My story starts with a thirteen-day, whirlwind trip to the desert and a life changing hike down into the Grand Canyon. A fire was lit, and I started a relentless pursuit of exploring our Public Lands, followed by a search for how I could turn my future life’s work into protecting them. A couple years later, in the spring of 2016, I found myself in a new job with the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

A look back on social media and I find the words I wrote as I walked into our office, my first day on the job — I am so excited to be working with such a great group of people, on work I genuinely care about. That statement stands true today. Since then, I’ve had the opportunity to work alongside you and see how passionate you are truly are. I’ve learned what makes you keep going in this fight to curb climate change and protect our environment, and I’ve blown away when I see just how much you’re willing to give.

You’ve shown up at countless events to help out when needed; you’ve spent your nights and weekends working on campaigns, leading and attending meetings, and managing volunteers; you’ve led people into the forest to share your passion with others; and you’ve pitched in your own dime to support our collective work. You are Sierra Club.

Three years ago, I came on board in a time of transition, just as we sit here today. I am still excited to be working with a great group of people — our current team of talented staff, engaged Executive Committee members, and you! We will continue our work protecting wild places, expanding clean transit options across the state, picking up political and legislative wins, and transitioning Georgia to a clean energy future for all!

Whether you’ve been helping us for years or are just now looking for ways to get involved, we sure could use your support! Check out the calendar on our website (sierraclub.org/georgia/calendar) often to find out about events, meetings, and outings; follow us on social media for all the latest updates and how to get involved; donate your time, talent, or money; or give us a call and tell us what you care about most and let us help plug you into our work.

Hope to see you or hear from you soon!

Jessica Morehead
Interim Chapter Director
The Sierra Club Georgia Chapter is growing!

Since our last issue, we’ve welcomed Ricky LeRoux as the new communications coordinator for the chapter. After graduating from UGA with a journalism degree, Ricky spent most of his career in the newspaper industry. He joined the staff at the Sierra Club to apply his skill set toward his passion for the outdoors.

As communications coordinator, Ricky works on the chapter’s social media feeds, manages its website and more.

The Georgia Chapter is very thankful for the help provided by our outgoing interns and fellows and wishes them well in the next phases of their careers. Tori Mister served as the Beyond Coal Campaign intern, spearheading outreach and engagement with communities affected by coal-fired power plants. Eliza Stevenson has been our Quaker Volunteer Service Fellow for the last year, working on student outreach and the Ready for 100 Campaign. Kayla Chen and Maria Russo spent the summer as Urban Leadership Fellows, helping the chapter organize Sierra Club & Beer events and a rally to protest changes to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Welcome new staff, thanks to summer interns/fellows

More than 20 years ago, a group of activists banded together for a common cause and prevented DuPont from establishing a titanium mine that would have potentially damaged the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. DuPont planned to mine in an area known as Trail Ridge on the east side of the Okefenokee. The topography of the swamp is similar to a saucer with Trail Ridge serving as the saucer’s lip. A mine in that area had the potential to cause significant damage by disrupting the swamp’s natural boundary.

Club officials mounted an opposition to the mine, which culminated in February 1999 when DuPont signed the “No Mine Agreement,” officially ending their pursuit. A few years later in 2003, DuPont donated 5,000 acres to the Okefenokee Refuge, retiring mineral rights on these lands with the Georgia Wildlife Federation, and 11,000 acres to The Conservation Fund, which holds mineral rights to these lands as well.

How did the Sierra Club convince one of the largest companies in the world to abandon its plans? It required a multi-pronged approach that included a broad public awareness campaign, engaging DuPont shareholders, and the coordination of a multitude of environmental groups, activists, stakeholders, and politicians.

In early 1997, news of the proposed titanium mine was gaining traction and drawing headlines, with outlets in Atlanta, Savannah, and Jacksonville writing pieces about DuPont’s plans and the activists opposed to them. “Judy Jennings was the Chapter’s Paul Revere, sounding the alarm to newspapers, TV stations, and organizations around the region,” said Sam Collier, who served as the Sierra Club’s Southeast regional representative at the time.

The issue got national attention when then-Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt toured the Okefenokee and the proposed...
At first, the activists were skeptical, believing the stakeholder collaborative was just a way to wear them down or a way to find out how they did it. Then, a reporter called him, and told him he needed a resolution. He thought he’d be glad to do it, but he said no and couldn’t take on another resolution project.

“I stood up and said, ‘Well, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to send you $1,000. I’m going to send it today. You’ll get the check in the mail. I want you to go as far as you can with that $1,000, and let’s see what we can do something about this,’” Booher said.

He decided to write a shareholder resolution that included everything he wanted to say. He submitted it for approval by the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC). Booher would have to publish it and put it up for a vote at the next shareholder meeting.

