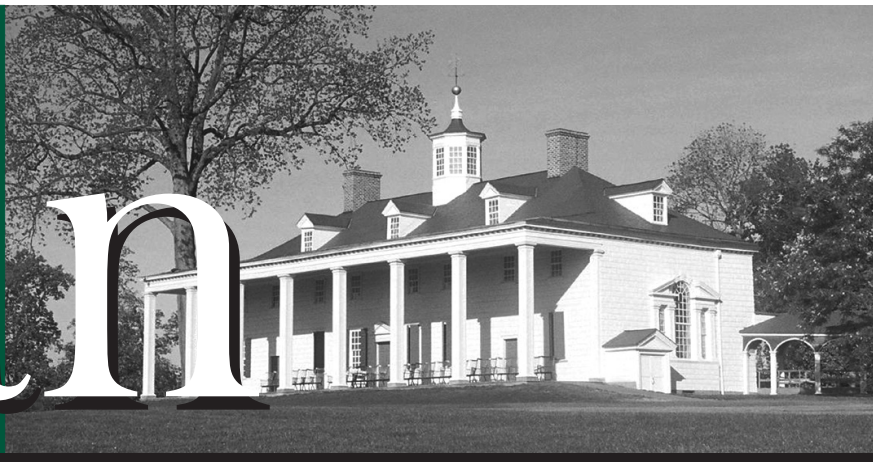


# S • Mt. Vernon Sierra

January / February / March 2011

The Mount Vernon Group of Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club

[virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg](http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg)



## Energy Efficiency and Arlington's Community Energy Plan by *Rick Keller*

Arlington's efforts to reduce the county's overall energy use and greenhouse gas emissions will take a significant step forward in March 2011, when the county's Community Energy and Sustainability (CES) Task Force presents its report to the County Board. The task force's recommendations will form the foundation for a comprehensive, countywide implementation plan. (For more information about the task force and the community energy plan, visit <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/DES-CEP/CommunityEnergyPlan/CommunityEnergyPlanMain.aspx>.)

Over the fall and winter, the task force focused on building energy efficiencies, one of Arlington's major hurdles in meeting sustainable, transformational energy goals.

Arlington's per-resident greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are almost 60% better than the U.S. national average. However, Arlington's buildings require much more energy than the national average. This is primarily due to their age; many were built before energy efficiency was common practice in building design and construction.

The good news is that by making some basic operational changes (e.g., thermostat settings, lighting utilization, etc.) approximately 50% of the needed efficiency improvements—and therefore reductions in GHG emissions—may be achieved. This is before structural changes (renovations and retrofits) are performed.

What guides the energy efficiency of new construction and major renovations? Developers and property owners must follow building codes, which are set at the state level. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) reviews new standards, as developed by International Code Council.

The IECC (International Energy Conservation Code) is the only model energy code that's recognized in federal law. The U.S. Department of Energy is required to evaluate it and states are required to consider adopting it. Virginia currently enforces the 2006 IECC standard. The 2009 standard adoption (with possible state-determined caveats) is targeted for March 2011. The IECC 2012 standard now under development would undergo the same 12 to 18 month process unless Virginia changes the way it does business.

Thus, new construction and renovations starting after 2011 will yield more efficient structures—but what about the existing base,

most of which will be with us through the 2050 period that the Community Energy Plan targets?

First and foremost, building owners need to be educated about the operational changes they might make. Most homeowners are now aware of the savings that can be achieved through the replacement of incandescent lights with CFLs and LEDs or by installing programmable thermostats that can be set for different temperatures at different times of the day. If energy prices rise, however, the building owner may see flat or increasing costs despite improvements. So how to move forward?

