

The Lookout

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group

Fall 2019



Making a Difference: Huron Valley Group Volunteers



ANN ARBOR'S FIRST PROTECTED BIKE LANES
Combating CO² and Providing Equitable Transportation



Thoughts from
the Chair
Vision.



Outings
Park Lyndon,
Saginaw forest, and
more



Destinations
Kayaking the
Pokomoke River

A graphic illustration of a ballot box. Two hands are shown placing a ballot into the slot. The ballot has a checkmark. The box is white with a lock icon and the word 'VOTE' written on it. The background is a dark blue color.

Huron Valley Group
Executive Committee
Election

Ballot
Inside!

VOTE

Thoughts from the Chair: Vision

Dan Ezekiel

HVG Executive Committee Chair

As an environmental advocate, I'm almost always ruled by the "tyranny of the urgent". What's the latest new threat to our air or water? What catastrophic new decision just came down from Washington? How should HVG respond? These concerns dominate most weeks.

Dreaming big doesn't come naturally to me. I spent a career in the trenches, teaching middle school, which I assure you doesn't allow much time for daydreaming. Yet, unless we have a vision of how things should be, how can we respond appropriately to the way things are?

The time never seems quite right to be time to dream about that ideal. So, one day early in my tenure as your chair, I challenged myself to imagine a future Huron Valley, a generation from now, where everything is as it should be. Here is a passage:

"The people of the Huron Valley area live safely in thriving, vibrant communities. Everyone's basic needs are met: food, clothing, shelter, health care, connection with others, knowledge that they are valued and needed.

No one is disadvantaged because of their background. Everyone feels they belong and has a chance to shine and share whatever talents they possess. People frequently gather and celebrate, enjoying healthy, locally grown food and drink. Our human towns and cities are



placed amid vibrant natural communities. Waters are clean, air is refreshing. Ecosystems are stable, the climate is reverting to its norm. Everywhere are green spaces, laced by trails, allowing folks to get out and enjoy the healing sights and sounds of the natural world. Wildlife thrive, pollinators buzz among crops and native flowers."

Continuing with my dream/vision, I wrote:

"Soil bursts with health and fertility, bringing forth bountiful food and drink in the midst of an agricultural system that works with nature, rather than trying to overcome it. Likewise, our businesses and industry model the natural system and create products and services that enhance our health and happiness. Waste reduction is planned in, as our businesses' owners and workers (often the same people!) plan ahead together for a sustainable environment for future generations. Bountiful energy is generated from wind and sun, stored for use when needed. Transportation is safe, smooth and efficient, designed for people's actual needs and wants, without use of fossil fuels. Communities are safely walkable and bikeable."

Of course, as a career teacher, my vision wouldn't have been complete without peeking into the schoolhouse doors:

“Children attend well-resourced schools where they learn, hands-on, how to live in and improve our communities. Alongside the three R's, they learn to grow food, tend compost piles, repair and maintain bikes, install solar panels, and spend lots of time learning to be comfortable outdoors and in nature. In the lunchroom, they smile as they encounter produce they helped grow.”

At this point, I ask you: What is your vision? How is it like mine, and how does it differ? What are the primary hurdles that prevent your vision from being realized today? What are the best first steps we can take to get over these hurdles?

This is how I concluded my visit to an ideal future:

“Sometimes people look back to the way we live today, with fouled air and water, cataclysmic destruction of habitat, bitter infighting among interest communities, each trying to preserve whatever scrap of privilege it has inherited. They shake their heads. They remember the way it was, but the memory is unclear, like a fever from which one has recovered. They think proudly of the changes they made and look confidently ahead.”

I felt refreshed and empowered by putting these thoughts on paper, glad I'd taken a time-out from reacting to events and instead allowed myself this vision. How do we get from here to there, or to wherever your personal environmental vision would take us? I'd love to hear from you. dan.ezekiel24@gmail.com

On September 28, HVG members volunteered for a day of service at Farm City Detroit. A project of Detroit Blight Busters, the farm aims to foster self-sufficiency & increase access to fresh and healthy food to the neighborhoods.