And so he said, “We’ll look into that. Next?” The meeting moved on to other speakers, and Booher never got the chance to deliver his speech.

“On the way home, I turned to my wife. I said, ‘This pisses me off. And you can piss off a normal shareholder, but you really don’t go around pissing off activists.’ And I said I’m going to do something about this,” Booher said.

Submit a comment to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asking them to deny the mining permit at bit.ly/ProtectTheOkefenokee.

Contact Sierra Club volunteer Sam Collier at sam.collier3@gmail.com if you want to help defend the swamp.

— Ricky Leroux

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

History repeats itself: New mine proposed outside Okefenokee

Twenty years after activists with the Sierra Club and its allies stopped DuPont from setting up a mine outside the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, a new company is seeking to do the same.

Twin Pines LLC out of Birmingham, Alabama, has filed permits with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to mine titanium dioxide less than four miles from the refuge, the Associated Press reports.

The company says its mining operation would permanently affect 65 acres of wetlands and more than 4,500 feet of tributaries, the AP reports. The permit application also predicts impacts to the gopher tortoise and gopher frog, two species that are protected by Georgia state law, but not the federal Endangered Species Act.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Twin Pines Minerals President Steve Ingle said his company’s mining techniques are "much more environmentally friendly and efficient than what was being proposed in the 1990s" by DuPont.

But the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the wildlife refuge, said the mine could pose "substantial risks" to the environment and some of the damage might be irreversible.

The federal agency made those comments to the Corps of Engineers and provided them to the Associated Press.

“We have concerns that the proposed project poses substantial risks for significant effect to the environment,” the Fish and Wildlife Service wrote in a five-page response to the Army Corps dated Feb. 20. “Should impacts occur, they may not be able to be reversed, repaired, or mitigated.”

The agency’s memo said even though the mine is outside the borders of the refuge, it could still impact the entire swamp. The AP reports that the memo also quotes former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, who opposed DuPont’s efforts in the 1990s, as having said “Titanium is a common mineral, while the Okefenokee is a very uncommon swamp.”

While the company is initially asking to mine on about four square miles, it eventually wants to expand the mine to 19 square miles, the AP reports.

The Sierra Club Georgia Chapter is mobilizing to stop the mine, just as it did 20 years ago. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has extended the public comment period to September 12.

Submit a comment to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asking them to deny the mining permit at bit.ly/ProtectTheOkefenokee.
DuPont agreed,” Collier said, adding, “That optimize that outcome. And to our surprise, benefit most with no mine at all, how can we together, one option has to be how can we ‘no mine scenario.’

At the small no-mine group meetings, DuPont representa-
tives said they didn’t need the ore from the mine, but they wanted the value of that ore, Collier said. Then they came back and said they didn’t need the full value of the ore, just the profit. Collier said the group could live with letting DuPont get some money for their trouble. “Not to say that we would give it to them, or that anybody would give it. In fact, nobody did. But we said we could live with that outcome if you can find a way to get donations or tax breaks or something. … And eventually they lost inter-
est. They realized nobody was going to hand them money for doing nothing,” Collier said.

In February 1999, the official “No-Mine Agreement” was signed, putting an end to the profit. “I would have been satisfied just to go up and not letting me speak, we’ve now passed a resolution that’s going to be voted on by everybody that’s a shareholder in DuPont. And that resolution is exactly what I was going to say when I stood up.”

Booher travelled back to Delaware for the 1998 shareholder meeting knowing his reso-
ducing the impact of the mine. But in December 1997, the meeting was going to hand them money for donating to their cause. “Not to say that we would give it to them, or that anybody would give it. In fact, nobody did. But we said we could live with that outcome if you can find a way to get donations or tax breaks or something. … And eventually they lost interest. They realized nobody was going to hand them money for doing nothing,” Collier said.

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GET TOGETHER: FALL GATHERING 2019

The Sierra Club Georgia Chapter will be having its 2019 Fall Gathering on the weekend of No-

vember 15 at the Okefenokee. We will have a slate of activities planned for the weekend, including a chili cook-off, a paddle trip, and more. We’ll also be talking about our future efforts to protect the Okefenokee from new threats as well as our other priority campaigns.

For lodging, we’ll have cabin and camping options available. Visit sierraclub.org/georgia/ FallGathering2019 for more info as it becomes available.
More MARTA and state transit in the works

TEJAS KOTAK

MARTA is poised for its largest expansion since its creation. The More MARTA program within the city of Atlanta will create 22 miles of new light rail in the city, four new bus rapid transit routes (BRT), and many more arterial rapid transit and local bus lines.

