

GEORGIA SIERRAN

SIERRA CLUB
GEORGIA CHAPTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GEORGIA SIERRA CLUB • JAN / FEB / MARCH 2019



2019: THE YEAR FOR TRANSIT • MARTA FOR GWINNETT • A LOOK INTO THE ATL BOARD • PLUS • ATL CLEAN ENERGY PLAN UPDATE • POLITICAL SEASON WRAP-UP & LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW • LOCAL GROUP UPDATES • AND MORE

FROM THE CHAPTER CHAIR

Are you charged up and ready to go? After the intensity of the recent elections and the ongoing craziness of the last couple of years, you might think it's time for a rest. You couldn't be more wrong.

As your new Chair of the Georgia Chapter Executive Committee, I see evidence that Georgians are increasingly realizing that they share Sierra Club values. Across the state, candidates we endorsed for their views on environmental and energy policies won their races. Our win rate was simply awesome, with 28 wins in 32 legislative races. We did equally well in the few local races where our groups led the way on some critical endorsements. These new public servants are ready to support transit expansion and clean energy, and they will listen to us when we advocate for positive change on all sorts of environmental matters.

Although exhausting to deal with, the obvious awfulness of our rivals is helping our cause. Georgians can see that climate change is real and a threat. They can judge for themselves the critical need to move to sustainable energy. They know that stewardship of our land and water can't work without smart, science-based regulations. And it is both motivating and obviously wrong when people in power tell regular folks that their voices don't matter. We fought for justice and fairness throughout the 2018 campaign season along with around 2 million other Georgia

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high-resolution digital photo
(200 dpi). For more information,
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Send address changes to Sierra
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Subscriptions

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Visit the Georgia Chapter Office

Our office is a 2-minute walk from the MARTA Avondale station (E7). We encourage you to take MARTA when possible. Exit the MARTA station towards the South Parking Lot, located on the E. College Ave side (currently under construction). Once outside, proceed down the temporary stairway and turn left towards Sams Street. Cross over Sams Street and the office is the building located behind the bakery. Look for the playground behind the building. Enter the fenced gate. The office is the 2nd door from Sams Street on the right.

On the Cover

Gwinnett MARTA advocates at a
2018 Gwinnett BOC Meeting
Photo by Brenda Cargin

Continued from page 2

voters. The opportunities for the Sierra Club as a force for good in Georgia have never been better.

In my new position of leadership, my goal is to make sure that we can capitalize on this momentum. We have thousands of members all over the state. We could be as powerful a force as the Chamber of Commerce or Georgia Power if we mobilize. To do that, we need to make two important changes to our mindset:

First, we need to get more serious about raising funds. We have a huge wish list of critical work in 2019 and beyond. The Ready for 100 and Beyond Coal campaigns continue. We will be in the center of the effort to expand transit into Gwinnett county. We will be demanding that the PSC adopt a progressive energy policy during the critical IRP process. We will be front and center during the adoption of a new forest management plan. Volunteers power much of this work, but professional staff, organizers, lawyers, and lobbyists all need to be paid. I am committed to professionalizing our fundraising efforts so that we can turn our good ideas into effective work. Your contributions will also help, of course.

And second, we all need to start thinking of ourselves as more than environmentalists. We are environmental champions. We don't just value the environment, we fight for it. We get on the phone, we organize, we rally, we communicate with our elected officials, and we vote. Every one of us can make a difference. The Sierra Club loves to train folks just like you to learn how to take meaningful action. When we all start to act together, we will wield serious power. If you are already doing this work, thank you. If you haven't joined in yet, now is the time. The Sierra Club will mean more to you when you use the Club to make an impact and change our world. Now is a great time to get started.

Jeff Schoenberg
CHAPTER CHAIR

WINTER 2019 CALENDAR

JANUARY

MONDAY, 28 • RAIL Committee Meeting

FEBRUARY

MONDAY, 4 • Clean Energy For All Committee Meeting

THURSDAY, 7 • Centennial Group Meeting

MONDAY, 11 • Conservation Committee Meeting

Wildlands & Wildlife Committee Meeting

TUESDAY, 12 • Metro Atlanta Goup Meeting

TUESDAY, 19 • Coastal Group Meeting

LaGrange Group Meeting

Savannah River Group Meeting

THURSDAY, 21 • Gwinnett Group Meeting

MONDAY, 25 • RAIL Committee Meeting

MARCH

MONDAY, 4 • Clean Energy For All Committee Meeting

THURSDAY, 7 • Centennial Group Meeting

MONDAY, 11 • Conservation Committee Meeting

TUESDAY, 12 • Metro Atlanta Goup Meeting

MONDAY, 18 • Wildlands & Wildlife Committee Meeting

TUESDAY, 19 • Coastal Group Meeting

LaGrange Group Meeting

Savannah River Group Meeting

THURSDAY, 21 • Gwinnett Group Meeting

MONDAY, 25 • RAIL Committee Meeting

For a full listing of our upcoming outings, along with details on meeting times, locations, and more, visit the Chapter Calendar at sierraclub.org/georgia/calendar.

Setting Course on a New Chapter Tradition

BY JEFF SCHOENBERG

This past October, the Georgia Chapter celebrated its 35th anniversary in high style. We marked the occasion with our first-ever Trailblazers reception, which proved to be both fun and financially successful. The evening stood out as a rare chance to see some of your favorite Sierra Club folks in clothes they couldn't have worn on a hike.

