

• Mt. Vernon Sierran

April / May 2011

The Mount Vernon Group of Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club

virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg



This Newsletter Will Be A Collector's Item! Mount Vernon Sierran Goes Digital; Print Edition Ends With This Issue

At its February meeting, the Mount Vernon Group's executive committee (ExCom) decided to cease production of a quarterly print newsletter and shift to an email edition of the newsletter beginning in June 2011.

Local Sierra Club members will still receive a print newsletter from the state chapter, the *Old Dominion Sierran*, but in order to receive news about local environmental campaigns and events, Mount Vernon Group members will need to supply the Sierra Club with an email address so that they can receive the MVG's new, quarterly email newsletter.

The ExCom decided to end print distribution because newsletter production and distribution consume the lion's share of the Group's budget each year. Rising costs, coupled with decreased local and national Sierra Club revenue, make it even tougher for the Group to allocate any meaningful portion of its budget to local activism, public education, outdoor excursions or social events for its members.

IMPORTANT: In order to receive an electronic version of the newsletter, the Group will need to be able to access your email address within the national Sierra Club membership database. If you haven't already provided your email to the Sierra Club, you can do so in one of the following ways:

- Email address.changes@sierraclub.org or call Membership Services at 415-977-5500. It will help if you can provide your

member ID to make sure the email address gets put on the correct record.

- Create an account for yourself at <https://secure2.convio.net/sierra/site/ConsProfile-User>.
 - » You'll need to check the box that says, "Yes, I would like to receive periodic updates and communications from Sierra Club." When you do this, you're automatically opted-in to all Sierra Club correspondences—however, you can "opt-out" of selected communications if you want to.
 - » Once you're logged in, simply select "Update my Email Subscriptions" and then you'll see a list of different communications you can choose to receive. The MVG newsletter will be listed within "Local Sierra Club Newsletters" in this menu. Make sure this is checked so that you'll receive the local newsletter!

We understand that there may be a few MVG members who can't access the newsletter electronically. If you absolutely can't receive the newsletter via email and require a hard copy to be mailed to you, please notify Mary Kadera at marykadera@gmail.com or (703) 684-2004 and we'll make every effort to send you print copies of the new version of the newsletter. ☺

Arlington's Community Energy Plan Makes Its Debut by Rick Keller

On March 11th the Community Energy and Sustainability Task Force finalized its proposal for a sustainable energy plan for Arlington. The basic premise is to have a transformational sustainability plan for the County that will be a guide for the Arlington community's environmental and energy policies and actions for the next forty years.

The Task Force is the vision of Board member Jay Fisette and began its work in January 2010. Members were drawn from both the public and private sectors as well as from for-profit and non-profit groups. In addition, liaisons were recruited from a variety of other organizations to elicit additional comments on the proposals. Meetings were held every three months with interim work being performed by consultants (Garforth International) and County staff.

The Report "Roadmap" states, "Arlington County recognizes that our world faces critical energy challenges in the coming years. With these challenges come opportunities. We must find ways to reduce our dependence on the inexpensive fossil fuels that have fueled our progress since the Industrial Revolution in favor of efficiency and cleaner, more sustainable energy sources and systems."



Photo by Dan Machold. Some rights reserved.

The report includes recommendations that will allow Arlington to meet three explicit goals:

- Ensure economic competitiveness
- Provide energy supply security
- Protect the environment

The plan calls for reducing Arlington's per capita greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂e) from the current 13.4 metric tons (mt) to 3.0 by 2050. (The report further states that if an effective regional plan is implemented, the target level could be reduced to 2.2 mt per capita.) To accomplish this goal improvements will need to be made across the board – in both

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Turn GenOn Off: Retire the Potomac River Coal Plant by Phillip Ellis

In early March, concerned citizens from our Mount Vernon Group gathered at the steps of the Environmental Protection Agency to share personal stories from people around our nation who are becoming sick from the pollution Big Oil and Coal are spewing. They gathered because for more than 50 years, they have witnessed this pollution in their own backyard coming from the Potomac River Coal Plant (a plant owned by the Mirant corporation, which recently merged to form a new company named GenOn). It is past time that this corporate polluter respects the long-voiced wishes of Alexandria's citizens and retire this plant once and for all.