Two important points to touch on here are buses and the project timeline. Buses move hundreds of thousands of people a day in the metro area, and Atlanta should be proud of the work being done to expand its bus services as well as its rail expansion. With many residents and planners enjoying seeing rail lines throughout a city, BRT lines can provide the same frequency and quality of service as most light rail lines. They must be done properly with dedicated lanes and signal prioritization, which are opportunities for us to stay involved with the process as MARTA and the city begin building these new projects to make sure they are done properly.

Regarding the More MARTA project timeline: Very few of these will be ready within the next five years, and most of the light rail will not be in operation for at least a decade. This is largely due to the long timeline engineering projects of their size require as well as the funding constraints MARTA still faces. MARTA is the major transit provider in the United States that does not receive dedicated funding from the state it serves. There has historically been strong opposition to funding mass transit at the Georgia Capitol from a mix of car-oriented interests and politicians.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) does offer limited funding to these entities, but it is a far cry from what is needed in order to have robust, connected systems throughout the state. Right now, GDOT is conducting a Statewide Transit Survey (gdottransitsurvey.org) to understand the current needs and desires of the public for their transit systems. The survey will be open for the next few months, and the results could lead to the agency more aggressively planning and funding transit projects. Shifting some of GDOT’s massive financial resources for transit would be a big victory for the entire state. Please take the survey and express support for improved service, connected systems, and electric buses, which are more sustainable and output zero carbon emissions.

LEGISLATIVE

Toxic coal ash continues to be a threat in Georgia

MARK WOODALL

 Burning coal to make electricity is a danger to the planet because of its massive contribution to climate change. Burning coal in Georgia has also left a toxic legacy of some 90 million tons of toxic coal ash in leaking ponds all across Georgia.

Coal ash contains a lethal list of heavy metals and other contaminants, including arsenic, lead, cadmium, chromium, selenium, boron, and radium. Political pressure from utilities such as Georgia Power kept the EPA from regulating coal ash for decades. Finally, after the TVA coal ash spill disaster of December 2008, the EPA released coal ash regulations in 2015.

The worst part of the 2015 EPA rule was the classification of coal ash as a non-hazardous waste that could be put in municipal solid waste landfill along with household garbage. This loophole has led to millions of tons of out-of-state coal ash being dumped in Georgia. A continuous stream of trucks brings coal ash from Asheville, NC, down Interstate 85 to Banks County, and each day, plants in Wayne County have so far prevented waste giant CSX rail at its Broadhurst facility.

Georgia Power is currently working to close all its wet coal ash ponds. Unfortunately, their current plan is to leave over 40 million tons of coal ash in unlined pits at Plant Hammond near Rome, Plant Cook in Cobb County, Plant Scherer near Macon, and at Plants Wansley and Yates near Newman. Georgia Power plans to ask the Public Service Commission (PSC) to allow it to charge its customers as much as $7.6 BILLION for an incomplete cleanup.

In April, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality ordered Duke Energy to do a full excavation of all remaining coal ash ponds with disposal in lined landfills. Virginia and South Carolina are also requiring lined storage. Georgia residents and groundwater deserve the same level of protection as those states are getting.

The Trump EPA is trying to weaken the already too weak 2015 EPA rule. The EPA has proposed giving Georgia EPD the coal ash program under what is called delegation. Georgia would be the second state after Oklahoma to get delegation. The EPA will conduct a hearing on the proposal to delegate coal ash regulations to the Georgia EPD on August 6 at the EPD Tradeport office.

Submit a comment to the EPA about the proposal at bit.ly/WriteEPAStopACoalAsh.

The Sierra Club expects further public comment on several pieces of coal ash legislation which may be acted upon when the legislature returns in January 2020. For more info, go to gawater.org/coal-ash. To get involved with the phasing out of coal burning in Georgia and its replacement with clean energy, contact Beyond Coal Campaign organizer Neil Sardana at neil.sardana@sierraclub.org. To read more about the fight in Wayne County, go to NoAshAtALL.org. As Georgia author Janisse Ray writes in The Bitter Southerner: "From ashes such as these, what can rise?"
80 MW of battery storage, which is widely considered to be critical to the future of the utility industry and vital for additional adoption of solar resources since boosting storage resources is one way to resolve solar skeptics’ concerns about reliability. This plan also includes energy efficiency targets that are 15% above their last plan in 2016. Sierra Club was active in the ongoing “Demand Side Management working group,” and pushed successfully to increase the reach of an experimental pilot program to boost energy efficiency programs for low-income Georgians. We were also pleased that the plan did not call for additional building of fracked-gas power plants, which might accelerate the retirement of coal, but is a major contributor to climate change. We are confident that burning gas is not the path forward in Georgia, and appreciate the company refraining from proposing such resources.