The crowd enjoyed excellent food and drink in the beautiful penthouse of the Nelson Mullins Atlantic Station offices. After a short program that highlighted our history as a Chapter, we honored a few of our local "Trailblazers," people who have helped us build our chapter and achieve significant victories for Georgia's environment. We honored Chuck Bosserman, Stephanie Stuckey, Ian Karra, Brionté McCorkle, and Thomas Neff.

Turnout for the event was strong and we raised quite a bit of money to support our programming. Our plan is to make the Trailblazer reception a regular part of the Georgia Sierra Club calendar and to use the event to offer a very public thank you to those who are setting the course for a better Georgia.

Many thanks to the team that put the event together, and especially to Kelley Cody-Grimm, who led the preparation of the event. Georgia Sierra Club members, plan on making this annual event a regular part of your participation in the Georgia Chapter!

To view photos from the evening, visit: bit.ly/GASCTrailblazers2018



A Lively End to 2018

BY BRENDA CARGIN

2018 was a busy year for the Georgia Sierra Club. We worked tirelessly this past midterm election season to endorse environmental champions, get out the environmental vote across Georgia, and see 28 wins in 32 legislative races. Our clean energy team educated folks on the benefits of clean, renewable energy, while our transit team advocated for the expansion of MARTA into Gwinnett County. Wildlands Committee volunteers continued to fight for the protection of Georgia's wild places, like Cumberland Island and the Panther Creek trail. Across the state, the Chapter and our local groups hosted over 80 outings.

After a year of hard work and dedication to our mission to explore, enjoy, and protect Georgia, we celebrated with our Sierra Club family on Thursday, December 13 at our annual holiday party. We enjoyed a potluck, celebrated our outstanding volunteers, took a look back at 2018, and even had a dance party!



Congratulations to the winners of our 2018 Volunteer Awards:

Exceptional Leadership Award

Sam Collier
Roger Buerki
Lynn Walston

Exceptional Activism Award

Linda Bell

Exceptional Dedication Award

Judy Lawrence
Mary Lou Dabbs
Michael Hallen
Gloria Hallen

Outings Leader of the Year Award

Max Brown

Thank you to not only these outstanding individuals but to all of our dedicated volunteers that make our work possible! We are excited to continue 2018's momentum into this new year.

To watch our 2018 highlights video, visit bit.ly/GASC2018

To view photos from the holiday party, visit bit.ly/GASCHoliday2018



The Time is Right: Bringing MARTA to Gwinnett

BY ART SHELDON

It has been a long, slow slog to this point.

Gwinnett County's last vote about MARTA was in 1990. By the late 1990s, there was a glimmer of hope as the board of commissioners began preparing for a county-operated bus system to tie into MARTA. But the federal Department of Transportation sent a message to Georgia that no more federal transportation money would come unless plans were made to deal with metro Atlanta's high levels of pollution.

Gwinnett at the time was the largest county in the country by population to not have public transit. The board of commissioners, seeing the light, determined they would correct that, despite the anti-transit leanings of the county's citizens.

The first presentation to the public took place in 1999. Two years later, the first buses started rolling in the newly opened HOV (high-occupancy vehicle) lanes. The service

began as express service only, followed by the rollout of five local routes in early 2002. Those were exciting times, and as one of the originally appointed transit board members, I had a front-row seat.

For a decade the system stood alone, but by the early 2010s, there was talk of submitting another MARTA referendum to the voters. I and others lobbied in support of it. Periodic surveys began to show renewed interest in expanding MARTA. The Atlanta Regional Commission ran surveys supporting transit expansion into Gwinnett. The Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce released the results of a poll a few years ago showing definite support. Local community improvement districts funded another, larger survey that again showed increasing support for transit expansion. Personal discussions suggested support was growing among local commissioners.

The support was there, but the political will wasn't. The more the surveys showed support, the more the anti-transit folks pushed back at elected officials who had the power to put a referendum out there for the public.

Two years ago, in the midst of decennial planning for land use and transportation, the county commissioners finally realized they



needed to do a special planning exercise on transit, splitting it off from the main transportation plan.

As presented to and discussed with the public, the transit planning exercise did not necessarily mention MARTA, but behind the scenes, momentum was building toward a MARTA referendum—depending on public feedback on a plan including rail transit coming into Gwinnett. One commissioner confided to me a year ago that the plan was a MARTA referendum, date to be determined. The commissioner also told me they had been threatened with a primary opponent if they mentioned MARTA in public.

As anticipation grew, expectations were for a referendum in November of 2018. It was shocking to most when, at a special meeting last August, the commissioners instead announced a special election in March of 2019. Apparently one or both of the commissioners up for re-election asked that the referendum be pushed off the November midterm ballot, ostensibly because it would likely draw more Democrats to the polls. The incumbents were Republicans, including the one threatened with a primary opponent.

Here we are today with just a couple of months to go before the vote on March 19. The Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, in concert with other groups, is preparing a big push to get this referendum passed. At the time of writing, the rumor is that the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce is creating a group and funding it to push for passage of the referendum.

The time is right for Gwinnett. Then on to Cobb.

To find out how you can get involved in the effort to bring MARTA to Gwinnett, visit marta4gwinnett.org.

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Questions? Contact Ted Terry at ted.terry@sierraclub.org

Please note the Sierra Club Foundation does not offer legal, tax, or financial planning advice. You are encouraged to consult your own legal counsel, tax advisor, and/or financial planner.

