



Welcome to the Capital Sierran, newsletter of the Sierra Club DC Chapter

August 2021



Sierra Club President Ramón Cruz (left) and DC Chapter executive committee member Nicky Sundt (right) join a demonstration at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on July 20, 2021, to support climate provisions in congressional legislation. Photo credit: KT R Ose.

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New Legislation Would Codify DC's Climate Commitments

By Claire August

In May, Councilmember Mary Cheh, along with seven of her colleagues – a majority of the DC Council – introduced the Climate Commitment Act of 2021, which codifies DC's climate commitments into law and solidifies DC's pledge to decarbonization. While climate and sustainability plans exist in Mayor Muriel Bowser's Sustainable DC and Clean Energy DC plans, without writing them into law, these commitments could be vulnerable to dismissal, and cast aside.

The bill sets interim targets for greenhouse gas reductions and aligns DC's climate commitments with President Biden's national climate goals. The legislation requires:

- 50% greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2030 with interim targets between 2025 and 2050
- Carbon neutrality by 2050
- Carbon neutrality for District government operations by 2040

In addition to Councilmember Cheh (Ward 3), the legislation was co-sponsored by Council Chairman Phil Mendelson and Councilmembers Robert White (At-Large), Christina Henderson (At-Large), Brianne Nadeau (Ward 1), Brooke Pinto (Ward 2), Janeese Lewis George (Ward 4) and Charles Allen (Ward 6).

To get involved with the DC Chapter's Clean Energy Committee, contact Lara Levison at clean.energy@dc.sierraclub.org.



WMATA's battery powered, all electric Metrobus. Photo credit: MJW15

WMATA Sets Targets for Zero-Emission Bus Fleet

By Lucas Godshalk

The Sierra Club and its allies scored a major victory in June when the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) presented its initial plans to electrify its entire bus fleet. The plans state that all WMATA bus purchases will be zero emission by 2030 and 100% of the fleet will be zero emission by 2045. The plans are preliminary, but this marks a dramatic turn from only a few years ago when WMATA barely considered an electric bus pilot program, much less total fleet electrification.

WMATA has much more work to do, and while the plans presented at the recent board meeting should be even more aggressive, this is still an important first step. The Sierra Club thanks all of our members and allies who wrote or called in to WMATA during the campaign, as the outpouring of support had a clear and powerful effect on the future of WMATA. This truly is a coalition effort, and the DC chapter is proud to partner with the Union of Concerned Scientists, Mom's Clean Air Force, and Sierra Club chapters in Maryland and Virginia in driving the campaign forward. We will need to keep pushing WMATA to produce the best plan and to fully execute it in the years ahead. However, we also want to celebrate what is clearly a turn in the road for our bus transit system!

To get involved with local efforts to electrify our transportation, contact Lucas Godshalk at clean.transportation@dc.sierraclub.org.

The graphic features a light blue background with a bokeh effect. At the top left is the Sierra Club logo with the text 'SIERRA CLUB WASHINGTON D.C.'. To its right is the 'OUR LAST STRAW' logo with 'DC · MD · VA' below it. The main title 'TURNING TAKEOUT GREEN' is in large, bold, teal and green letters. Below it, the subtitle 'EXPLORING REUSABLE TAKEOUT CONTAINER STRATEGIES IN DC' is in smaller, dark teal letters. Three circular headshots of the speakers are arranged horizontally. Below each headshot is the speaker's name and title in white text on a teal background.

SIERRA CLUB
WASHINGTON D.C.