Ann Arbor's First Protected Bike Lane

Combating CO² Emissions and Providing Equitable Transportation

Jaime Magiera

HVG Executive Committee Vice-Chair

With the invention of the automobile, city planning became more and more dominated by them. Nearly every aspect of our surroundings has been shaped to benefit car travel and parking. While cars have provided an increased level of mobility, we've boxed ourselves into a lifestyle that is doing great harm to the environment and ourselves. The numbers are pretty sobering. According to the EPA, cars emit on average 404 grams of CO² per mile. When total greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. are broken down by sector, transportation contributes the highest at 29%. While overall the average family spends 20% of their budget on transportation, that number rises to 30% for very low income families. Each year, 1.5 million of us die in road accidents. It's clear that our reliance on cars is detrimental.

The tides are starting to shift though. Recently, the sciences of sustainability and urban planning have highlighted the importance of walkable communities for planetary and human health. Ann Arbor, like many urban cities, has been integrating more walking and bicycling infrastructure in an effort to foster those benefits. This has taken the form of a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, a Complete Streets policy, and a variety of other initiatives. Likewise, Ann Arbor's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is bringing about such changes in the city's core.



A new milestone was reached this October with the unveiling of the city's first buffered bike lanes. Dubbed the William Street Bikeway, the 1/2 mile stretch is the result of a collaboration between the DDA and the city government. It features two bike lanes side-by-side, separated from the east-ward automobile lane with bollards. The grand opening of the bikeway on Sunday, October 27th brought hundreds of bicyclists and supporters to William St. There were games, contests, and giveaways. Common Cycle, a member-owned bicycle repair cooperative, provided free tune-ups, while advocacy organizations such as the Washtenaw Bicycling & Walking Coalition provided safety information and maps.

The William Street Bikeway is an example of environmental stewardship and people-friendly urban planning. It's one more piece in Ann Arbor's building out of a complete bicycling network. The DDA has a helpful website that documents how the project unfolded over several years. Environmentalists and city leaders across Michigan can learn a lot from the materials provided.

<http://www.peoplefriendlystreets.org/william-street-bikeway/>

Outings Update

Anya Dale

Outings Chair

Photos by John Metzler

September was a busy and fun-filled month for Huron Valley Group outings! Sierra Club and other community members participated in hikes and bird-watching in Park Lyndon, Matthaei Botanical Gardens, and Saginaw forest, and Waterloo Recreation Area. Members also turned up in Detroit for the Blight Busters service day and put their work gloves on to help revitalize motor city neighborhoods by tending to community gardens among other activities.

Dawn, a volunteer at the work day, commented "We had a great team to work on the various projects. It was an honor to meet and chat with John George, founder of Detroit Blight Busters. He is such an inspiration!! Knowing our efforts today are helping people in the community, makes me smile!" The Huron Valley Group will continue to work on extending Outings to include more opportunities for helping build our communities. If you have any suggestions, please reach out to Anya Dale (anyaaudubon@gmail.com).