We were also not happy about a small 50 MW biomass project that was approved, but we were happy that it wasn’t larger. Countless studies have shown that burning trees is not an economic way to make electricity. We appreciated working with our many allies, all of whom made the case to the PSC for additional solar energy to come online in Georgia. We were also encouraged by the leadership shown by the Georgia Public Service Commission in pushing Georgia Power to propose additional renewable energy. The commission also urged cities across Georgia to highlight their clean energy demands so that future long-term plans can incorporate the growing appetite for 100 percent renewable energy.

Public’s right to have a say in future of National Forests at risk!

MARIJA RUSSO, UBRAN LEADERS FELLOW

On July 18, activists from all over Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina met for a rally outside of the Region 8 Forest Service office. The purpose of the rally was to protest federally proposed changes to the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which are yet another example of federal attacks on citizen rights and public participation. The proposed changes would cut the public out of the decision making process for a variety of projects:

- Commercial logging up to 4,200 acres (6.6 square miles) at a time;
- Building up to five new miles of roads at a time;
- Adding illegally created roads and trails to the official roads and trails systems;
- Closing roads used by the public to access hunting areas, streams for fishing, and trails; and
- Bulldozing new pipeline or utility rights-of-way up to 20 acres (e.g., 4 miles at 40 feet across)

At the July 18 rally, we protested for more than an hour to gain attention and recognition from the Forest Service’s office. Many people passing by in cars and on bikes honked and shouted to show their support for our presence. While we were met with some security outside of the building, we were generally welcomed to share our perspective on the issue.

After about two hours of standing and chanting outside of the building, we were invited, two people at a time, into the building. We spoke with the Forest Service for about twenty minutes and discussed our perspectives regarding the changes. Many of the issues that we worked to highlight are regional in nature, adversely affecting the entire Southern U.S. For example, given the smaller size of National Forests in the region, the creation of roads and large-scale logging could essentially wipe out wide swaths of our forests, whereas they would be less significant to forests in the West. The rally was just the beginning of our work.

To fill out a public comment to share your opposition to the Forest Service’s proposed changes before August 12th, please visit: bit.ly/NEPAComments.

WILDLANDS & WILDLIFE

Thanks to everyone else in the region who are collectively combating these proposed changes. We are encouraging people to learn more about what these proposed changes mean for your forests and asking readers to submit their opposition through the public comment portal, which is open until August 12th.
Outings Leader training a huge success!

LORNE T VESTAL, SOUTHEASTERN CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVE, MILITARY OUTDOORS

On Thursday, May 30, the Sierra Club Military Outdoors and Georgia Chapter gathered at Mulberry Gap Mountain Bike Get-a-way for our 2019 Outings Leader Training. It was the first SCMO leadership training course in the Southeast since 2017 and the first time we partnered with the Georgia Chapter to bring Local Outings’ collective knowledge into the fold.

Several guests joined me, Georgia Chapter Interim Director Jessica Morehead, and Outings Leaders Max Brown and Laura Ochs for a weekend of outdoor leadership training.

The host venue, Mulberry Gap, was rustic yet modern. We were served some tasty down-home meals for our three days at the campground. We even had a bluegrass band named Opossum and the Bear, and folks got to play a washtub bass and washboard as the local musicians serenaded us on our final evening.

Guests learned about the Military Outdoors and Local Outings programs offered through the Sierra Club. We also discussed the Georgia Chapter’s conservation campaigns. During our equity training, we had a deep dive discussion on Sierra Club history and why outdoors for all is a human right. We also talked about how outing leaders can be the vanguard of the conservation movement and fight against climate change as leaders can be the vanguard of the conservation movement and fight against climate change as well as ways to ensure all people are welcomed.

I led a Sierra Club leadership training session with the Georgia Chapter and our two volunteer Outings Leaders, Max Brown and Laura Ochs. Without them, this training couldn’t have been successful.

Many veteran and outside groups, such as Team Red, White, and Blue; Minority Veterans and Conflict on the Trail; and the National Park Service, volunteered their expertise to the trail that day. We even had a daughter of a veteran and his wife join us on the trail. The teenager challenged herself to a tough water crossing with a smile on her face.

We want to give a special thanks to the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter and our two volunteer Outings Leaders, Max Brown and Laura Ochs. Without them, this training couldn’t have been successful.

Many veteran and outside groups, such as Team Red, White, and Blue; Minority Veterans of America; and GirlTrek, were all represented. Folks found great value in practical exercises on the trial and building community with each other, veterans and civilians alike. On Sunday, June 2, when people departed for home, it was no longer a group of strangers who left the trail, but friends who would be back on the trail leading and learning from each other for years to come.