OUR LAST STRAW
DC · MD · VA

TURNING TAKEOUT GREEN

EXPLORING REUSABLE TAKEOUT CONTAINER STRATEGIES IN DC

Dan Simons
Farmers Restaurant
Group Co-Owner & Our
Last Straw Founder

Rachel Clark
Legislative Counsel, DC Council
Committee on Transportation &
the Environment

John Hansen
Paradigm One
Founder & CEO

Zero Waste Committee's Turning Takeout Green Webinar

By Susan Schorr

The Zero Waste Committee's Turning Takeout Green webinar was held on July 12 in

partnership with Our Last Straw. It featured leading sustainable restaurateur Dan Simons of Founding Farmers Group, Rachel Clark, legislative counsel for the DC Council, and John Hansen, the founder and CEO of Paradigm One, a reusable takeout container service in the DC area. The event, the second in our [Taming Takeout Trash webinar series](#), was moderated by Sierra Club volunteer Tiondra Willingham.

Nearly 60 people attended, including leaders of the DC restaurant industry, government officials charged with meeting the District's ambitious waste diversion goals, and customers clamoring for an end to single-use plastic takeout containers. The webinar raised awareness of the benefits of reusables and the growing demand customers and advocates have for these services. It also sparked the process of identifying solutions to the challenges faced by restaurants in adopting reusable takeout container services, especially as restaurants are trying to rebuild after the economic and staffing challenges caused by the pandemic.

Participants learned that reusable takeout containers can be used hundreds of times and avoid the waste stream altogether. They offer restaurants cost savings, branding opportunities and attract new customers. Restaurants also learned that the DC Council is expected to vote later this summer on grant funding to support the uptake of reusable food ware.

You can [watch the webinar on YouTube](#).

To get involved with the DC Chapter's Zero Waste Committee, contact Doreen Campbell at zero.waste@dc.sierraclub.org.

Let's Volunteer - Take a Hike, Diabetes!

By Annie Wang

The organization Hiking My Feelings is on a mission to improve community health by creating opportunities for people to experience the healing power of nature. Take a Hike is a diabetes campaign with the mission to hike one million miles for diabetes awareness as a community.

To contribute toward the goal, all you have to do is track your daily running, walking, hiking, or rolling workouts with the apps or devices you already have. It's that simple! Through December 2021, Hiking My Feelings is also offering monthly prizes from generous sponsors.

You can register here: [Kilter Event: Take A Hike, Diabetes](#). **Our team name is called SierraClubDC, so please make sure to choose our team.** Note: There is an initial donation fee of \$15. Please reach out to [Annie](#) if you have any questions.

Happy hiking!



Western wildfires blanket North America with a smoky haze on Monday July 19, 2021, coloring the setting sun a reddish orange as it sinks below the U.S. Capitol. Congress was debating legislation to address climate change — linked to the worsening wildfire conditions. Photo credit: Nicky Sundt

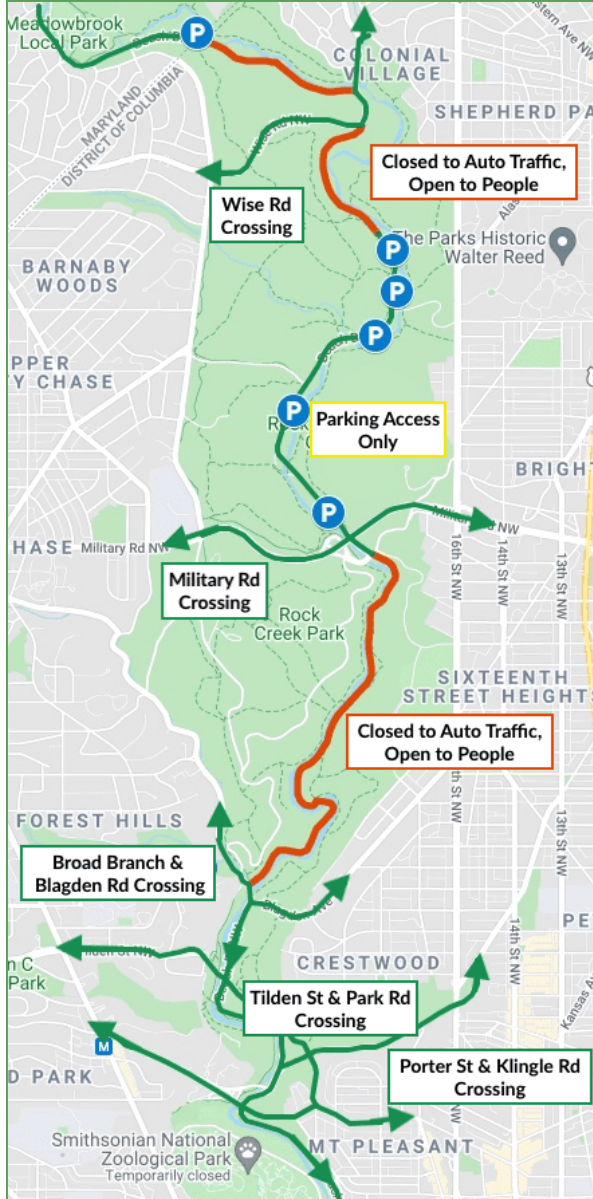
Rock Creek, Seven Days a Week!