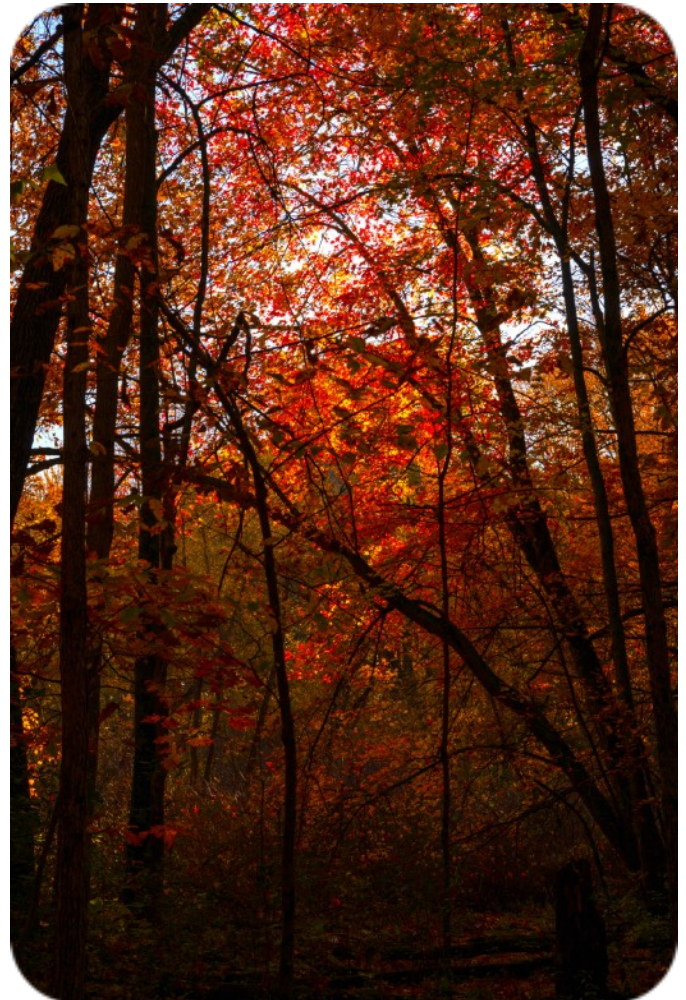


Brighton State Recreation Area

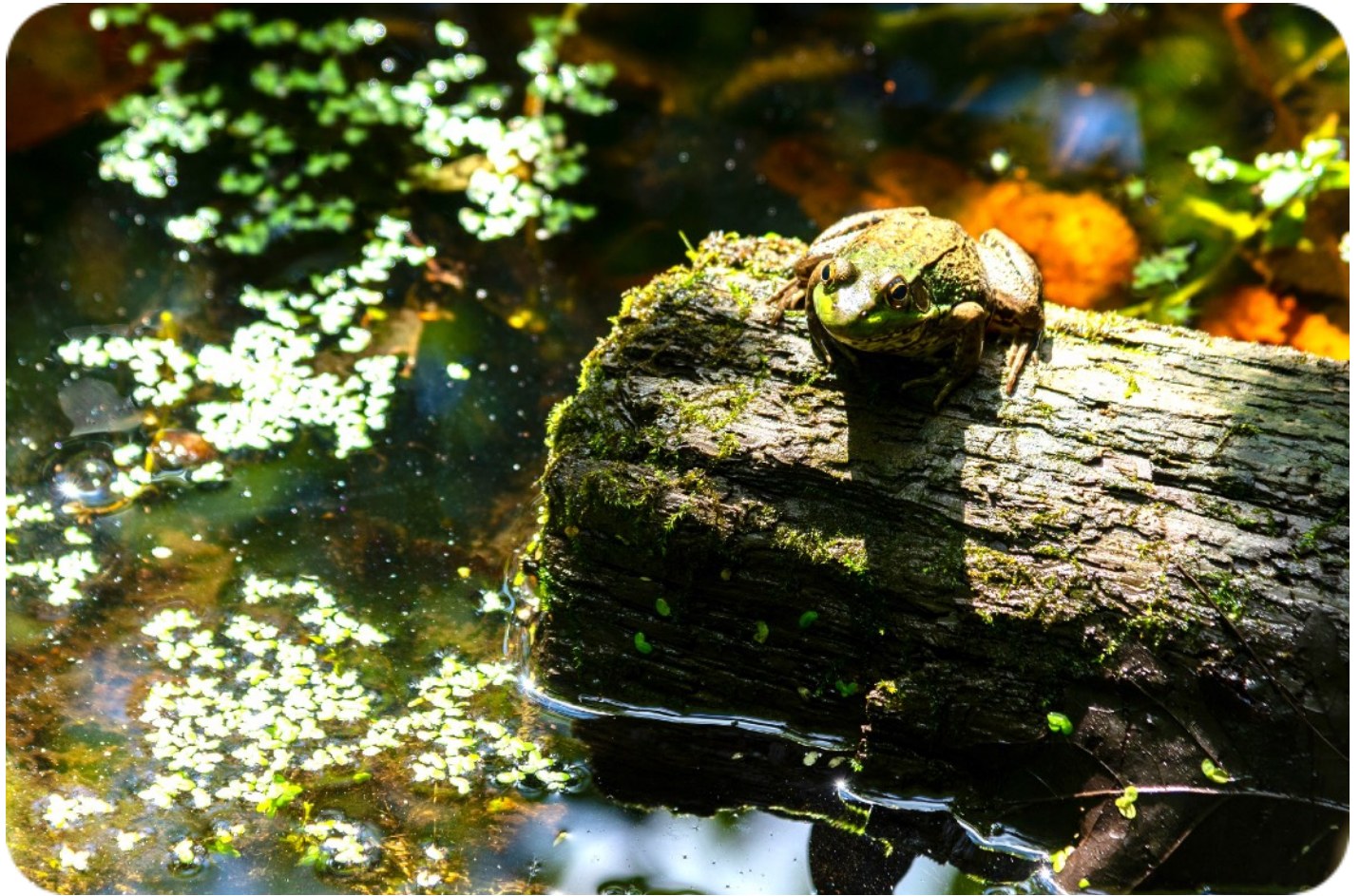
Also! If you have not yet done so, consider signing up to be alerted of our upcoming outings through MeetUp! We already have quite a few wonderful hikes planned to enjoy the fall colors that are just around the corner! See you on the trail!