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SierraClubFoundation.org



CONSERVATION

The ATL Board and Transit Districts

BY TEJAS KOTAK

The Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority, or the ATL, is a new transit-focused agency that was created during the 2018 Georgia legislative session. The ATL's sixteen-member board is now complete and had its first meeting on December 14. The agency as a whole begins formal operations in January.

The ATL covers thirteen metro Atlanta counties and is charged with coordinating, planning, and funding among them at a regional level. Funding sources will still be determined at the city or county level — often by a 1 percent TSPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) — as will the initial concepts for new projects and plans.

The ATL will ensure that these various plans work in concert with each other for maximum effectiveness when all the new routes are in place. For example, the ATL will play a role in determining if the Gwinnett Comprehensive Transit Development Plan, DeKalb Transit Master Plan and Atlanta Transportation Plan all connect together once they are finalized. The ATL will coordinate any federal funds received by the region, and any state funds if the state decides to directly fund any transit programs in the future.

The metro area is split into ten “transit districts” (see page 9). Each one intentionally crosses county boundaries so as to encompass major commuting corridors and reflect a diversity of political, demographic and economic needs. For the board, one citizen representative

is appointed from each district by elected officials (state legislators, county commission chairs, and mayors) who represent it. The board also includes five political appointees, selected by state-level leaders, and the Georgia Department of Transportation commissioner, who serves as an ex-officio, nonvoting member.

The Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club will actively engage with each of these board members to help transit expand and become a regional success.

GET INVOLVED WITH OUR REGIONAL ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVABILITY COMMITTEE:

Join us for our next committee meeting on Monday, January 28, 6:30 - 8:30 PM at the Georgia Chapter Office (743 E College Ave, Suite B, Decatur, GA 30030) or visit sierraclub.org/georgia/rail for more information.

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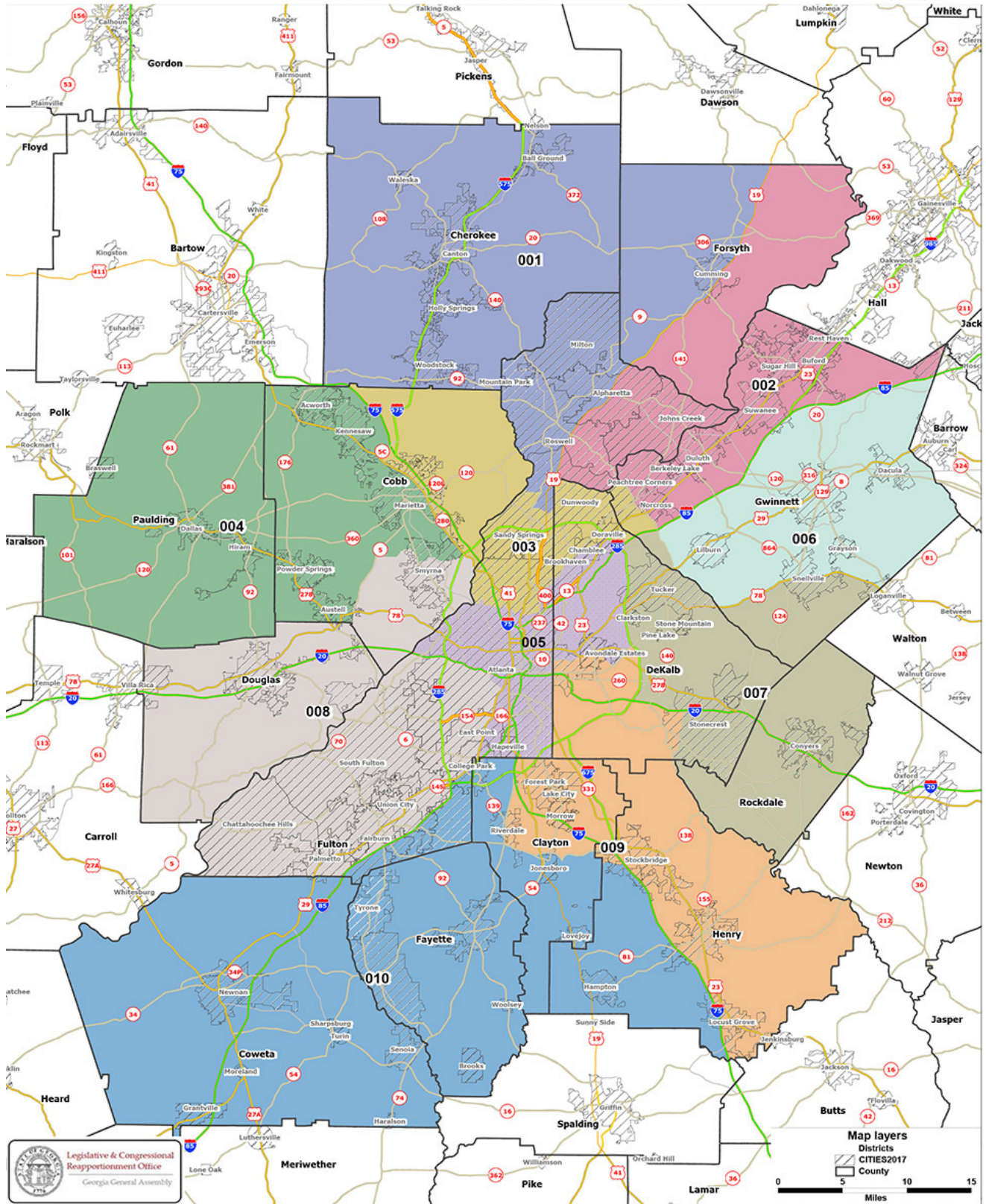


