make new friends and meet our Committee Chairs. This social will give you the opportunity to have a one on one with our political, outings and conservation chairs, as well as our

executive committee. Bring ideas for meetings or events you wish to participate in. This meeting will not be zoomed because there will not be a formal program.

20 October, 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM. “The Power of Community Gardens”

Joy Brown, Community Garden Curator of the Belle Terrace Community Garden and Founder of Grow with Joy, will explore why community gardens are important, how they often begin, the needs they help meet in local communities, and what is happening in the CSRA. From food access and education to wellness, service, youth engagement, and neighborhood connection, community gardens grow much more than fruits and vegetables but provide tools for building healthier, more connected communities.

Register in advance for this meeting to zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/3xJ-Rh6NMq8pPKFiuA>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Upcoming Outings and Events

This year marks the 125 anniversary of outings with the Sierra Club. The first outing was led by William Colby in 1901 in Yosemite. The idea behind Sierra Club outings is that if people experience the outdoors firsthand, it will inspire them to protect it. Please join us on our outings this fall as we explore, enjoy, and protect our planet.



5 September, 2026, Saturday, 8:30 – 12pm. Paddle and meet the candidate. Come splash and paddle with us and meet a Columbia County Chairman Candidate as we paddle down the Augusta Canal. We will meet at the Savannah Rapids Pavilion Kayak Rental place at 8:30. Boats will go in the water around 9 a.m. and we will paddle to Lake

Olmstead where light refreshments and more time to meet and greet will be provided between 11 a.m. and noon. Savannah Rapids Kayak will provide transportation back to the Savannah Rapids Pavilion parking lot. Cost is \$10 for transit.

Register at:

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po000024iQEulAM>

Bring your questions, your kayaks or canoes, life jackets, hats, and water. Don't have a boat? Rent one at <https://savannahrapidskayakrental.com/reserve>. Select Reserve a Boat for the date, 9/5/26, and the tab, "SIERRA CLUB PADDLE."

5, 7, 8 September Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) 8:30am-12:00pm: Contact Stephen Heyl to volunteer, stephen@woodhurstarchitects.com

26 September, Saturday, Boyd Pond Park Hike. 9:45am Take a 3 mile hike on the wild side of Boyd Pond beginning along the natural trail that follows the 30 acre pond then venture to recently established trails for bikers and hikers. This is a Loop trail with some twisted elevated trail areas. Please bring water and good walking shoes. Dogs are welcome but No retractable leashes please. Meet in the parking lot at 340 Boyd Pond Park, Aiken, SC. Register at:

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po000027fp4nIAA>

26 September 9:30am – 12pm. Invitation to a Birthday Bash Please join us this September 26, 2026, for a special community gathering in St. Mary's, Georgia — a birthday celebration honoring *Carol Ruckdeschel*, her invaluable contributions to Cumberland Island National seashore and Wilderness, and a milestone birthday. The event will take place from 9:30 am to 12:00 noon at Howard Gilman Park. For more information contact Charlotte Fries at frieschar2@gmail.com

3 October, Hike at Phinizy Swamp, 9:30am-10:30am. Join us for this easy loop walk through the woods, the wetland cells and back around on 2 boardwalks. We will follow the Beaver Dam Trail, Wetland Trail, and Cattail Trail as we make a loop starting and ending at the silos. Following the hike we will have our annual picnic next to the silos. Register at:

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po0000279jFNIAY>

3 October, 11am-2pm Sierra Club Annual Potluck Picnic. All are invited! Come join us for great fellowship, food, fun, and games. Don't know anyone? Now's your chance to get to know us! Bring a dish and a lawn chair and join us at the picnic shelter beside the silos at Phinizy Swamp. Contact Cathy Black to let her know what you are bringing, sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com. Register at:

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po0000278W2VIAU>

3,5,6 October Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) 8:30am-12:00pm. Contact Stephen Heyl to volunteer at stephen@woodhurstarchitects.com

11 October, Sunday, Lake Olmstead Hike. 9:45am. Hike 3.5 miles out and back along the tow paths of the aqueduct and River Levee Trail enjoying the scenery and wildlife. We will meet in the parking lot at 1 Milledge Road, Augusta GA. Please bring water. Dogs are welcome but No retractable leashes please. Register at: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po000027fKyllIAE>

24 October, Noon - 2:00 pm. Tour Two USDA People's Gardens.

We will visit two unique agriculture sites in Augusta that are recognized as USDA People's Gardens and serve as examples of how community-based agriculture can educate, inspire, and strengthen neighborhoods; they are: Belle Terrace Community Garden and The Concrete Farm. Register at

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po000027BwmnIAC>

This outing is a follow up to our monthly meeting talk on Oct 20th. We will carpool to consolidate vehicles. Please be prepared to contribute for gasoline.