The plant is literally making us sick. According to the Clean Air Task Force web site, the DC metro area ranks fifth in the nation for deaths attributed to coal-fired power pollution. The GenOn plant alone accounts for 37 extra deaths a year, and inflicts an annual healthcare



Photo by Trent Roche. Some rights reserved.

cost of over \$270,000. The pollution coming from the GenOn Plant is also solely responsible for:

- 60 heart attacks/year
- 610 asthma attacks/year
- 28 hospitalizations/year
- 23 cases of bronchitis/year

In 2010 the majority of the coal burned at the plant came from sites in West Virginia, Kentucky and Virginia known to harvest their

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Go Green! Alexandria Educate. Advocate. Green Living.

A new green movement has come to Alexandria!

Go Green Alexandria's mission is to educate residents about their impact on the environment, to advocate for the conservation of Alexandria's environmental resources and a clean and sustainable community and to encourage green living practices wherever possible. Upcoming events include park and stream cleanups, film screenings, learning about local foods and much more!

Visit www.alexenvironment.org to learn more.

Mount Vernon Group Leadership

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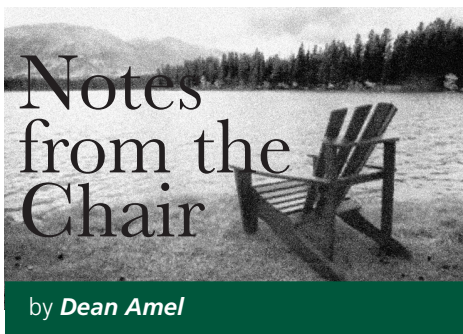
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This is my first column as the new chair of the Mount Vernon Group and, as you'll see elsewhere in this issue, the last column you'll receive in your mailbox as we move to electronic distribution. Our newsletter has long been our Group's largest single expense, and we would rather use that money on some of our local conservation campaigns while also saving some trees.

If we don't already have your email address, please follow the directions elsewhere in this issue to send it to us so that you can continue to receive our electronic newsletter four or five times a year. We promise we won't share your address with advertisers or Nigerian diplomats who have \$1 million to share.

The switch to an electronic newsletter was initiated by our previous chair, Mary Kadera. Mary served as chair for three years and has been a leader of the Mount Vernon Group for

New Book Club for Nature Lovers

by **Pat Soriano**

A few months ago, I was reading *Arctic Dreams* by Barry Lopez. Based on 15 extended trips to the Canadian Arctic over five years, the book is full of keen observations. These observations are set against stories of his time spent among the Eskimos so attuned to their environment that they "sometimes see themselves as still not quite separate from the animal world," in Lopez's estimation, and "regard us as a kind of people whose separate may have become too complete. They call us, with a mixture of incredulity and apprehension, 'the people who change nature.'"

I have been fortunate to travel in Alaska twice, but never had I felt such a keen appreciation of the wealth and fragility of the arctic landscape. I wanted to share the book with others, and so suggested that the Mount Vernon Group start a book club.

After reading *Arctic Dreams*, the next book we tackled was *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. While most of us have heard of this book, which is credited with opening our eyes about the environmental hazards of pesticide and herbicide use, I found that few people have actually read it. *Silent Spring* systematically and elegantly pulled together, in chapter after chapter, the degradation of chemical use on birds, fish, insects, plant life, not to mention our food. How the chemical companies and U.S.

much longer than that. Mary is a delightful person, and the standard she set as a leader will be very hard to match. I greatly appreciate all that she's done to make my transition to this position easier. Mary continues to serve the Group as editor of this newsletter and to coordinate our switch to email distribution, but even if she weren't editing my words, I'd have nothing but good things to say about her.

My recent involvement in the Sierra Club has been as Virginia Chapter treasurer and a member of the national Finance Committee, but I missed having time to get more involved in local issues. One common thread I've found at all levels of the Club is the quality of the people you meet when you get involved. Some of my fellow Executive Committee members are old friends and some I'd never met before, but they are all intelligent, interesting people who make involvement in the Club a pleasure.