Five questions with an outings leader

RICKY LEROUX

Getting outside and experiencing nature is good for the soul. The Sierra Club regularly organizes outings across the state, which are led by our fantastic group of Outings Leaders.

In this issue, Outings Leader Pete Johnson tells us about joining the Sierra Club in the wake of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and how his military experience made him a natural outings leader.

Q: Tell us about yourself.
A: Professionally, I work in IT. I am a former Army officer. I spent several years on active duty and in the reserves. I joined the Sierra Club formally in 2014 and quickly went through outings leader training. I was motivated by the big BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; I felt it was finally time for me to act. … In my outings leader training, I discovered the military outdoors program, so I asked more about that and became involved. And that’s kind of a niche that I settled into.

Q: What is your connection to the outdoors?
A: I have always been an avid outdoorsman. I read Rachel Carson’s “Silent Spring” when I was in the fourth grade, so I was kind of a precocious ecological kid. I come from a long line of hunters and fishermen, and a lot of my family’s roots are very rural. The women and the men in my family were very adept at hunting and fishing and woodcraft and I guess what we would call fieldcraft today. I have always had a comfort in the outdoors, and I really like the opportunity of introducing that to other people.

Q: And why did you become an outings leader?
A: In 2016, I was so shaken by the BP gulf oil spill that I looked at the Sierra Club website with an idea of getting involved. And there was a question on there: “Would you like to become an outings leader?” And it was a response form and I filled it out. I said, “Yes, I really would.” I’ve got military experience leading groups of people in the woods, sometimes under very trying circumstances, so I thought that might be a nice starting point.

Q: What’s the best part of being an outings leader?
A: Meeting a whole assortment of people that I wouldn’t have met otherwise who come to the outings.

Q: What’s your favorite outdoor space in Georgia?
A: I have discovered more about my home state as an outings leader, though both talking as well as going and doing, than I ever thought I would have. I’m a watercraft guy, and my next challenges are the big rivers in the south, the Altamaha and the Flint rivers as they head toward the coast. But I spent a lot of my high school years in north Georgia, and I still have a real fondness for the mountains up there.

Know an outings leader who should be featured in this space? Want to become an outings leader? Email Communications Coordinator Ricky Leroux at ricky.leroux@sierraclub.org!
SUMMER 2019

GROUP NEWS

Swinging Into Summer

LYNN WALSTON, BETTYE HARRIS & BOB SPRINGFIELD

So far, our “lazy, hazy days of summer” have been busy and rewarding. At the end of May, we were happy to co-host one in a series of “Clean Energy Community Conversations” in Cartersville along with the Georgia Chapter, several community partners, and many helping hands.

We had excellent turnout, discussion, and engagement. We invite you to join us and to also give us your feedback by responding to our Centennial membership survey that we will distribute later this spring.

Please visit our Centennial webpage, Facebook page, and the Georgia Chapter Outings page at sierraclub.org/georgia/outingscalendar.

On June 4th, our annual Centennial Group Potluck Picnic at East Cobb Park featured awe-some weather, food, turnout, a short optional walk, and several newcomers and returning members. Thanks to everyone who joined us for a fun evening and one of our sure bet summer traditions.

Kudos to our friends at the Cobb Branch NAACP for sponsoring another successful and impressive Juneteenth Festival the weekend of June 14 on the Marietta Square. This was the 16th year for this local celebration and commemoration and the fifth year that our Centennial Group has participated as a nonprofit vendor (we were set up on Saturday). We were happy that Cobb4Transit.org volunteers also hosted a booth for the first time, collecting signatures and helping promote expanded transit initiatives for Cobb County.

The Centennial Group celebrated its members at its recent Potluck Picnic at East Cobb Park.

The Centennial Group participated in the Cobb Branch of the NAACP’s annual Juneteenth Festival in June.

Outings Leaders from the Centennial Group took 19 hikers for a trip in the Lula Lake Land Trust in northwest Georgia in June.

FEATURED: LULA LAKE LAND TRUST OUTING- JUNE 22

Centennial Group Outings Leaders led a hike at the private Lula Lake Land Trust for 19 hikers on June 22. The Lula Lake Land Trust is nestled in northwest Georgia near Lookout Mountain and is open to the public only two weekends a month. Groups like the Sierra Club are allowed access for private events on closed days.

The five-mile hike included views from a ridge top and treks to the top and bottom of Lula Falls. Hikers generously made donations to the Lula Trust and the Sierra Club. Thanks to leaders Lee Graham, Connie Dassinger, Christene Van Roosen, and Bob Springfield.

Please check the Georgia Chapter outing calendar, sierraclub.org/georgia/outingscalendar, for upcoming dates.