By Larry Martin

For the past two years, outdoor summer fun in the District has been enhanced by the continued management of upper Beach Drive as a recreation space. The overwhelmingly popular recreational priority for non-motorized use of upper Beach Drive on weekends (that's been in place since the 1980s), has been full-time, seven-days a week since 2020.

Strollers, hikers, runners, and cyclists of all ages are using the road all day long for fun in the sun. The Sierra Club is on the record for supporting this use of upper Beach Drive permanently, seven-days a week, all year long. But, it's going to take more support, and your help is needed. Here is a [link to add your name](#) to a petition calling for Beach Drive to be open to all.

The Sierra Club is in coalition with other



groups such as the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, the DC Environmental Network and Greater Greater Washington to bring awareness and advocacy for keeping Beach Drive open seven-days a week. The People's Alliance for Rock Creek (PARC) is organizing testimony and the petition in support of the effort and having some initial success. On June 1, 2021, the DC Council passed a resolution, 9-4, in favor of making the current traffic management pattern on upper Beach Drive permanent, and on June 15, the Montgomery County Council passed a similar resolution.

On July 8, the National Park Service kicked off the environmental assessment with a virtual public meeting attended by more than 250 people. At the meeting they proposed two concepts for the management of upper Beach Drive and asked the public to comment on the choices. Concept #1 is to reinstate weekday automobile commuter traffic. Concept #2 is to maintain the current configuration during the pandemic. There is a 45-day comment period that ends on August 22, 2021. More detail is available at the National Park Service website. Please submit a formal comment on the environmental assessment [via this form](#).

For more information about the DC Chapter's conservation efforts, contact Conservation Chair Larry Martin at conservation@dc.sierraclub.org.

Need a new book? Check out ideas from our volunteers

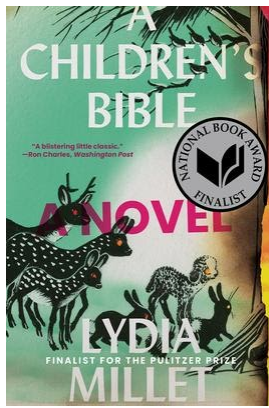
By Lily Rozenstrauch and Sara Lepley

Maybe you're beach-bound. Maybe you're starting to take the Metro again. Maybe you're socialized-out and could use downtime... something tells us you could use a great book.

You're in luck! We asked volunteers across our DC Chapter for eco-minded book recommendations and they delivered. Find a selection of thought-provoking reads perfect for wherever you find yourself this summer [here](#) - and a few samplings below.

A Children's Bible by Lydia Millet

Lara Levison, chair of our Clean Energy committee, calls this tale: "an unsettling look



at society destabilized by climate change in the near future.” It follows 12 children who run away from a forced vacation when a storm descends.