We've tried to make it easy for you to get involved in the Club and meet some of these folks. The new Club office on Mt. Vernon Avenue in Alexandria has two staff working on local issues. Phillip Ellis and Kate Pollard have set up regular Thursday evening activist nights. I encourage you to come by some week to check things out. Phillip is leading the Club's efforts to close the GenOn (formerly Mirant) coal-fired power plant in Alexandria, an effort that was identified as our Group's

top conservation priority at our Executive Committee planning session in January.

Among our volunteer leaders, Pat Soriano is leading the Group's new book club and Jenny Abel has taken over leadership of our restaurant outings to sample healthy, locally-sourced and reasonably priced food. Marta VanderStarre, who recently moved to the area, has agreed to take over treasurer duties from Pat Soriano. Pat has done a wonderful job handling this crucial task for many years. We thank her for all of her work and welcome Marta to our group. We also welcome Sarah Ayling as our new volunteer webmaster, an increasingly important position.

One last volunteer opportunity that will interest some of you is the attempt to start an Inner City Outings program in Northern Virginia. ICO is a program that brings low-income children out into nature. As highlighted elsewhere in this issue, Kris Unger, the volunteer who leads the District's ICO program, will speak at a meeting in our Alexandria office on April 12 where he will explain what's involved in setting up an ICO program. This is a great opportunity to get involved for those who would rather spend time on a hike than a meeting room. ICO volunteers all seem to love what they do, and your commitment can be as small as one trip. ☺

The Mount Vernon Sierran welcomes articles, news releases, first-person experiences, poetry, photos and artwork. We reserve the right to edit all contributions for clarity, style, length and for adherence to stated Sierra Club philosophies and outlooks. Letters to the editor and articles with responsible counter-opinions are encouraged and welcome. Submissions are preferred in electronic format pasted into emails or as attachments. Photos can be scanned and emailed as JPEG files or mailed to the editor. Please contact Nicole Feuerstein (see above) or any Excom member for information. To place advertisements or classifieds in this newsletter, please contact Mary Kadera. The national Sierra Club web page can be found at: www.sierraclub.org. The Mount Vernon Group's web page is: www.virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg. The Mount Vernon Sierran is a publication of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, and Prince William County and is published 5 times a year for all Group members and the interested public. Our primary mission is to inform and engage group members in activities for the protection and enjoyment of the environment

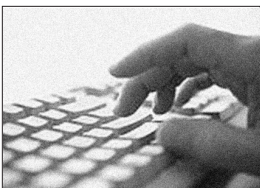
ADDRESS CHANGES

Member address changes: Sierra Club Member Services, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968. Send old and new addresses and a Sierra label; phone 415-977-5653; e-mail to address.changes@sierraclub.org. For non-member subscription inquiries and address changes: call 1-800-765-7904 toll-free or write to Sierra, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328.

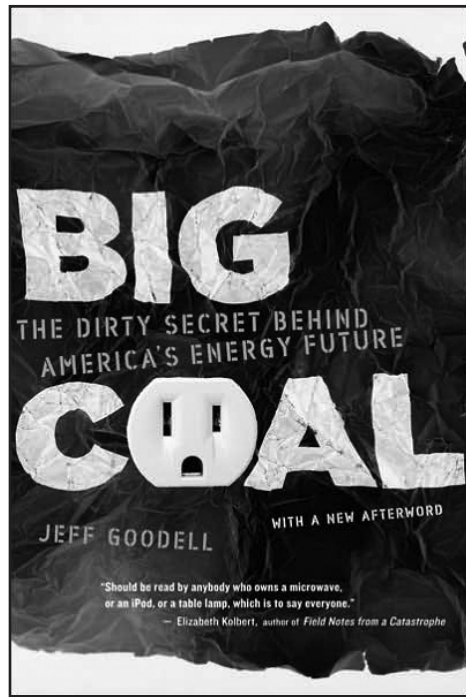
Important Contact Information

SIERRA CLUB NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: 85 2nd Street, 2nd floor, San Francisco, CA 94105-3441; 415-977-5500; Membership info: 415-977-5653; Sierra Club Legislative Hotline: 202-675-2394; Sierra Club website: www.sierraclub.org
SENATOR WEBB'S OFFICE: 202-224-4024, email: senator@webb.senate.gov **SENATOR WARNER'S OFFICE:** 202-224-2023, email senator@warner.senate.gov **CONGRESSMAN DAVIS'S OFFICE:** 202-225-1492, email: tomdavis@house.gov **CONGRESSMAN MORAN'S OFFICE:** 202-225-4376, email: jimmoran@mail.house.gov **THE WHITE HOUSE COMM-ENT LINE:** 202-456-6213, FAX line 202-456-2461, email the President and Vice President by going to www.whitehouse.gov and follow the prompts.