GROUP INFORMATION

Monthly meetings: 1st Thursday, welcome and refreshments at 7 p.m., program at 7:30 p.m.; Life College, 1269 Barclay Cir. SE, Marietta. For directions please contact Lynn Walston, lynnwalston22@yahoo.com.

Short Summer Break: We will NOT have a regular meeting in July or August, but hope to announce a mini “pop-up” event during that time. Our regular meetings will resume on Thursday, September 5th, at 7 p.m. at Life University.

Special September Reminder: We are making plans to again participate in the annual East Cobb Parade & Festival on Saturday, September 14th. Lots of creative hands needed to help us plan for this fun event. We need folks to march, help make a float, and staff our table. Please contact lynnwalston22@yahoo.com if you’re interested.

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/centennial

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

As we move past the midpoint of the year – and approach the end of school vacation (t.ic-toc, tic-toc) – it is the perfect time to look back at what we have done and look forward to where we are going. This year, the Gwinnett Group worked to bring public transportation to Gwinnett and talked about the effect that Plant Vogel will have on our household budgets, as well as the proposed Green New Deal’s potential effects on Gwinnett and its citizens. We have monitored water quality in Gwinnett streams, taken hikes (or outings, in Sierran jargon), and attended festivals. At our June meeting, Sarah Barlow, Gwinnett County’s deputy director of natural and cultural resources, discussed Gwinnett’s park system, one of the best in Georgia, and the resources available in the parks. This is particularly timely as a recent published study said that two hours a week should be spent outdoors to reduce stress, increase exercise, and get away from our daily routine, enabling us to relax.

In the second half of the year, our programs will continue to concentrate on Gwinnett in areas of smart energy, politics, transportation, and the global climate crisis. There is something here for everyone and more than likely several topics that will interest you.

GROUP INFORMATION

Our meetings are held the third Thursday of each month. We meet at Berkmar High School (405 Pleasant Hill Road, Lilburn) with a social at 7 p.m. and a program beginning at 7:30 p.m. Enter the high school from Pleasant Hill and enter the school via the covered walkway at the top of the hill.

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/Gwinnett.

MEGAWINNET GROUP

SERVING GWENNETT COUNTY

DOFF DU NTON

At our April 9 meeting, we discussed how to save our home with better stories – that is, how to be more effective at communicating the messages of the environmental movement. Hobie Stocking, our featured speaker in April, is the lead strategist with SkyWaterEarth and a volunteer with the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter’s Clean Energy for All Committee. Here are 3 short takeaways from Stocking’s presentation:

1. Facts and truth matter, but at the right time.
2. Environmentalists often work closely with scientists, so we’re used to thinking and hearing about concepts with uncertainty. But while scientists are rewarded for expressing uncertainty, doing so is not helpful to change anyone’s mind.
3. If you’re speaking with someone you disagree with and you would like to get them to understand your perspective, find out what that person values. Then tell a story about the issue/topic that connects to that value (ideally, some value that you can find in common, e.g., family).

At our May 14 meeting, we heard from interpreters Don Scarbrough and Andy Wooten about Sweetwater Creek State Park, the park’s natural and human history, and their work to educate the public about it. We recommend checking out the calendar of events on the park’s website for interesting ways to experience the park, from kayak paddles at twilight to Ranger Wooten’s guided tour of the indigenous peoples’ history in what is now the park. At this meeting, we also heard from Michael Greenberg – who was then the southeast organizer with Mighty Earth – about that organization’s campaign to end deforestation by the rubber industry by putting public pressure on tire companies.

In June, a typical meeting in June, we took part in the June Statewide Speak Truth to Georgia Power rally outside the Georgia Public Service Commission. Georgia residents mobilized from across the state for this rally to call for clean affordable energy during one of the PSC’s final public hearings on Georgia’s 2019 Energy Plan. June 11 and 12 were the last public hearings in which intervening parties (including Sierra Club) could participate regarding the 2019 Integrated Resource Plan, a process by which Georgia Power updates its plan for how it will provide electricity. Since this process occurs only once every three years, getting involved in this it has been our best chance in the near term to win clean affordable energy and climate justice in Georgia.

Do you like getting a little muddy? Feel most alive exploring creeks and forests? Want to serve as a sentinel for the health of a stream? Metro Atlanta Group Adopt-a-Stream needs volunteers!

SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP

SERVING AUGUSTA & SURROUNDING AREAS

LINDA MCBURNEY

Since our Outings Chair Cathy Black and Co-Chair and retired Army veteran Sam Bower joined forces to plan a Savannah River Group Military Outdoors Program, two veterans – Bridget Brown and Joshua Mastel – have become certified Sierra Club outings leaders with a few outings already completed. Bridget has taken a lead role with Military Outdoors Program, and both she and Joshua are planning more outings to include some that are slower paced, some aimed for families, and some for those who like high-octane challenges.