How You Can Influence Congress by George Alderson

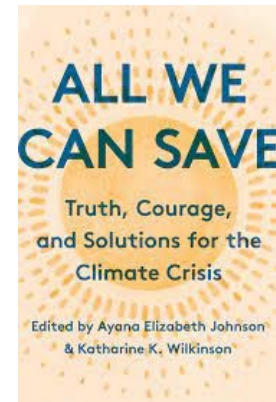
Ordinary citizens can make extraordinary change - something we already know as climate activists! For a lowdown on some of the tools we have at our disposal, check out this recommendation from volunteer Marchant Wentworth.

All We Can Save edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine Wilkinson

This 2020 collection of essays and poems seeks to highlight a wide range of women’s voices in the environmental movement, containing titles such as “Collards Are Just as Good as Kale,” “Man on the TV Say,” “Ode to Dirt” and “A Field Guide for Transformation.”

Thank you to volunteer Leah Karrer for the recommendation.

Check out the rest of the [#DCFaves book recommendations](#).



Pro-democracy advocates speak to a crowd at the “Good Trouble Vigil” at Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington on July 17, 2021, calling for the passage of For the People Act, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, and DC Statehood Admission Act. Photo credit: Will Anderson

Remembering John Lewis

On Saturday, July 17, as thunder rolled across the region, hundreds gathered at Black Lives Matter Plaza in downtown DC to celebrate the life and legacy of the late statesman and civil rights hero John Lewis. He was extraordinary, and his work and legacy stand as a powerful example of the American ideal -- justice and liberty for all.

As a young man, he was an activist and organizer leading the civil rights movement as part of the Freedom Riders and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington. In 1965, when leading a march from Selma to Montgomery for voting rights, John Lewis was beaten and his skull fractured as he led peaceful marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Later in life, Lewis would become a leading member of Congress representing Georgia. Beloved and respected by his peers, and a lion of the fight for justice and civil rights, Lewis became known as the “conscience of Congress.” He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011.

The vigil marked one year since his death. He was commemorated and his legacy honored as the DC community gathered to uplift his lifelong call for voting rights, including full voting rights and representation for the people of DC through DC statehood. The speakers and participants at the vigil called for the swift passage of the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, as well as legislation that would expand and protect the right to vote and restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These bills would ensure the right to vote, advance fair districts, thwart racist anti-voter laws, and halt discriminatory barriers to voting being enacted in states across the nation.

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton of DC, the author of the DC Statehood Admission Act and a longtime friend and colleague of Lewis in the House and with the SNCC, spoke strongly in favor of these essential pieces of legislation.

Participants walked from Black Lives Matter Plaza to St. John’s Episcopal Church to present a wreath in memory of John Lewis. I, my fellow Sierra Club members, and all assembled were joined together in sadness as we remembered John Lewis’ powerful works, and also in hope as we reflected on his call to get in “good trouble, necessary trouble” – to protect, and expand, the right to vote.

[Join the call for the freedom to vote today! Send a note to the Biden administration, and urge Congress to pass pro-democracy reforms.](#)



Crowd gathers for the “Good Trouble Vigil” in honor of the late Rep. John Lewis at Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, July 17, 2021. Photo credit: Will Anderson

Nominations for DC Chapter Executive Committee

As a volunteer-led, grassroots organization that advocates for the environment in the District of Columbia, the Sierra Club DC Chapter invites you to get involved!

The Executive Committee (ExCom) of the DC chapter is responsible for the overall activities of the chapter, including advocacy, conservation, recruitment and membership services, financial management, communications, and political programs.

The ExCom is made up of nine members elected by the Chapter membership in the fourth quarter of every year, in accordance with its bylaws. We strive to get better every year – and we like to do that with fresh ideas and new voices. The nominations and elections schedule is posted on our website [here](#).