Get Connected! Join the MVG Listserv and Web Site



TAKE PART IN SPIRITED DISCUSSIONS and lively local events with the Mount Vernon Group! You won't miss a single one of them when you're subscribed to the Group's listserv for periodic email announcements, or if you bookmark the Mount Vernon Group's web site! To join the listserv, log on to the Mount Vernon Group site at <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/> today.



Cover image courtesy of Mariner Books.

at the next book club gathering on Tuesday, April 26, at the Sierra Club's Alexandria office at 2312 Mount Vernon Avenue. Happy reading! ☺

Turn GenOn Off *(cont. from p.1)*

coal through the devastating practice of mountaintop removal mining. Throughout the majestic Appalachians, mountains are routinely blown up with explosives and the waste rock is dumped into valley streams. This has destroyed over 500 mountains and buried 1000 miles of streams.

Northern Virginia receives pollution from this plant, but none of the energy it produces. The plant generates the least amount of energy of any coal plant in the DC Metro area by operating at only 18% of its capacity. The energy is transmitted from Virginia into a regional grid that sends power to DC and

Maryland; however, the power generated by the plant isn't required to keep the lights on.

Corporate polluters like GenOn have long chosen profits over the health of our communities and families. While I strongly support the 2008 agreement the City of Alexandria reached with Mirant to reduce some of the pollution coming from the plant, I cannot ignore the devastating impacts this plant will continue to have not only on our children and families, but to all the communities in our neighboring cities and states.

You can help turn GenOn off. Please visit genoffpotomac.com for more information. ☺



MOUNT VERNON GROUP MEETINGS

MVG Executive Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 20, 6:30 pm

Join the Group's elected leadership at these meetings where we direct and plan Group actions and activities. All Mount Vernon Group members are welcome to attend. For more information, including meeting location and agenda, and to RSVP, please contact Dean Amel, Chair, at deanamel@comcast.net or 703-243-2095.

Mount Vernon Group Book Club (NEW!)
Tuesday, April 26, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

The Mount Vernon Group has just launched a book club focusing on books about the environment and nature. The pick for spring 2011 is *Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future* (2007), available in local libraries and on new/used book web sites. The book looks at the political and economic power of the American coal industry. The author visited coal fields, coal-hauling trains, and power plants, to present a solid criticism of the disconnect between environmental pollution and the economic assertions by industry that standards of living will suffer from greater regulation. The book club discussion will be held at the Sierra Club's Alexandria office, 2312 Mt. Vernon Ave, #206. If you arrive early, the building may be locked so please wait at nearby coffee shop until folks arrive to let folks in. To RSVP, and/or if you need a ride from the nearest Metro stop (Braddock Road), email Pat Soriano at patemail@comcast.net or phone her at 703-671-3129.

True Cost of Food Dinners: They're Back!

We're reviving our tradition of gathering monthly at restaurants that feature locally-produced foods. Fortunately they are becoming

numerous and more affordable! So come join other Sierra Club members for an evening of tasty dishes and lively environmental discussions. Look for the folks with Sierra Club buttons. Questions? Contact Jenny Abel at jennyabel@verizon.net. All dinners are currently scheduled on Tuesdays.