An idea that has gained currency in Europe is an energy performance label (EPL). Think of a display in your home that allows you to see how efficiently your home is functioning from an energy usage perspective. You note the level and then install CFLs, caulk around windows, and add insulation. What is the result? You have real time reinforcement of your efforts—or you get an indication that you have not taken the steps you needed to reduce your footprint (if you paid for the work—did the contractor deliver as promised?). Think of this being a requirement for selling your home—that you provide performance numbers based on a national standard to any potential buyers. Would it have an impact on the home value and finding a buyer? Apply that same thinking to selling a commercial property—or for the use of tenants in a building where they are going to share energy costs or pay their own utilities. Owners with better performing buildings would have a marketplace advantage.

To be effective, the EPL program can't be a "nice-to-have," optional activity. State- or locally-sponsored incentives such as appliance credits, property financing advantages, tax breaks, and/or public recognition of "star" buildings would be the types of things needed to push the idea forward. Buy-in from Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development to set a state standard for EPL or a state law passed by the General Assembly will also be necessary.

The CES Task Force will continue to explore strategies for energy efficiency and other, related issues as it gears up to deliver its report to the Board in March. The next CES Task Force meeting will be held the morning of January 28th from 8-11:30 a.m. at Arlington's Central Library. The public is invited to attend and observe proceedings. ☺

## Delegate Kaye Kory Plans an Environmental Symposium in Virginia's 38th District

by *Diana Artemis, Kimberly Smith, Fred Abbey*

Delegate Kaye Kory plans to host an Environmental Symposium in March 2011 for constituents and representatives of homeowners' associations in the 38th District of Virginia. This will be the first of approximately three symposia that will culminate with an Environmental Summit currently planned for November 2011. The overarching goal is to identify potential new environmental legislation to be introduced in the 2012 General Assembly Session.

The purpose of the first symposium in March 2011 is to share ideas, programs and advocacy efforts and to identify environmental concerns that directly impact residents, homeowners' associations and businesses of District 38; and identify community and environmental leaders and other interested parties who will prioritize the common issues and work toward defining specific legislative proposals that will lead to measurable improvements in the District's community and environmental health.

Delegate Kory envisions community leaders and activists to direct discussions on topics such as storm water management and drainage issues; trash problems that are a blight

and result in challenges in our watershed; and successful local projects that demonstrate connection to the watershed issue, such as the Lake Barcroft Reforestation Program, a school program rain garden or vegetable garden, and use of organic products for lawn and garden care that reduce toxins in our storm water and the Chesapeake Bay.

The March 2011 Symposium will be followed by detailed workshops later in the year. The culminating Environmental Summit is planned for November 2011, during which specific and quantified environmental legislation will be drafted and proposed for submission in December 2011.

For further details, including the date, location and agenda of the District 38 Environmental Symposium, please check Delegate Kory's website early next year: <http://kayekory.com/>. You may also call her office at 703-354-6024.

If you are a leader of an environmentally-focused group or a member of other community environmental improvement efforts and would like to participate, please contact Diana Artemis at: [artemdi@yahoo.com](mailto:artemdi@yahoo.com). ☺

## Weak Rules on Coal Ash Have to Go!

by *Phillip Ellis*

A big Sierra Club thanks to all who participated in the November Rally for Children's Health at the Environmental Protection Agency's headquarters in D.C. The Sierra Club organized the rally to promote awareness of the EPA's proposed new coal ash safeguards. Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal for energy. It contains dangerous levels of arsenic, mercury and other toxins, and yet it isn't regulated by the federal government.

Nearly 40 volunteers—many parents with young children—joined staffers from the Sierra Club at the rally. Members of participating organizations including the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Greater Washington Interfaith and Light, Wise Energy Coalition, and the University of Georgetown joined hands to show their support for increased protection from the toxic coal ash that puts the health of nearly 1.5 million children at risk each year.

As a captive audience of D.C. police officers, EPA security guards, and a squadron of

Homeland Security guards looked on, the Sierra Club's Kate Pollard led activists in a rousing rendition of Ring Around the Rosie to playfully but sternly express support for stronger regulations on coal ash. Or, as our activists so eloquently put it, "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! Weak rules on coal ash have to go!"