Don and his wife are veterans and have two children. Josh is a veteran and his wife is on active duty, and they have two children. This was truly a community effort to get this program going. In addition to Lornett Vestal, Sierra Club’s Southeast Military Veterans & Outdoors Coordinator, providing guidance, Augusta University’s Military and Veterans Services helped to spread the word about MOP using their listserv, Veterans Affairs marketed at both the VA hospital and Augusta University, and the Ft. Gordon Retiree Council helped us get approval to advertise in Ft. Gordon’s newspaper, Ft. Gordon Globe.

GROUP INFORMATION

Our executive committee meetings are open and generally held the evening of the first Tuesday of the month. Contact Nina Dutton (nddutton@gmail.com) to confirm details.


If you don’t get our monthly meeting announcements, sign up for email updates through the Georgia Chapter website (http://sierraclub.org/georgia) and be sure to include your Atlanta-area zip code.

Want to find out more about stepping up? Please read about the existing program at sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta/adopt-stream-program and email our chair, Nina Dutton, at nddutton@gmail.com.

Want to pitch in in other ways, such as by helping out at meetings, planning events or actions, or keeping on top of local news, policy, politics, events, and opportunities? Please email our chair, Nina Dutton, at nddutton@gmail.com.

GROUP INFORMATION

Monthly meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., Unitarian Church on Walton Way, Augusta.

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/Savannah-River.
The LaGrange Group was very active in education outreach this spring. In April, the group joined the Coweta County Democrats to host a citywide town hall meeting to educate citizens on climate change and the Green New Deal. The town hall, held at the LaGrange Memorial Library, was well attended. Speakers discussed global warming and climate change and the ways the Green New Deal addressed those issues.

LaGrange Group also hosted two public programs on conservation and energy. A family-friendly program featuring live birds of prey was held at the LaGrange Memorial Library to educate children and families on the crucial role raptors play in nature. The second program was on The Ray, an 18-mile stretch of I-85 in west Georgia that became one of the first sections of highway in the nation to research and put into action sustainable, regenerative, and carbon-neutral features.

The group also participated in Sweep the Hooch in April, the LaGrange portion of which concentrates on cleaning the shoreline of West Point Lake. The group collected more than 80 bags of trash over four hours. One of our most interesting activities was a trip to Fort Benning in Columbus to learn about conservation efforts on the base to protect the red cockaded woodpeckers and the longleaf pine forests they inhabit.

LaGrange Group will not hold any public meetings in June, July or August. Our next public meeting will be on Tuesday, September 17 at 7 p.m. at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in LaGrange.

GROUP INFORMATION

The LaGrange Group will not hold any public meetings in August. Its next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 17 at 7 p.m. at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church’s Parish Hall, 207 N. Greenwood Street, LaGrange.

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/Gwinnett.

GROUP INFORMATION

Visit our webpage at sierraclub.org/georgia/Coastal.

Join us on Facebook at bit.ly/CoastaSCFB.

The Coastal Group works to protect Georgia’s coastal marshland with legislative, legal, scientific, technical, communications, and advocacy techniques.

COASTAL GROUP

SERVING SAVANNAH & SURROUNDING AREAS

Join us on Facebook at bit.ly/CoastaSCFB.
CHAPTER DIRECTORY

LOCAL GROUP CONTACTS

CENTENNIAL GROUP
Chair, Lynn Walston
lynnwalston22@yahoo.com
Conservation Chair, Andrea Searles
andreaearls@gmail.com
Outings Chair, Lee Graham
leegrah3@gmail.com

COASTAL GROUP
Chair, Karen Grainey
karengainer@bellsouth.net
Outings Chair, Steve Wagner
sjwgnr@hotmail.com
Events Coordinator, Lilli Hutto
medi8@mindspring.com

REGIONAL CONTACTS

Forysth County
Jim Callison
callisonjim@bellsouth.net

Macon
Fletcher Winston
winston_f@mercer.edu

North Georgia
Larry Winstead
winfog@windstream.net

Valdosta
Brian Day
bjday@valdosta.edu

GWINNETT GROUP
Chair, Dan Friedman
dan3688@aol.com
Conservation Chair, Art Sheldon
asheldon.cp81@gtalumni.org
Outings Chair, Jake Hardison
jake.hardison@ssa.gov

LAGRANGE GROUP
Co-Chair, Mary Lou Dabbs
mlldabb05@gmail.com
Co-Chair, Eric Simpson
elamar109@yahoo.com
Outings Chair, Laura Breyfogle
breyfoglel@gmail.com