--April 19, 6:30 pm: Food Matters,
4906 Brenman Park Drive, Alexandria
--May 17, 6:30 pm: Santa Fe Café,
1500 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington

COMMUNITY AND STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Eliminating Plastic Bags and Styrofoam in Arlington Stores
Sunday, April 3, 4:00 – 6:00 pm

The Arlington Greens are hosting a panel discussion on a local ban on retail stores and restaurants using single-use plastic bags and styrofoam containers; the Mount Vernon Group and the Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment are participating as event cosponsors. At the meeting, experts will discuss the facts and statistics on reusable bags, reusable food containers, paper, and D.C.'s plastic bag tax. Panelists will also discuss the implications of the Virginia General Assembly's recent decision not to adopt a plastic bag tax at the state level. The event will be held at the Arlington Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St, Arlington. For more information, contact info@greensofarlington.org.

Community Climate Conference
Monday, April 4, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Join other advocates at the George Mason University's Johnson Center for a free conference focusing on climate change issues at the personal, local, regional and national levels. Come for the day or for panels or workshops of your choosing and learn more about the science behind climate change, what's going on in Congress, how to craft an effective message and communicate with elected officials, vegetarianism, off-shore wind energy for VA, mountain-top removal and more. See www.NOVACAN.org for agenda. Pre-registration at bit.ly/MasonClimateEvent. Registration starts at 8:30 a.m. at event. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided. Co-sponsored by George Mason University

and the Northern Virginia Climate Action Network. Questions? Contact Colin Bennett at cbennet6@gmu.edu or 703-993-4426.

Restoring Streams, Revitalizing Communities Along the Richmond Highway Corridor
Wednesday, April 6, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

This event, sponsored by the Coalition for Smarter Growth, will illustrate the serious challenges faced by the streams passing through communities along the Richmond Highway Corridor, while updating the community on recently completed stream restoration plans. CSG's Stewart Schwartz and Stella Koch of the Audubon Naturalist Society will team up to show how redevelopment on the acres of parking lots in the corridor can be linked to good stormwater management. This event will also cover cost-effective ways to reduce runoff from your own home and yard. Community members will have the opportunity to "ask the experts" and discuss the next steps necessary to restore the community's streams. The event will be held at the Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane in Alexandria. For more information, visit www.smartergrowth.net.

Potomac River Watershed Cleanup
Saturday, April 9, 9:00 am – 12 noon

Since 1989, more than 90,000 volunteers have teamed with 425 partner organizations to tug over 5 million pounds of trash from the watershed's streams, rivers and bays. Last year's haul of over 250 tons included more than 15 tons of recyclables, 21,597 plastic bags, 1,844 tires, 14,802 cigarette butts, 3 canoes and 2 couches! To volunteer, visit the Alice Ferguson Foundation web site at www.fergusonfoundation.org/trash_initiative/trash_cleanup.shtml.

Inner City Outings Meeting
Tuesday, April 12

Inner City Outings (ICO) is a Sierra Club program that provides safe, enjoyable experiences for urban youth: www.sierraclub.org/ico/. The DC ICO program has been successfully leading outings with schools, community centers, and neighbourhoods for over 20 years. There will be a meeting on April 12 to discuss the possibility of starting an ICO program in Northern Virginia. If there is adequate interest (at least 3-5 people

who are willing to help start such a program up, by taking a leadership role), we would identify programs and organisations to partner with, recruit for volunteers and leaders (a significant number of DC ICO volunteers/leaders live in Virginia). For more information, contact Kris Unger at 703-527-2457 or by emailing krisunger@gmail.com.

Alexandria Earth Day:
A Zero Waste Event!
Saturday, April 30, 2011,
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Come on out to Ben Brenman Park for Alexandria's 2011 Earth Day celebration! There will be exhibitors, food and fun! Don't miss the "Recycled Runway presents Trashion Fashion" fashion show. Alexandria City Public School students will design clothing, accessories and costumes out of recycled materials to be modeled at the 18th Annual Earth Day celebration. And be sure to stop by the Sierra Club exhibit! You won't want to miss this! For more information, visit www.alexearthday.org/.

Climate Ride
May 13-17, NYC to DC

Take your message to Washington...by bicycle! Climate Ride is not only a fully-supported, five day charitable bike ride, but it's also the one and only multi-day charitable bicycling event that supports green causes. Proceeds from Climate Ride events support important projects at a collection of nine organizations focused on green jobs, clean energy, climate education, and bicycle infrastructure. Climate Ride is your chance to learn more about sustainability and the green energy future from expert speakers, network with others who are passionate about renewables and the climate, and most importantly take action, all while experiencing an exciting cycling adventure through some of the nation's most beautiful countryside. For more information, visit www.climateride.org/.