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A LOOK AT THE PROPOSED ATL TRANSIT DISTRICTS

Proposed Transit District Areas

Client: H009
Plan: transit-dist-2018
Type: Regional



ATL Clean Energy Update

BY MARQUESE AVERETT, CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVE & ELIZA STEVENSON, SIERRA STUDENT COALITION AND CLEAN ENERGY FOR ALL FELLOW

We're on the move now - Atlanta's 100% Clean Energy Plan is projected to be officially approved by City Council in January 2019!

The Atlanta City Council unanimously passed an initial resolution, committing to the creation of the 100% Clean Energy Plan, on May 1st, 2017. This resolution directed the Mayor's Office of Resilience to develop a plan for City of Atlanta operations to achieve 100 percent clean energy by 2035 and to ultimately transition the entirety of the Atlanta community to 100 percent clean energy by 2050. After a year of development, the plan to do just that is complete. This plan represents the most comprehensive clean energy transition plan of any American city.

In general, the plan outlines three approaches to achieve the 100 percent clean energy community-wide target: use less energy, generate more clean energy, and buy renewable energy credits. The plan outlines immediate, short-term, and long-term benchmark timelines. In the first phase of the 100 percent clean energy plan, the City of Atlanta will lead by example, transitioning their huge assortment of buildings and facilities to clean, renewable energy sources. The second phase of the plan will center on equity, economic development, and cost-effectiveness throughout Atlanta. Local organizations, including

the Sierra Club, the Partnership for Southern Equity, Solarize ATL, and many more, will have significant roles to play in the implementation and success of this clean energy transition plan.

In 2019, other cities across the state will also make commitments, such as Athens, where officials are currently holding town hall meetings and community dialogues. Check out Atlanta's clean energy plan at 100atl.com.

IRP is Coming!

BY NEIL SARDANA, BEYOND COAL ORGANIZER

Winter of 2019 is here and the process for determining the 2019 Integrated Resource Plan (often referred to as the IRP) has finally begun.

An IRP is a state's energy plan. In Georgia, this planning process is run by the five statewide elected members of our Public Service Commission (PSC) and takes place every three years. The IRP is a roadmap for how energy utilities, such as Georgia Power, will meet the entire state's energy needs: the energy for all residential homes, private businesses, and industries as well as for public entities and infrastructure such as schools, government buildings, and streetlights. Since Georgia is a regulated state when it comes to large energy utilities, Georgia Power has little to no competition. The Integrated Resource Plan process is designed to give the general public a voice in the regulation of energy companies, including setting fair prices, protecting our environment and serving the public interest.

The development process starts when Georgia Power and the other utilities provide

the PSC with their own draft of the IRP, including everything they would like to do regarding energy over the next three years. Then, in a judicial process over the next few months that involves input from the energy utility companies, environmental, energy and consumer advocate groups, and the general public, the PSC will develop the final draft, mandating what actions the utility companies must take as a part of the state's energy plan.

For example, in the IRP the Georgia PSC will determine:

- How much power Georgia is expected to need and what must be done to meet a change in demand.
- What types of energy to deploy (e.g., coal, gas, nuclear, solar, wind, hydro) and whether new facilities are needed.
- How much energy can be produced from

fossil fuels, solar, wind, hydro, etc., and which are the most cost-effective.

- What the status is of current or planned power facilities and whether they will be expanded, retired, or changed to a new form of energy production.
- What solutions can be used to make energy more affordable or energy usage more efficient.
- What operational, economic, environmental, or community concerns exist about energy production and usage in Georgia.

The IRP process is our best opportunity in Georgia to advocate for the retirement of dirty fossil fuel power plants, the transition to clean, renewable and carbon-free energy production such as solar and wind, and the development of clean energy storage solutions. We can also demand a full implementation of



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energy efficiency measures and energy affordability programs to reduce the overall cost of energy. This would benefit all utility customers—especially people living paycheck to paycheck who are at risk of having their heat or lights shut off.

Since the IRP process occurs only once every three years, this is an absolutely crucial time for us to engage and push for progress toward our goals of preventing climate change by retiring fossil fuel plants and limiting the emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. The long-term energy planning process starts in early 2019 and runs until the summer, so we'll have the opportunity, as a community of concerned residents of Georgia, to provide input and public comment on our energy future to the PSC.

After the IRP process, the Public Service Commission will conduct a rate case, which gives the public a voice in setting energy rates—what we actually see on our bills—for the near future. We need your help to win as much clean energy and as many fossil fuel retirements as possible in this IRP. Please contact Neil Sardana, neil.sardana@sierraclub.org, to get involved in our fight to win clean power for the people in Georgia!