Scio Woods



Johnson Preserve



Park Lyndon, Lyndon Township



Barton Nature Area

Report From the HVG Book Club: Authors Confronting the Flint Water Crisis



Nancy Shiffler

One of the rewards of being in an environmental book club is the opportunity to delve into issues from a variety of angles. The

HVG book club did that this year with two books about the Flint water crisis: Anna Clark's *The Poisoned City* and Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha's *What the Eyes Don't See*.

For many of us living outside of Flint, the story came through piecemeal in varied news stories and sound bites, with little opportunities to put the pieces together. Clark's book brings a journalist's craft to the story, combining historical, political and social context with the sequence of events that created the crisis and the response to it. We get a well-documented, broad understanding of the actors in the crisis – the failures of leadership at local, state, and national levels, and the persistence of ordinary citizens to make their voices be heard.

Hanna-Attisha's book also provides the context and history, but she approaches it with a memoirist's touch. She found herself in the position to provide data showing the impact of the poisoned water on blood lead levels in Flint's children – providing the proof of impact that helped to break the logjam of denials and cover-ups coming from the very officials who were responsible for the problem. She writes of the team of colleagues and friends, her family

history and professional training and ethics which helped her persist in producing the evidence and standing up to the attacks on her professional qualifications from officials trying to cover up their own misdeeds. Most importantly, she writes of the efforts to put in place a program to support the children of Flint in mitigating the impacts of lead exposure – ending with a message of hope and belief in the resilience of the people of Flint.

Both books are worth the read. They give us not only a clear understanding of what happened in Flint, but also a warning to look for the systemic faults that produce crises like this.

HURON VALLEY GROUP BOOK CLUB – COME JOIN US

In a world where we are confronted with small bits of information – sound bites, tweets, Facebook entries – it can be rewarding to find a deeper perspective on our world by the simple act of reading a good book, and there are lots of them out there. For the past several years the Huron Valley Group has sponsored a book group that meets monthly from September to May (second Tuesday of the month, 7:30 pm at Nicola's Books in Ann Arbor's Westgate shopping center). Our selections include a mixture of titles covering nature, science, politics, and history as related to the environment. Come every month or when a title intrigues you.