LOOKING FOR A HIKE? THE SIERRA CLUB POTOMAC REGION OUTINGS PROGRAM (SCPRO) provides a wide range of mostly day hikes in our area led by experienced hike leaders. Check it out at sierrapotomac.org. ☺

Arlington Energy Plan *(cont. from p.1)*

commercial and residential arenas, buildings and transportation, as well as in the county's government and school buildings and the federal facilities within Arlington's borders.

At the core of this proposal is the recognized need to do testing to make sure that assumptions are backed up by the facts on the ground; thus, the report calls for a mixed-use, net-zero energy scale project to be implemented. 'Mixed-use' refers to an area that includes both residential and commercial properties. 'Scale' refers to the size of the project, and in this case is defined as containing at least 100 homes (these can be in a multi-residence building). 'Net-zero energy' means that the amount of energy generated within the project area equals the amount of energy used. From a test project of this size, results

may be evaluated, adjustments made, and additional projects developed toward meeting the task force's goals county-wide.

Within the scale project a number of energy practices would be tested, specifically District Energy (DE) and clean, renewable energy. DE is a fairly simple concept: a central energy source for a defined area rather than importing energy from a major power station located somewhere else. In an area such as Crystal City, for example, you would provide combined heat and power (CHP) from a single source and shared among facilities, eliminating the need for each building to have its own boiler system. DE encourages the responsible capture and use of what's known as "waste heat"--that is, heat generated by the heating process, but lost within the process

of generation and transport. Currently, about 45% of the power generated by a coal-fired power plant is lost this way. With currently available technology about 70% of that waste heat is recoverable for use in a DE system. In Germany, for example, waste heat from one city is sent through a pipeline to another town twenty-five miles away using an insulated pipe less than seven inches across.

The task force's report proposes heavy use of photovoltaics (solar): the goal would be an installed base of 160 megawatts of power generation by 2025 utilizing both commercial and residential rooftops. Virginia is rated to be a fairly high source of solar energy, and there are many opportunities for solar in Arlington; look at the rooftop at your local school, for example. It is flat and either black or covered in gravel. Now envision a lighter colored roof with reflective paint (now being manufactured)

and an array of solar panels that provide enough power for not only the school, but some of the surrounding area. This illustrates renewable energy and district energy in a real-world application.

The complete task force report is available for review via <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/DES-CEP/CommunityEnergyPlan/documents/file80565.pdf>. All the materials generated by this initiative may be found by going to www.arlingtonva.us/energyplan.

After a final approval by the CES task force, the report will be presented for County Board adoption in April. After any revisions are made, work will then begin on community outreach and project implementation. Review will be ongoing to measure progress and to make adjustments as the proposal is tested and available technologies change. ☺

Wilderness Outings for Northern Virginia Youth:
Your Help Needed! by Kris Unger

Inner City Outings (ICO) is a Sierra Club program that provides safe, enjoyable experiences for urban youth. The DC ICO program has been successfully leading outings with schools, community centers, and neighborhoods for more than 20 years. We've gone canoeing, rafting, camping, horseback riding, skating, and hiking; climbed Sugarloaf Mountain and explored nearby parks; and arranged boat trips on the Anacostia and Potomac rivers with low-income and minority youth from DC.

Leading nature trips for young people, particularly youth who don't have much experience with nature, is both challenging and rewarding. Making sure that all the logistical details have been covered and ensuring the safety of all participants requires good leadership skills and teamwork. Despite the challenges, sharing nature with young people who've never climbed a mountain or gone camping or canoeing before is a great experience!

While the Sierra Club provides support at the national level for the ICO program (www.sierraclub.org/ico/) in the form of trip insurance, infrastructure, and guidance, individual ICO groups are run and supported entirely by volunteers. This allows a significant degree of initiative at the local level in terms of trips, partners, and so on.