The chapter is accepting nominations to fill five seats on the ExCom. Our nominations committee is seeking a diverse range of candidates who are ready to step up and learn what we do to organize change across the district. We strongly encourage applications from members in Wards 7 and 8. All nominations are due to the nominating committee by Friday, September 24, 2021. Members elected begin their term at the first meeting in January and serve two-year terms.

Candidates should understand and be willing to promote the [mission of the Sierra Club](#), to contribute in a substantial way, attend the ExCom meetings each month, to assist with leadership and fundraising efforts, and to provide leadership and direction for the Group.

Please note that any candidates for the ExCom and those eligible to vote in the election must be Sierra Club members as of Sunday, October 31, 2021. You may sign up to be a member here: <http://sc.org/JoinDC>. To update or verify your membership information, you can email member.care@sierraclub.org

If you are interested in running or would like to suggest another person, or if you

have any questions about the election, please email chair@dc.sierraclub.org and vice.chair@dc.sierraclub.org by September 24.

If you care about the direction Sierra Club is taking locally, we are very interested in hearing from you!

Volunteer Opportunities

Holiday Party & Silent Auction Planning - *Early December (date TBA)*

A successful event takes lots of dedicated and passionate volunteers. Our Annual Holiday Party & Silent Auction will tentatively be held in person, in early December. If you're interested in making this annual event a success, [fill out this form](#) and we'll be in touch!

THEARC Farm - *Saturday September 4, 2021 at 10am - 1pm (THEARC 1901 Mississippi Ave SE)*

Join the Farm team for hands-on planting, weeding, building and learning on Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus ([THEARC](#)) Farm. THEARC Farm is the anchor site of the Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR) Farms network. The project farm was to encourage healthy nutrition in the community and utilize green space in a positive way. To RSVP, please [email](#) Sierra Club volunteer Annie.

DC Chapter Committee Meetings

These and other events are always posted on our chapter calendar at sierraclub.org/dc/calendar

Zero Waste Committee Meeting - *Tuesday, August 10 at 6:30pm (online)*

Contact Doreen Campbell (zero.waste@dc.sierraclub.org) for more information. [RSVP here for August](#), and here for the [September 14 meeting](#).

Smart Growth Committee Meeting - *Wednesday, August 11 at 6:45pm (online)*

Contact Payton Chung (smart.growth@dc.sierraclub.org) for more information. [RSVP here for August](#), and here for the [September 8 meeting](#).

Clean Water Committee Meeting - *Wednesday, September 15 at 6:30pm (online)*

Contact Larry Martin (clean.water@dc.sierraclub.org) for more information. [RSVP here](#).

Clean Energy Committee Meeting - *Tuesday, September 21 at 6:30pm (online)*

Contact Lara Levison (clean.energy@dc.sierraclub.org) for more information. [RSVP here](#).

DC Chapter Executive Committee Meeting - *Wednesday, August 25 at 6:30pm*

Dues-paying Sierra Club members can attend meetings of the Executive Committee which take place the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm. For meeting details, please email WashingtonDC.Chapter@SierraClub.org at least 48 hours in advance with subject line: ExCom meeting guest.

Not sure if your membership is active? Join or renew here: <http://sc.org/JoinDC> or check your account here: <https://myaccount.sierraclub.org/MyAccountLogin>. You can also use this page to update your account and mail preferences.

New Volunteers and Activists wanted!

The Sierra Club works for clean energy, zero waste, clean water, and sustainable transportation. [Fill out our Volunteer Form to get involved.](#)

While our offices remain closed to prevent the spread of covid-19, our committee meetings have remained active and online. RSVP early to get the link for video conferencing. Phone options are also available.

Thank you for your support!

As always, we couldn't do this without your support. Sign up to be a monthly donor to keep our campaigns, committees, and advocacy going. Giving [\\$5, \\$10, or \\$25](#) a month can greatly increase our effectiveness as we communicate with our members and activate our campaigns. Just check the box to make your gift monthly.

[Donate](#)

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