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GET INVOLVED WITH OUR FIGHT TO WIN CLEAN POWER FOR GEORGIA:

Join us for our next Clean Energy For All committee meeting on Monday, February 4, 6:30-8:30 PM at the Georgia Chapter Office (743 E College Ave, Suite B, Decatur, GA 30030) or contact Neil Sardana, Beyond Coal Organizer: neil.sardana@sierraclub.org

POLITICAL & LEGISLATIVE

Midterm Election 2018 Recap

BY EDDIE EHLERT

The 2018 midterm elections saw a major change in a problem that has long bedeviled environmental voters: anti-environment incumbents were no longer running uncontested. The threats to our natural resources, wild places, and climate have become glaringly obvious since 2016 and this year the call for change was answered by a wave of new courageous candidates ready to do the work and spend the time, money, and sweat to make sure that environmental interests are well represented in the political office.

Thanks to their efforts and the efforts of a record number of Georgia Sierra Club volunteers, we have the largest number of victorious Endorsed Candidates in a decade. For the first time, the Georgia Chapter membership has chipped into our PAC to help fund candidates with bold ideas and concrete plans for success. Dekalb, Gwinnett, Cobb, and Fulton Counties have fundamentally changed course. All around the state of Georgia there are new Representatives and Senators who respect the natural world we all share and understand their responsibility to protect it.

While the statewide races were not as strong environmental victories as we had hoped for, the results show a hard-fought battle with very close tallies – tallies thought highly unlikely just a few years ago. In the Congressional races, we held a respectable four out of five, welcoming Lucy McBath to the Georgia delegation. Simultaneously, Carolyn Bourdeaux lost by a mere 400 votes in a previously anti-environment stronghold. The momentum of change toward

pro-climate, pro-clean energy, and pro-conservation policies is manifesting across Georgia. While we celebrate some clear wins for the planet, make sure to know who your elected officials are and let them know that you support environmental protection and action on climate change. If your legislator is protecting your planet, let them know and thank them for their efforts. If they lean more toward destroying our coastline with seismic testing, denuding our forests or seizing property for pipelines, make them aware of your outrage. You still make the choice in the voting booth. Your voice will continue to protect the environment across the state.

Everyone in the Sierra Club who made a phone call, knocked on a door, gave a contribution, encouraged a friend and, most of all, VOTED, helped generate a big victory for environmental progress in Georgia in 2018. As our incoming environmental champions take office in January, we'll keep in touch with them and make sure they are defending wild places and the climate. And let's not forget to be looking forward, towards 2020: our goal is parity or majority of environmental champions in the 2021 General Assembly. It's a goal that is possible with the sort of spectacular efforts we experienced this year. Georgia Environmental Voters are tough to beat. Courage on display!

A WORD FROM OUR POLITICAL FIELD DIRECTOR

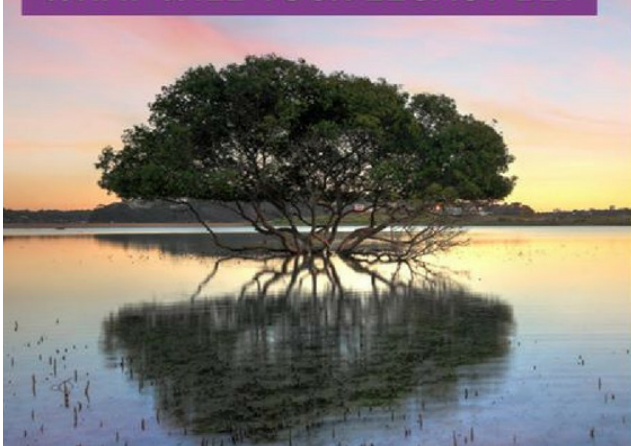
The Georgia Sierra Club's political organizing team worked diligently for eight weeks prior to the 2018 Midterms Elections on November 06, 2018, and another four weeks prior to the runoff elections on December 04, 2018, to educate voters across the state on our endorsed candidates and the importance of this year's elections while encouraging them to get out and vote.

Altogether, our campaign reached out to over **140k Georgia voters** through mass canvassing, phone-banking, and SMS-text efforts. Looking forward to 2019, our political organizers will continue working diligently throughout the 2019 legislative session in support of sustainability for our environment, starting with spreading support for Gwinnett County's MARTA Expansion referendum. Stay tuned for ways to get involved!



- NOELIA FRANCESCHI, GEORGIA CHAPTER POLITICAL ORGANIZERS FIELD DIRECTOR

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If you have named the Sierra Club - Georgia Chapter as a beneficiary or would like to discuss doing so, please contact us today at georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org.

LORI SULLIVAN *Director of Gift Planning*
2101 Webster St, Suite 1300, Oakland, CA 94612

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2019 Georgia Legislative Preview

BY MARK WOODALL

The 2019 state legislative session will convene on January 14 with a new governor and lieutenant governor, five new state senators and 30 new state representatives. All the Sierra Club's priority issue areas — including energy, transportation, water, and land protection — will likely see action. Now is the time to get involved and let your state representative and state senator hear your support for protecting Georgia's environment. Go to legis.ga.gov to find the contact information for your elected officials, as well as all things concerning the Georgia General Assembly.

In 2009, Georgia Power hired an army of lobbyists to pass State Bill 31, the Nuclear

Power Financing Act. SB 31 shifted all the financial risk of building new nukes to the customers. The customers have now prepaid over \$2 billion for Plant Vogtle units 3 and 4 — and are still paying every month, even though Vogtle 3 and 4 were supposed to be finished by 2017. In 2018, SB 355 stopped the tariff for future nuclear projects, but legislation to stop the current Vogtle nuclear tariff is still needed.