The Sierra Club has been a leader in promoting national awareness of the coal ash hearings by helping to solicit more than 118,000 public comments that encourage the federally enforceable, subtitle C option (the strictest form of regulation that is being considered).

The rally was covered by several media organizations, including The Washington Examiner and the local Fox television affiliate. The EPA has not said how quickly it would issue its final decision on coal ash regulation, following the closing of the public comment period on November 19. ☺



## Mount Vernon Group Leadership

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**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 Timmons (see above) or any Excom member for information. To place advertisements or classifieds in this newsletter, please contact Bill L'Hommedieu. The national Sierra Club web page can be found at: [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org). The Mount Vernon Group's web page is: [www.virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg](http://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](mailto: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

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## MOUNT VERNON GROUP MEETINGS

### MVG Executive Committee Meetings

Join the Group's elected leadership at this annual planning "retreat" where we consider the challenges and successes of the year just past and set priorities, plans, and budget for the year ahead. All Mount Vernon Group members are welcome to attend. For more information (including meeting location and agenda) and to RSVP, please contact Bruce Parker, Group Vice-Chair, at [bruce@chesdata.com](mailto:bruce@chesdata.com).

Dates of upcoming scheduled meetings are:  
Sunday, January 2, 1:00 pm

### Mount Vernon Group Book Club (NEW!) Wednesday, February 23, 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 winter 2011 is the environmental classic *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, which changed public opinion and public policy about the overuse of pesticides (the title refers to a spring day without bird songs, as birds were at great risk from then aerial spraying of DDT to control mosquitoes). Future books can be selected by the group but should be books available in the library and in soft cover. To RSVP and get information about

the location, email Pat Soriano at [patemail@comcast.net](mailto:patemail@comcast.net) or phone her at 703-671-3129.

## COMMUNITY AND STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

### Environmental Issues and the 2011 Virginia Legislative Session Monday, January 10, 7:30 – 9:00 pm

Come learn about legislation proposed for the 2011 General Assembly session, how you can support conservation issues, and how you can participate in the Virginia Conservation Network's Lobby Day on January 17 (see below). On January 10, you'll hear from JR Tolbert, the assistant director of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club. The meeting, which is sponsored by the Great Falls Group, will be held at the McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road in McLean. Refreshments will be served at 7 pm.

### Conservation Lobby Day Monday, January 17 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

The Virginia Conservation Network sponsors this annual gathering in Richmond of environmental activists from across the state (the Sierra Club is a member of VCN). Lobby Day includes education about the state's most pressing environmental issues, a briefing about current legislation before the General Assembly, and an opportunity to meet with your elected officials and urge them to vote in an environmentally-responsible way. For more information and to register, visit the VCN web site at <http://www.vcnva.org/>.

## MLK Day Neighborhood and Stream Cleanup

**Monday, January 17, 10:00 am - Noon**

Help make Martin Luther King Day a Day of Service! Volunteer to clean up a section of Columbia Pike and Four Mile Run stream and keep trash out of Arlington County's largest stream watershed. The event, sponsored by Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, begins at the Arlington Mill Community Center at 4975 Columbia Pike. Please register at [volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org](mailto:volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org) or 703-228-6406.

### Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference Tuesday, February 8 – Thursday, February 10

Plan to be at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in D.C. in early February to participate in this exciting environmental event! The 2011 Conference is the leading forum for learning about strategies for building a green economy that creates good jobs, reduces global warming and other environmental problems, and secures America's economic and environmental future. The conference is sponsored by the Blue Green Alliance, a national partnership of labor unions and environmental organizations dedicated to expanding the number and quality of jobs in the green economy. Registration costs \$175 and can be completed online at <http://www.greenjobsconference.org/>.