With DC ICO, our strongest programs are based on a community model, where youth and adult participants come from the same neighborhood or general area. I feel that there is strong potential for similar programs in Northern Virginia, reaching populations of low-income and minority youth that don't often get to spend time in nature. DC ICO has found that building long-term programs--doing monthly trips with the same group of young people--is the best way to build trust and stability and provide quality experiences in nature.

As DC ICO chair, my primary responsibility



Photo by Jennifer Kerr. All rights reserved.

is to the DC program, and I would not be able to be actively involved in starting up a Northern Virginia ICO. This is why we're recruiting for local people to help start this. However, it would be easy for us to collaborate, in terms of sharing leader trainings, equipment, and experience, to mutual benefit.

There will be a meeting on April 12 to discuss the possibility of starting an ICO program in Northern Virginia. If there is adequate interest (at least 3-5 people who are willing to help start up such a program by taking a leadership role), we would identify programs and organizations to partner with, and recruit volunteers.

If you're interested in attending the meeting on April 12 or in getting involved with ICO in Northern Virginia, please contact Kris Unger at 703-527-2457 or by email at krisunger@gmail.com. ☼

*** IMPORTANT! ***

This will be the last print edition of the Mount Vernon Sierran.

Starting in June, you can receive the local newsletter via email.

See the story on Page 1 for additional details and instructions.

Easy Greening
by Jenny Abel

Welcome to a new column in the Mount Vernon Sierran! In each issue we'll explore ways that we can go beyond recycling and buying CFLs and take more steps to improve the health of our planet, our bank balances, and future generations. If you have ideas for what topics we should cover, please email jennyabel@verizon.net.

This edition concerns reducing our use of plastics and is inspired by the story of a California woman who is striving to go plastic-free. In 2007 Beth Terry became worried over statistics like the 27 billion plastic bags that Californians throw away each year and the 3 million barrels of oil that are required to produce those bags. She committed to buying no new plastic items and started finding alternatives to the plastics that she was using. She maintains a list of ways that others can use to go plastic-free on her web site: <http://myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide/>.

Terry says that the top two ways to reduce plastic waste are to carry reusable shopping bags and to stop drinking bottled water. Thanks to the advent of nylon bags that can be stuffed into tiny sacks (like Chico Bags), it is easy to carry one in a pocket or purse and have a reusable bag always at the ready. And thanks to the profusion of metal water bottles it is easy to have a lightweight alternative to single-use plastic ones.

Other tips from Terry include giving up chewing gum (apparently most chewing gum is made with polyvinyl acetate, a type of plastic), shopping at farmers' markets to avoid pre-packaged foods, choosing cloth produce bags



Photo by Barbara Myers. All rights reserved.

like those available from EcoBags, shopping at stores featuring grains and other dry goods in bulk bins (and using those cloth bags to package the bulk goods), eliminating sodas, juices, and other beverages bottled in plastic, and buying fresh bread that comes in paper bags or no bags. She also suggests returning containers for berries and cherry tomatoes to the farmers' market to be re-used, choosing milk in returnable glass bottles, and "letting go of frozen convenience foods" because frozen food containers are lined with plastic.

When eating out Terry carries her own re-usable containers for take out food and leftovers, a glass straw, and re-usable plates and utensils so that she can eschew plastic ware at restaurants. She also carries a stainless steel travel mug for coffee and other beverages. She even makes her own yogurt, soy milk, ketchup, mustard, chocolate syrup, and hummus to avoid buying the plastic or plastic-lined containers that these foods and condiments typically come in.

Terry's site features lots of other ideas for reducing our use of plastic. While we might not be ready to make all of the changes that she has, every little thing that we can do will make a difference in the long run. ☼

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YES! I want to join the Sierra Club and help safeguard our nation's precious environmental heritage!

Member's name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ If this is a gift, giver's name _____

Membership category Number _____ Check enclosed ☐ Charge my VISA ☐ Mastercard ☐ Exp. date _____ / _____

Cardholder Name _____

Card number _____ Signature _____

MEMBERSHIP	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
1. Introductory	\$25	—
2. Regular	39	49
3. Supporting	75	100
4. Contributing	150	175
5. Life	1,000	1,250
6. Senior	25	35
7. Student	25	35
8. Limited	25	35

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