Political Committee Update

Erica Brown Ackerman

Political Committee Chair

HVG members have been active both on the state level and locally on a range of issues. On the state level, we have participated in two different Lobby Days, where members go to Lansing for training, then meet with legislators from both parties to discuss specific issues. This year we lobbied in favor of the following legislation:

The Energy Freedom Package of Bills: This is a package of five bills that would provide for:

- **Fair-Priced Net Metering:**
Net metering is a proven, simple, and fair way to credit distributed solar customers who export power to the utility's system. Since solar generation occurs at times when there is peak demand for electricity, solar exports save all ratepayers substantial money over time by reducing the need to invest in electric generation plants for peak load, which are the most expensive to build, maintain and run, and drive up the cost of electricity for all ratepayers. Solar users should be fairly compensated for providing this service.
- Removal of the artificial 1% cap on the number of net metering households
- **Microgrids:**
Microgrids are localized transmission systems fueled by renewable energy that are islands separate from the traditional grid. This means that if the grid goes



HVG Political Committee: Nancy Shiffler, Richard Baron, Erica Ackerman, Dan Ezekiel

down due to an extreme weather event, technical failure, or attack, a microgrid can still provide electricity to critical services in its system like hospitals, fire and police departments, schools, and shelters. Microgrids should not only be allowed, but encouraged.

- **Community Solar:**
If your home is too shady for solar, you should be able to contribute to a community solar installation and get credit for the energy produced. Currently, utilities have complete control over community solar and, at least in the case of DTE, have been very uncooperative about allowing new installations. This bill would remove the stranglehold of the utilities on community solar.
- **Standardized Property Taxes on Solar: This legislation would prevent**

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Electric vehicles produce much less CO₂ than gasoline engines, especially when they are charged using renewable energy. The single biggest

impediment to the adoption of electric vehicles is “range anxiety”, the fear that your battery will run down with no charging station nearby. This set of bills would provide for charging stations at all state-owned freeway rest stops, Park & Rides, parks, and other places.

“Snow-Fro” Regulation: A significant contributor to algal blooms in the Great Lakes is the application of manure to frozen fields. This legislation would prevent that practice.

In Ann Arbor, Sierra Club members have actively (and successfully) encouraged City Council to fund and support action on climate

change prevention and adaptation. We also held a fun debate watch party in September for the CNN Climate Crisis Presidential Candidate Town Hall.

As the election year begins, we will be gearing up to support candidates with strong stances on environmental issues, especially climate change. Look for emails with invitations to participate!



CONSERVATION COMMITTEE - COME JOIN US

The Group’s Conservation Committee meets monthly to discuss events of local concern, and organize collective actions. Recent meetings have focussed on PFAS, the Gelman 1,4-dioxane plume, the Ann Arbor Public Schools Millage proposal, the Chapter’s Citizen Lobby Day, the Climate Strike, the B2B trail, and many other local environmental issues. It is hoped that more members will join us to regularly discuss the pending update of the City’s Master Plan, and how Ann Arbor can become more livable in a future overshadowed by the Climate Crisis and persistent environmental threats to natural features.

The Conservation Committee meets 7-9PM every 4th Monday at the Atomic Object Community Room, 3rd floor, at 206 S. Fifth Avenue in Ann Arbor. One goal for 2020 is to utilize remote meeting software such as Zoom to facilitate these meetings and reduce transportation costs. Please contact Stephen C Brown (browns6887@att.net) for more information



Pokomoke River

Destinations

Stephen C. Brown

Conservation Committee Chair

I spent October 12-20 kayaking the Pokomoke River with a friend. This is one of the best locations for a near-wilderness experience along the East Coast between Maine and North Carolina, being on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The lower Pokomoke watershed is an extensive Bald Cypress swamp presenting many opportunities to observe wildlife up close—including river otters, bald eagles, and numerous waterfowl. Camping opportunities

are rare along the river, bordered by extensive swampland, so the Shad Landing Maryland State Park is a good base camp from which to explore. The Pokomoke River Canoe Company provides reasonable one-way transportation for more extensive day trips. The river was easily navigable below Porters Crossing Road above the town of Snow Hill, but there are numerous deadfalls upstream that impede navigation. One day, we visited the E. A. Vaughn WMA Kayak Trails on Chincoteague Bay and poked around the salt marshes and offshore islands. This region is well worth a week-long trip in a small boat with binoculars, and the fishing is good. Call me if you want to learn more!