Elections for our Executive Committee

We are looking for candidates for our Savannah River Group *Executive Committee*. Elections will begin in November.

The Executive Committee (ExCom) is the main governing body for our group, focusing mostly on local and some state issues. The ExCom along with the committee chairs organize the monthly meetings and outings, get speakers and set the annual goals for our group each year. The ExCom members serve for 2 years and the committee meets bimonthly six times a year. To be on the ExCom you must be a member of the Sierra Club.

If you would like more information or to throw your hat in the ring for this election, contact Linda McBurney at srgsierraclub@gmail.com or text 706-631-1489.

Volunteers Needed

Zoom Operator Volunteers Needed for Monthly Meetings

Savannah River Group currently offers hybrid options at our nine (9) monthly meetings so people may attend in-person or on Zoom. **We need 2 or more volunteers to run Zoom from 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm.** Having more than one person gives you the flexibility

to choose which meeting you could commit to (a total of 9 meetings/year). The meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month except for July, August, and December. It does not matter your age; in fact, we hope that some younger folks, including someone in their teens, would like to volunteer to do this and then be able to add it to your resume for future employment! Please contact Linda McBurney for further information at srgsierraclub@gmail.com or text at 706-631-1489.

Volunteers for Tabling

We have a Sierra Club booth at different events, such as on Earth Day, and are always in need of having additional help. This includes help with setting up and taking down our exhibit and staffing the booth (also called tabling) during an event. You will always have an experienced person volunteering with you and to help show you the ropes. Contact **Matt Maurer** for more information, preferably by text, at **706-825-3647**.

Volunteers for Adopt a Stream

Savannah River Group has adopted 9 stream sites in Richmond and Columbia counties which are monitored every month for pollution levels as indicated by dissolved O₂, pH, phosphate, temperature and macro-invertebrates. We meet the first Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday of each month. You can participate for one, two or all three days if you would like. Come join us and be a part of the monitoring of *your* fresh water. For more information, email Stephen Heyl at Stephen@woodhurstarchitects.com

Roadless Rule Rollback

The Sierra Club has worked tirelessly for the implementation and preservation of the Roadless Rule since its inception in 2001. Now, the Trump Administration proposes to nullify this Rule as part of their strategy to sell-off public lands to private interests for the extraction of our natural resources with the profits syphoned into corporate coffers. Their rationalization is that roadless lands have too many trees, particularly old growth trees, and trees cause forest fires; thus, logging our National Forests will eliminate forest fires. No. No. No. Quite the opposite is true: roads in forested lands have been shown to be vectors for the spread of forest fires (see [Bloomberg News: roadless-rule-rollback-may-fuel-more-wildfires-agencies-say](#)). The [proposed Rule](#) and [DEIS](#) became available today.

The Roadless Rule DEIS comment period started on August 20 and runs for 30 days through **September 21**. As a community, our goal is to generate 1 million comments to the Forest Service. Sierra Club is collecting comments at sc.org/RoadlessRule, and we helped develop [this comment period toolkit](#). For those who like to write, now is a good time for op-eds and *letters to the editor* in local outlets that acquaint people with Roadless areas and their values, and draw public attention to the comment period.

Please take some time to advocate for our forests, let your Representative and this Administration know how valuable these wild places are to you.

NOISE, NOISE, NOISE: The Data Center Dilemma Series

By Marlena Bergeron, M.Ed.
Political Chair



When "Walden" was published in 1854, Henry David Thoreau complained about the noise from the train two miles away. It's almost quaint by today's noise standards.

We have acclimated to the pervasive roar of traffic, sirens, lawn mowers, leaf blowers, HVAC, nearby construction and industry, chainsaws clearing trees... Maybe you can hear a rock quarry's 'chunk chunk chunking' from your neighborhood Monday through Saturday.

During power outages, we endured loud generators running day and night, like having a fleet of diesel trucks parked and idling.

We adjust. It's easier when we can tell ourselves that the audio assault is temporary. Some people are comforted by the sounds of constant engines running, and it's the quiet that makes them anxious.

So what's different about data centers' noise pollution adding to the soundscape's cacophony? Are we being "Grinchy" to call foul on all the noise?

- Low frequency noises emitted by data centers are able to travel farther, go through sound barrier walls, and can be heard all hours of the day, even nights and weekends, even through the walls of your home.
- Data centers meet the dB thresholds by slowing the fans down but raising the amount of low frequency noise which is not regulated within most ordinances.
- Construction of a proposed 8 million square foot commercial warehouse is a lot louder, will take longer than what nearby communities are used to, and will need a LOT more AC units.
- The generators that will kick on are not always just for testing. They could run in the beginning to be fully operational until the power grid is updated to meet the data center's power supply needs.