Historic transit governance legislation passed in 2018, but work remains to secure both temporary and permanent funding of transit. DeKalb County may seek legislation to increase MARTA funding. Driving an electric vehicle (EV) is one of the best ways to protect both the environment and national security. We expect continued efforts to reduce the nation's highest annual fee on EVs (\$200 a year in Georgia) and to reestablish at least some of the state's EV tax credit, which went from best in the nation to zero.

As a member of the Georgia Water Coalition, the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra



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Club will again work to pass several water quality protection measures. The Georgia Supreme Court's buffer case decision left many rivers and streams without protection, so legislation is needed to provide certainty to landowners and regulators.

Georgia Power continues to deal with almost 90 million tons of coal ash. Greater public notification, especially before dewatering of coal ash ponds into lakes and rivers, is needed. Coal ash policy took a step backward in the last days of the 2018 legislature as Georgia Power got an amendment exempting coal ash from an increase in the host fee paid to counties until 2025. It is terrible policy to have a lower fee for toxic coal ash than for regular household garbage.

The Water Coalition will again be working to restore funding of the trust funds that get fees from tire disposal, landfill tonnage, and hazardous waste. These funds have been diverted to other uses, leaving abandoned toxic sites and used tires all over Georgia. The Trust Fund Honesty constitutional amendment almost passed in 2018 and will be back again in 2019. Information about the water quality bills will be posted at gawater.org.

The Sierra Club has a national Democracy Initiative. This is a much-needed effort in view of the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, which allowed the nuclear industry to "pollute" Georgia's Public Service Commissioner runoff election with millions of dollars of dirty, dark money. At the legislature, we will also be supporting efforts to replace the old voting machines with hand-marked paper ballots.

Stopping rollbacks of environmental, health, and safety protection is always a critical activity. Dalton Utilities says they will be back

with another attack on democracy. Dalton Utilities, a partner in the hideously expensive Vogtle 3 and 4 projects, tried to pass House Bill 924 in 2018. HB 924 was an attempt to avoid a vote of the citizens of Dalton to increase debt due to Vogtle overruns. Sea Island Company is still trying to sell lots on the spit, so another attack on the Shore Protection Act may be headed to the legislature. You may remember the attempt two years ago to pass HB 271, a Beach Destruction Act. Other rollbacks will certainly appear. So please get involved and pay attention.

Capitol Conservation Day is February 20, 2019. Go to gawater.org for information and to register. I hope to see you there.



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WINTER 2019 GROUP NEWS

CENTENNIAL GROUP

SERVING COBB, CHEROKEE, & NORTH FULTON

An Active Start to 2019

BY LINDA BELL, BETTYE HARRIS,
AND LYNN WALSTON

END OF YEAR FESTIVITIES

We wrapped up 2018 with an excellent Holiday Potluck Party & Auction at the Avery Gallery in downtown Marietta on December 6. We had a record turnout, a record fundraising total, an awesome buffet, and we welcomed new and old friends



(including some of our general-election endorsees). Congrats to Linda Bell, Claudette Sukenick, Mary Miller, Connie Dassinger, and Mike Firment who received special leadership awards. Thanks to our Avery Gallery hosts, auctioneer Ron Warnken, the many volunteers who supported this event, and our generous donors.

COBB IS 4 TRANSIT!

"Survey says Cobb would support new sales tax for transit projects, including bus and rail... more than 50% view MARTA favorably."

We are pleased with results announced recently from a long-awaited transit survey of Cobb residents commissioned by the Board of Commissioners. See video summary at bit.ly/CobbMARTASurvey.

Our own Transit4Cobb team and other entities are discussing these results and possible next steps for creating and moving a transit funding proposal to the ballot box. All hands on deck are needed now as we meet with legislators, commissioners, city leaders, and residents. We will also reach out and offer assistance to Gwinnett transit volunteers to ensure a good result in their spring 2019 transit referendum. Please consider joining our team (transit4cobb.com), or contact



Linda Bell (elbell51@yahoo.com) for more information.

UPCOMING GROUP MEETINGS

Monthly Meetings are held at 7 PM at Life University in the Gymnasium Building.

- **Thursday, February 7:** “Under the Gold Dome,” our annual legislative update from our lobbyists, Neill Herring and Mark Woodall.
- **Thursday, March 7:** “Saving Our Home with Better Communications” with L. Hobart Stocking, an environmental and energy strategist who runs SkyWaterEarth, Inc. His presentation focuses on effective communication and messaging to better tell our stories and have more effective environmental conversations.



GROUP INFORMATION

Monthly Meetings: 1st Thursday, welcome/refreshments at 7 p.m., program at 7:30 p.m.; Life College, 1269 Barclay Cir. SE, Marietta. For directions please contact Lynn Walston.

Visit our webpage at
sierraclub.org/georgia/centennial

Join us on Facebook at
facebook.com/Centennial.Sierra.Club

GREATER GWINNETT GROUP

SERVING GWINNETT COUNTY

Bringing Transit to Gwinnett

BY DAN FRIEDMAN

The holidays are behind us, and as we turn our attention to 2019, there are major challenges ahead. First, and perhaps foremost, is the March MARTA referendum.

For decades, Sierrans have been working to bring transit to Gwinnett County. The March referendum could be the last opportunity for another decade. The 21st century promises to bring more people and jobs to the area and, as we have seen in the past, increased amounts of congestion and travel time. Unless the situation improves, new businesses will be hesitant to locate to Gwinnett County, which means the loss of jobs and opportunities that these companies would bring.