**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](http://sierrapotomac.org) ☺

# Local Foods Abound in Area Restaurants by *Jenny Abel*

If you've been reading this newsletter over the past year, you've likely spotted the articles about "Local Foods, Local Chefs," an effort to increase the number of restaurants in Arlington that serve locally-produced foods. In addition to the nine restaurants that participated in the "Local Foods, Local Chefs: Farm to Table Month" this fall, many others are beginning to feature foods grown by Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia farmers.

For example, the Silver Diner in Clarendon makes local and seasonal foods a major focus of their menu. What's more, many of the nine Local Foods, Local Chefs restaurants have continued to offer local foods beyond the Farm to Table Month. Those restaurants are: Santa Fe Café, Willow, Eventide, Liberty Tavern, Lyon Hall, Restaurant 3, American Flatbread, Twisted Vines, and Kora.

The third annual Farm to Table Month will take place in September 2011 and it's never

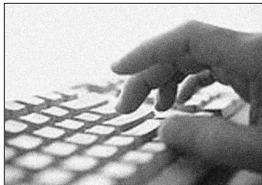
too early to start planning. We're looking to include as many restaurants as possible and would welcome your suggestions. The event requires participating restaurants to offer at least one complete meal (appetizer, entrée, and dessert) that's made entirely from locally-produced or raised ingredients (excluding oils, condiments, flour, and sugar) during the course of the month—Sept. 15-Oct. 15 2011. "Local" is defined as grown or raised within 125 miles of the Mount Vernon Group area: this definition is the same one used at local producer-only farmers' markets.

Eating locally-produced foods helps to reduce the number of miles that a food has to travel to reach our plates. Buying these foods helps to sustain local economies and keep agricultural lands in production rather than turned into housing or



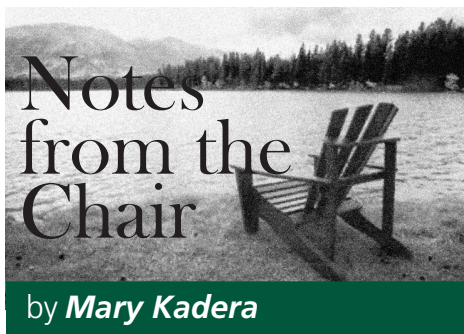
Photo by Andy Field. All rights reserved.

## 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.





It's midnight at my house, and I've found a few moments of perfect quiet to write this note for the Mount Vernon Sierran. This will be the last column I write as the Group's volunteer chair. I haven't found the right way to balance volunteering with other things going on in my life, especially the three-year-old and one-year-old things that are sleeping right now upstairs.

I joined the Mount Vernon Group's executive committee in 2003 and have been proud of all that the Group has accomplished since that time (not really because of, and often in spite of, my association with them). Through the Group's elected, volunteer leaders and a small, core group of dedicated activists, the Sierra Club has invoked the collective might of more than 3,500 Mount Vernon Group members and taken action on dozens of local issues, among them Metro funding, HOT lanes, Alexandria's Mirant power plant, I-66 widening, local master planning, municipal recycling, BRAC realignment, rail on the Wilson Bridge, and more. We've endorsed political candidates, engaged the public at events like Alexandria's Earth Day, and hosted happy hours, picnics, auctions and outings to bring our members together.

On January 2, the Group's executive committee will meet to establish priorities and make plans for 2011. The nine-member ExCom will include three new members (voting for the ExCom candidates closes on January 1—thanks to all who have mailed in ballots!). Rotating off the ExCom with me will be Andrew Nicholls and Diana Artemis, two dedicated volunteers and significant contributors to the Mount Vernon Group.

Andrew's known to many of you as the Program Chair who organized many fine slideshows, lectures and discussions for our

monthly group membership meetings over several years. Through his efforts, MVG members got to hear from hiker and author Paul Elliott; Arlington County energy manager John Morrill; kayak instructors from Potomac Paddlesports; representatives from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and many more. Andrew also supported the Group for many years by hosting newsletter labeling parties Chez Nicholls and hauling all the labeled newsletters to the Merrifield post office in bulk mail containers. He's hosted letter writing parties, authored numerous articles and quizzes for the newsletter, and supplied many bottles of wine and slices of pizza to energize the ExCom meetings.