- Georgia Power has the authority to kick data centers offline during peak hours when electricity demand is high usually between 2 PM and 7 PM, requiring data centers to run off generators when kids are getting out of school and doing after-school activities and outdoor practices.
- Noise pollution is a distraction and a stressor that triggers fight or flight responses and increases behavioral outbursts according to Les Blomberg, Founder and Executive Director of Noise Pollution Clearinghouse. Students were found a year behind in reading scores when a noise polluting factory was built nearby. Harlem Middle School will be less than a half mile away from a proposed data center.
- Loud hums in the background aren't just annoying--- these low-frequency sounds can cause cardiovascular problems, according to Blomberg, along with disturbing sleep, interfering with outdoor enjoyment, and making us less tolerant towards each other and resent the government officials that allowed data centers to be built next door.
- Many of the trees that help buffer noise pollution will be cleared and reduced to a 200-500 foot buffer. Residents have complained that even with noise ordinances, data centers are still too loud. Many residents report low frequency sounds are 'plainly audible' from inside their homes even during quiet hours. It never ends, and they can't get away.
- Animals don't like data center noise either. Predators like foxes and owls who rely on hearing to catch their food will suffer from low frequency interference and ultimately leave or die off. The animals they eat, mostly rodents, will increase in population size.

So what can we do?

-Get our leaders and legislators to write more laws that apply EPA and National Institute of Occupational Safety Standard AND make adjustments to ordinances depending on the community. South Carolina's proposed S.902 which limits noise to 50 dBA nighttime at residential property boundaries works for an URBAN residential area but should be 45 dBA for suburban communities, 40 dBA for rural, and even lower for sensitive wildlife conservation areas, according to Les Blomberg, M.A.--- the founder and executive director of the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse, a nationally recognized organization dedicated to researching, documenting, and educating the public about noise pollution and its impacts on health and society.

-Get more stringent environmental protections. When the regulations are lax, it's a matter of time until the environment is degraded.

-Inquire with Open Records if sound studies submitted by data center applicant were interpreted by acoustical professionals.

-Inquire about enforcement strategies. Too many data centers exceed noise limits, but take the average noise emitted as compliance, even though nearby residents feel the one-sided effects from excessive and incessant noise.

Noise pollution will only be a problem for those who have known and relish true peace and quiet with natural soundscapes and lullabies of crickets, frogs, and birds.

Rural and bedroom communities are special and sacred for preserving these treasured nighttime soundscapes, for enriching and recharging our five senses.

It's just like those of us lucky enough to have played at a pristine beach or a clean park. One stops noticing pollution when it's everywhere all the time.

Among the best things in life are looking up at stars in a dark sky and listening to birdsongs. You don't need money to do them daily, and they bring priceless joy, peace, perspective, and health benefits. But no amount of money can buy them back once pollution takes over. For many rural communities inundated with data centers, constant noise will be an irrevocable trade-off.

Robust protection in enforceable legislation and binding ordinances from elected and appointed officials can't wait.

For more information on how you can help your community and ensure data centers are good neighbors, visit <https://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/datacenters>

Sierra Club is also hosting public forums for members to connect with experts working to protect their communities. Les Blomberg has written extensively on the subject and has advised hundreds of communities, mayors, council members, zoning boards, and law enforcement agencies on understanding and enforcing noise regulations.

Don't miss the upcoming Sierra Club webinars to increase awareness and understanding on data centers' impacts on:

9/8 Water: <https://bit.ly/4bsughG>

9/22 Air: <https://bit.ly/4xaCBPs>

10/6 Light: <https://bit.ly/4c0GK05>

10/20 Heat: <https://bit.ly/4gbd6HS>

Your Savannah River Leadership team including Excom members are:

Officers and Executive Committee

Chair: Jeffery Holder JeffreyHolder1978@comcast.net

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Adopt A Stream Program Coordinator:

- Stephen Heyl, stephen@woodhurstarchitects.com

Please contact any of your leadership team to get involved.

Visit our Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/savannahrivergroup>.

Visit our Meetup Page: <https://www.meetup.com/georgia-sierra-club-savannah-river-group-augusta-ga/>

You can contact the Savannah River Group via our email:

SRGsierraclub@gmail.com

P.S. - If you ever need to contact the Savannah River Group by "snail mail," you can reach us at: Savannah River Group, Sierra Club, PO Box 14463, Augusta, GA 30919