METRO ATLANTA GROUP (MAG)
Chair, Nina Dutton
niddutton@gmail.com
Conservation and Outings Chair,
Max Brown
maxbrown@bellsouth.net

SAVANNAH RIVER GROUP (SRG)
Co-Chair, Sam Booher
sbooher@aol.com
Co-Chair, Linda McBurney
msmcb@outlook.com
Conservation Chair, Frank Carl
frankcarl@knology.net
Outings Chair, Cathy Black
sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair
Jeff Schoenberg
schoenbergje@gmail.com
(770) 394-0639
At-Large Elected Member

Vice Chair - Administration
David Emory
david.emory@gmail.com
(404) 433-4914
At-Large Elected Member

Vice Chair - Conservation
Mark Woodall
woodallmark8@gmail.com
(706) 601-1118
At-Large Elected Member

Secretary
Seth Gunnung
sgunnungn@gmail.com
(404) 434-9745
At-Large Elected Member

Treasurer
Tom Neff
tsn2003@yahoo.com

At-Large Elected Member
Shelby Buso
shelbybuso@gmail.com

At-Large Elected Member
Nancy Daves
nancydaves0711@gmail.com
(270) 461-1738

At-Large Elected Member
Yeou-Rong Jih
yeourong@gmail.com
(678) 640-3270

Centennial Group Delegate
Mary Miller
bikingmiller@gmail.com
(757) 513-7335

Coastal Group Delegate
Karen Grainey
karengainer@bellsouth.net
(912) 951-6190

Gwinnett Group Delegate
Dan Friedman
dan3688@gmail.com
(404) 610-5770

LaGrange Group Delegate
Travis Towns
ftravist@aol.com
(404) 797-6523

Metro Atlanta Group Delegate
Norman Slawsky
nslawsky@gmail.com
(404) 664-6259

Savannah River Group Delegate
Linda McBurney
msmcb@outlook.com
(706) 631-1489

Finance Chair: vacant

Fundraising Chair
Norman Slawsky
nslawsky@gmail.com

Human Resources Chair
Dan Friedman
dan3688@aol.com

Legal Chair
William Tomlin
wmtom@gmail.com

NATIONAL STAFF

CHAPTER STAFF
Interim Director
Jessica Morehead
(404) 607-1262 x 232
jessica.morehead@sierraclub.org

Development Associate
Gina Webber
(404) 607-1262 x 224
gina.webber@sierraclub.org

Communications Coordinator
Ricky Leroux
(404) 607-1262 x 234
ricky.leroux@sierraclub.org

POLITICAL STAFF

Regional Action to Improve Livability (RAIL)
Tejas Kotak
tkotak013@gmail.com

Wildlands and Wildlife
Larry Winstead
winfog@windstream.net

For a complete listing of conservation committee chairs and issue leaders, please visit: sierraclub.org/georgia/directory.

ISSUE CAMPAIGNS & COMMITTEES

Legislative
Mark Woodall
woodallmark8@gmail.com

Political
Eddie Ehliert
edehliert@bellsouth.net

Regional Action to Improve Livability (RAIL)
Tejas Kotak
tkotak013@gmail.com

Wildlands and Wildlife
Larry Winstead
winfog@windstream.net

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Water Sentinels/Adopt-a-Stream
Ina Allison
(centennial)
iallison@hotmail.com

Larry Kloe
(MAG Adopt-a-Stream Chemical Monitoring)
(404) 636-7226

Nancy Wylie
(MAG Biological Monitoring)
(404) 256-1172

Frank Carl (SRG)
frank.carl@knology.net

Michael Reardon (SRG)
reardonmp@hotmail.com

CHAPTER LEADERS & CHAIRS

Finance Chair
Vacant

Fundraising Chair
Norman Slawsky
nslawsky@gmail.com

Human Resources Chair
Dan Friedman
dan3688@aol.com

Legal Chair
William Tomlin
wmtom@gmail.com

Legislative Chair
Mark Woodall
woodallmark8@gmail.com

Membership Chair: Vacant
ExCom Contact - Yeou-Rong Jih
yeourong@gmail.com

Outings Chair: Vacant
Staff Contact - Jessica Morehead
jessica.morehead@sierraclub.org

Political Chair
Eddie Ehliert
edehliert@bellsouth.net

NATIONAL PROGRAM CONTACTS

Inspiring Connections Outdoors
Terri Lyde
lydeterri@bellsouth.net

For a complete listing of conservation committee chairs and issue leaders, please visit: sierraclub.org/georgia/directory.
Get Involved!
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sierraclub.org/georgia/volunteer

Join a Local Group
sierraclub.org/georgia/localgroups

Get Outside
sierraclub.org/georgia/outings

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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