Gwinnett Sierrans are registering citizens to vote, talking with them about how transit will improve their lives, and providing information to make informed transit decisions. Gwinnett County is at a crossroads; it can continue to maintain the status quo or decide to make changes necessary to stay competitive in the coming years.

Quality of life hangs in the balance, as well as access to good jobs, affordable housing, diverse entertainment, and shopping options, things that not only drew current residents but will impact future generations. Additionally, cleaner air and water will make Gwinnett County a more attractive place to live.

GROUP INFORMATION

Monthly Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m., Berkmar High School, 405 Pleasant Hill Road, Lilburn.

Visit our webpage at
sierraclub.org/georgia/Gwinnett

SERVING ATLANTA, DEKALB, & SOUTH FULTON

Get Involved this Year!

BY NINA DUTTON

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MORE MARTA

On September 19, the Metro Atlanta Group and the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter RAIL Committee co-hosted a panel discussion event about transit expansion in Atlanta. In 2016, Atlanta voters overwhelmingly approved a half-penny sales tax to fund the largest transit investment in our city in 40 years. Earlier this year, MARTA released a proposed expansion and improvement plan called More MARTA and gathered public input on the proposal through meetings and an online survey. At this presentation and panel discussion, we learned about the proposed More MARTA plan and joined a



conversation with panelists representing a variety of perspectives on the plan. The speakers and panelists were Kyle Keahey (More MARTA program manager), Sherry Williams of Georgia STAND-UP, Cathy Woolard of BeltLine Rail Now, and Betty Willis of Emory University and Clifton Community Partnership.

After the event, we encouraged attendees to contact MARTA and other officials with their opinions on how the final plan should be formed. The MARTA Board voted on a final "More MARTA" plan on October 4, which includes 29 miles of light rail, 13 miles of bus

rapid transit lines, three arterial rapid transit routes and station improvements. Alongside the Chapter RAIL committee, we will be watching the plan as it unfolds.

RECENT MEETING REPORTS

- October 9: We focused on the 2018 elections, how to get involved, and their implications at this meeting. Eddie Ehlert, political committee chair for the Georgia Chapter and Metro Atlanta Group, discussed the candidate endorsement process and other topics, such as some of the statewide amendments and measures on the ballot. Scott Holcomb, District 81 State House Representative and Georgia Sierra Club-endorsed candidate in 2018 and prior elections, discussed the need for clean energy in our state, the renewable portfolio standard he is considering introducing in the next session, and more.
- November 13: We learned about clean energy campaigns from Georgia Sierra Club Clean Energy Organizer Marquese Averett and the Clean Energy For All committee volunteer co-chair Norman Slawsky. Marquese and Norman specifically highlighted the City of Atlanta 100% clean energy plan, as well as Pay As You Save energy efficiency programs. Our discussion also touched on shareholder proposals, the concept of energy burden (the proportion of your disposable income spent on energy bills), and clean energy jobs. With the Georgia Power Integrated Resource Plan (the utility's rolling 20-year plan) to be updated in the new year, Atlanta's 100% clean energy plan yet to be adopted by the city council, and with the concept of a Green New Deal at the federal level on the minds of many, 2019 will be a big year for clean energy work. If you want to get involved, come to the Chapter's next Clean Energy for All committee meeting in February!

- In December, we skipped the typical group meeting and instead invited all our members and volunteers to the Chapter holiday party.



CONGRATULATIONS, MAX BROWN!

Our outings chair, Max Brown, won the 2018 Outings Leader of the Year award from the Georgia Chapter for his outstanding revival of the Metro Atlanta Group outings program. This year, Max led outings to illuminate what is interesting and beautiful about the parks we have in our metro area, inspiring Sierrans who explore and enjoy these spaces to protect our environment. In the last quarter of 2018, Max led hikes on the Gold Branch Trail (October 13) and East Palisades Trail (November 17). Find out about upcoming outings at our monthly meetings, in our meeting announcements, on our Facebook page, or on the Chapter's calendar online.



ADOPT-A-STREAM MONITORING

Our Adopt-a-Stream activities focus on Peachtree Creek in Medlock Park. For biological monitoring, we need many eyes to find the macroinvertebrate critters found in the creek.

The next chance to get your feet wet (figu-

ratively or literally!) on a day with both biological and chemical monitoring will be Saturday, March 16, from 10 AM – 12 PM. Chemical monitoring will be from 10 – 11 AM, and biological monitoring will take the full time. For information about chemical monitoring dates, call Larry Kloet at (404) 636-7226. For more details about biological monitoring, call Nancy Wylie at (404) 256-1172. Detailed directions are available at sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta/adopt-stream-program.

GET INVOLVED!

Want to pitch in by keeping on top of local news, policy, politics, events, and opportunities? Would you like to help out at our meetings, plan events, join our political committee, or help get out the vote for elections this year? Please email our chair, Nina Dutton, at nddutton@gmail.com.

GROUP INFORMATION

Our Executive Committee Meetings are open and generally held on the first Tuesday of the month (Athens Pizza, 7:30 p.m.). Contact Nina Dutton (nddutton@gmail.com) for details.

Monthly Meetings: The Metro Atlanta Group typically meets on the second Tuesday of each month. Typically our meetings feature a speaker on a timely topic. Then we present info on how to take action on important issues. We have been meeting at the Georgia Chapter office, at 743 E. College Ave., Suite B, Decatur, GA, 30030 but the location is subject to change. Please join us at 7 p.m. to socialize and 7:30 p.m. for the program!