Shopping for the Earth

You can help the earth at no cost to you – through your regular shopping!

- Over the past 15 years, the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group's **Shopping for the Earth** has been a very successful program for supporting our efforts to protect parks, natural areas and local farmland, and to address local and regional environmental problems.
- For every \$20 of cards you buy, you get the full \$20 in store credit and earn from \$0.80 to as much as \$4.60, depending on the merchant, for the Sierra Club.

Great for:

- ✓ Regular purchases like grocery shopping
- ✓ Giving as gifts
- ✓ Planned purchases like appliances
- ✓ Making online purchases

There are two ways to order cards:

1. Mail-In Order Form for groceries from local stores including:

Ann Arbor People's Food Co-op, Arbor Brewing Company, Arbor Farms, Busches, Kroger, Meijers, Produce Station, Whole Foods, and more...

2. Online ordering from over 600 national merchants including:

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bath & Body Works, Best Buy, Cabela's, Chipotle Mexican Grill, CVS/pharmacy, Econo Lodge, Glen's Market, Groupon, Home Depot, iTunes, Kohl's, L.L.Bean, Lands' End, Lowe's, Noodles & Company, Office Max, REI, Rite Aid, Sears, gas stations, Starbucks, Tim Hortons, United Artist Theatres, Walgreens, Whole Foods, and more...

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/shopping-for-earth>

Sierra Club Huron Valley Group

<http://sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley>

hvgsierraclub@gmail.com

P.O. Box 7802
Ann Arbor, MI 48107

HVG Executive Committee

Dan Ezekiel
Chair

Jaime Magiera
Vice-Chair
Communications Committee Chair

Jason Frenzel
Secretary & Treasurer

Erica Ackerman
Political Committee Chair

Anya Dale
Outings Committee Chair

Amanda Sweetman

Rita Mitchell

Are You A New Member?

Welcome to the Huron Valley Group of the Sierra Club. When you join the Sierra Club you are automatically a member of a local group, as well as a state chapter and the national organization. Membership entitles you to this newsletter as well as all editions of the state and national member publications. Check our online calendar for announcements of Monthly Public Program topics and other activities. We will be glad to see you at our next meeting or answer any questions if you care to call. Please take advantage of your membership as an opportunity to enjoy, preserve and protect our natural environment!

How to Get HVG reminders via email!

At each HVG general meeting, there is an email sign up list. For those who missed it, or haven't joined us at a meeting, you can sign up at...

<https://sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/email-list>

The Lookout is published in Spring and Fall each year. Design, layout, and typesetting by Jaime Magiera

Huron Valley Group Executive Committee Elections

Vote Paper Ballot Here [or](#) on-line at our Website

The Sierra Club is the largest democratically run environmental organization in the world, with direct election of leaders at the national Board, state Chapter and local Group level each year. Participation by members in the voting process is crucial for maintaining this structure. The Executive Committee (ExCom) for the Huron Valley Group is responsible for the administration and operation of the group, and does so entirely with volunteers. This fall, HVG members will be electing three ExCom members for two-year terms beginning in January 2020. The Nominations Committee has nominated three candidates for the three ExCom positions.

The Elections Committee is responsible for collecting candidate statements and for the production, mailing, receipt, and counting of ballots. All Sierra Club members within HVG territory (Washtenaw, Monroe, and Lenawee Counties) at the time the mailing list for the Fall newsletter is generated are eligible to vote. The ballot appears in this newsletter and may be returned via mail or by hand, and received no later than the December 17 HVG General Meeting at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, per the instructions accompanying the ballot. Alternatively, vote on-line at:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/excom-election-2019>

Please review the candidate statements on the following page or online and submit your ballot. Voting reinforces your involvement with the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group.