Sign up for email updates through the Georgia Chapter website (sierraclub.org/georgia) and be sure to include your Atlanta-area zipcode.

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta

Join us on Facebook at facebook.com/sierraclubatl

LAGRANGE GROUP

SERVING THE LAGRANGE AREA

2019 Activities are Underway!

BY LAURA BREYFOGLE

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN 2019

LaGrange's first group meeting of 2019 was held on the January 15. Angela Bennett, who is a professional theatre artist, presented on "Using Art to Inspire Social Action," which includes music and spoken word from her original environmentally-themed theatrical show, "Guardians of Gaia."

For more information about Angela's work and the show visit: rootsproductions.org. If you would be interested in having her bring this presentation to your group, please contact her at angelinATL99@gmail.com or 424-268-0628. Angela would love to come and share her passion and hopefully inspire you too!

RECENT OUTINGS

January 12-13: Festival of the Cranes

Over 20,000 Sandhill cranes, along with 20 or more Whooping cranes, spend the winter at Wheeler

National Wildlife Refuge. Events included viewing the cranes up close, birding workshops, nature walks, a live raptors show, and Teddy Roosevelt impersonator Joe Wiegand.

UPCOMING GROUP MEETINGS

All Monthly Meetings begin with social time at 6:30 PM, with programming beginning at 7 PM.

- **Tuesday, February 19:** Monthly Meeting-Upcoming GA Environmental Legislation (@ St. Mark's Parish Hall)
- **Tuesday, March 19:** Monthly Meeting-Al Gore's Climate Change (@ LaGrange College, Dickson Assembly Room)

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GROUP INFORMATION

Monthly Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 PM refreshments, 7 PM program, St. Mark's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 207 N. Greenwood St., LaGrange.

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/lagrange

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SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP

SERVING AUGUSTA & SURROUNDING AREAS

An Active Year for the Savannah River Group

BY LINDA MCBURNEY, CO-CHAIR

2018 was a busy year for the Savannah River Group (SRG). Two SRG Executive Committee members took on additional roles this year. Tim Nelken became the Adopt-a-Stream coordinator for Columbia County and Larry Komp joined Tim as an elected Soil and Water Conservation Supervisor in Columbia County.

The outings leaders led a total of 25 outings. Outings Chair Cathy Black conducted an outings leader training that included six new people and re-certifying five outings leaders. Two of the new leaders, Bridget Brown and Joshua Mastel, are veterans with our newly formed Military Outdoors Program, with Bridget as the chair. The two veterans have scheduled outings for January and February, so they are on their way to becoming certified outings leaders.

We convened two Lobby Your Legislator classes. Members helped on Election Day by providing rides to the polls, while others were active in political campaigns for some of the Sierra Club endorsed candidates by distributing signs, providing housing for campaign employees, and holding fundraising events.

Our Adopt-a-Stream monitoring sites increased from six to nine per month and the number of certified regular volunteers increased from four to seven. We also had a Harbour Keeper, Noel Sheehan, and Charlie Davis, Veterans for Clean Water, volunteer with us at six sites to learn more about the AAS processes & methods for collecting & testing water samples. The number of quarterly Adopt-a-Highway volunteers averaged from six to seven.

We partnered with the City of North Augusta Stormwater Management and the Interfaith Environmental Working Group to build a rain garden to slow and treat the runoff from roads, parking lots, and tennis courts in Riverview Park, North Augusta,

SC. The Conservation Chair developed a plan to educate developers to use the contour of the land when developing housing projects and was a judge at a middle school's Science, Technology, Engineering, Math Fest, where students created environmental projects.

We participated in eight tabling events, and the Co-Chairs and Conservation Chair were guest speakers at three events. There are many other activities ongoing, and the fun keeps growing!

Correction to our Fall 2018 article: the correct name for the original Georgia and Alabama chapter was the Chattahoochee Chapter, not the Georgia/Alabama Regional Chapter.

GROUP INFORMATION

Monthly Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 PM., Unitarian Church on Walton Way, Augusta.

Visit our webpage at
sierraclub.org/georgia/savannah-river

COASTAL GROUP

SERVING SAVANNAH & SURROUNDING COUNTIES

UPCOMING GROUP MEETINGS

For Monthly Meeting location details, visit
sierraclub.org/georgia/calendar.

• **Tuesday, February 19, 6:30 - 7:30 PM:** Monthly Meeting - Offshore Drilling: There is More We Can Do!

• **Tuesday, March 19, 6:30 - 7:30 PM:** Monthly Meeting - 100% Clean Energy for Savannah

GROUP INFORMATION

Visit our webpage at
sierraclub.org/georgia/coastal

Join us on Facebook at
bit.ly/CoastalSCFB

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VOLUNTEER ISSUE LEADERS

For a **complete** listing of Conservation Committee Chairs and Issue Leaders, please visit: sierraclub.org/georgia/directory.

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SIERRACLUB.ORG/GEORGIA

Head to our website for all sorts of great resources and opportunities, including a **complete** listing of all Conservation Committee Chairs, Issue Leaders, and Group Leaders at **sierraclub.org/georgia/directory**.

VOLUNTEER

Be a part of the legacy! Sign up today to help us protect Georgia's environment: **bit.ly/GASCVolunteer**

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