HVG ExCom Election Timeline

July 16, 2019: Nominees must inform the Nominating Committee of their interest by the July ExComm Meeting

Aug 01, 2019: Nominating Committee notifies candidates and ExComm of nomination status.

Sep 17, 2019: Any candidate petitions and/or ballot issue petitions must be delivered to the Nominating Committee at the September General Meeting.

Oct 01, 2019: Candidate statements and photographs are due to Elections Committee.

Oct 03, 2019: Final candidate list given to the Executive Committee.

Nov 1, 2019: Eligible voter list is pulled from the member database. Election materials are finalized to be posted on the website and distributed through the newsletter.

Dec, 18 2019: Ballot count process begins, completing no later than December 31. After completion, candidates are notified.



Erica Ackerman

Climate change, the greatest threat of our time, drives my environmental activism and led me to run for the Executive Committee of the Huron Valley Group last year. Since election, I have served as group representative to the state Executive Committee, as well as chair of the HVG's Political Committee. In addition, I helped organize support for climate change funding by Ann Arbor City Council and organized a watch party for the CNN Climate Crisis Town Hall. Previously, I helped found an Ann Arbor 350.org group, which I chaired for one year. As climate lead in Organizing for Action, Washtenaw County, I organized multiple educational outreach programs reaching hundreds of participants.

The Sierra Club plays a vital role in the climate struggle and other environmental issues. It is my goal to further that work in any way I can.



Anne Brown

Anne Brown has been an active member of the Sierra Club through Citizen Lobby Day, Political Training, Political Committee and the Living Economy Leadership Committee for the National Sierra Club. In 2018, Anne co-hosted MI People's Trade Summit in Washtenaw County that brought local, state and national community and elected leaders together. This gathering discussed the impact of NAFTA 2.0 on Michigan workers and families. Most recently the group worked with Congresswoman Katie Hill on a climate letter related to both environmental and labor practices in the United States Canada Mexico Agreement - USCMA.

Anne will use her experience and networks in local, state and federal government to help shape the future of our chapter. As the oldest environmental group, Anne believes Sierra needs to leverage its experience, knowledge and know how in recruiting the next generation of environmental stewards, particularly in underserved and underrepresented communities.



Jaime Magiera

Since being elected to the Executive Committee in Winter 2018, I've worked to expand the reach of the Huron Valley Group – particularly amongst youth and traditionally marginalized members of our community. That work includes completely redesigning the group's newsletter, expanding the website, expanding our social media presence, and incorporating video and audio into our materials. It has also included building partnerships with other local organizations with shared goals, such as collaborating with the Washtenaw Bicycling & Walking Coalition to decrease carbon emissions.

My areas of focus include water protection, renewable energy, sustainable food systems, and environmental justice. I'm asking for your vote for re-election so that I can continue expanding the group's reach and its effectiveness in building a more sustainable future.

Sierra Club Huron Valley Group Executive Committee Ballot 2019

Mark your ballot for up to 3 (three) Candidates. The second column of boxes is for a second voter in a joint membership household. After marking your ballot, remove this entire back page from the newsletter. Fold the bottom third up to conceal your votes, and fold the top third over to show your mailing label with the membership number. Return your ballot in a sealed envelope either by hand at the December 17 HVG General Meeting or by mail to:

HVG Election c/o Nancy Shiffler
2877 Sorrento Ave.,
Ann Arbor, MI, 48104.

Mailed ballots must be received by December 17, 2019, to be counted. Alternatively, members may vote on-line via the HVG website:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huron-valley/excom-election-2019>

Electronic voting will close at midnight December 17, 2019.

Erica Ackerman

Anne Brown

Jaime Magiera



Huron Valley Group
P.O. Box 7802
Ann Arbor, MI 48107



Sierra Club Huron Valley Group Members enjoy a hike in the Kuebler-Langford Nature Area
Photo by John Metzler