A few years ago, Andrew was able to lure Diana Artemis to join the Group's ExCom, and she quickly proved her value by organizing and hosting the enormously successful "True Cost of Food" restaurant and outing series. Because of Diana, Mount Vernon Group members and their friends enjoyed wonderful meals and great conversation at several area restaurants, outings to local farms and farmers' markets, cooking demonstrations and potluck dinners. Diana's TCOF efforts and her role leading the Sierra Club's national Sustainable Consumption committee led her to kick off a True Cost of Homes workshop and field trip series, which included a trip to tour Freedom House at JMU and a conversation with the architect of the Blueberry Hill Cohousing Community in Vienna. Diana is gone from the ExCom, but not forgotten—you'll see her byline on an article in this issue about an environmental forum she's helping to organize with her state delegate, Kaye Kory.

The ExCom meeting on January 2 is open to the public, and all Mount Vernon Group members are encouraged to attend. If you're interested in learning more about the Group and how you can become involved, I encourage you to email the Group's vice chair, Bruce Parker, at [bruce@chesdata.com](mailto:bruce@chesdata.com). We're hoping there's another Andrew or Diana out there, ready and willing to jump in! As for me, I thank you for the opportunity to represent you for the past several years on the ExCom, and I wish you a very happy new year. ☺

## The Sierran Goes Electronic? by Mary Kadera



Photo by Manu Mohan. All rights reserved.

As printing and postage costs rise, the leaders of the Mount Vernon Group are considering phasing out production of the print newsletter and moving to electronic distribution of the Mount Vernon Sierran.

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.

The Group expects to make a decision this spring and welcomes input from its members. If you have suggestions or concerns, please contact Mary Kadera, newsletter coordinator, at [marykadera@gmail.com](mailto:marykadera@gmail.com) or by phone at (703) 684-2004.

We understand that there may be MVG members who can't access the newsletter elec-

## The Sierra Club Supports I-395 HOT Lanes Lawsuit by Rick Keller

For more than a year, Arlington has been fighting a plan to add capacity to the I-395/95 express lanes and turn them into a toll road that will extend the current express lanes 28 miles and re-line the existing roadway from two to three lanes. On/off ramps will also be added or redesigned (including the one in Shirlington).

The County initiated a lawsuit against VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). At the core of the lawsuit is the contention that a Categorical Exclusion (CE) to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) was inappropriately awarded to the I-395/95 HOT lanes project because of the scope of the project and its local impact. The CE basically means that the full complement of NEPA rules and regulations do not apply to the road project. The FHWA granted the CE to the VDOT project 11 days before the end of the Bush Administration.

Arlington has had to press its case without outward support from any of the other impacted local jurisdictions or from area environmental organizations—but that is now changing. In November, the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club collaborated with the Coalition for Smarter Growth to send a letter to Governor McDonnell supporting Arlington's position. Earlier the same month, the court granted Arlington's "motion to compel" to supplement the record with documents Arlington knows exists, but has been unable to obtain. The court ordered that VDOT and

FHWA submit to Arlington all requested revenue/toll and traffic studies, notes and other documents in VDOT's possession not part of the court record at the time.

Arlington's lawsuit has been criticized from a number of directions, including comments by state legislators from both sides of the aisle. Some of the criticisms stem from the expansion of the suit beyond NEPA: the lawsuit also raises an environmental justice issue that contends the population most impacted by the project in south Arlington is predominantly minority and low-income. This has critics crying foul, claiming that Arlington is "playing the race card." However, the reality of the situation is that the project is designed to benefit predominantly white exurbs over those who live near the roadway in Arlington and will bear the brunt of the traffic changes. This is played out all over the U.S. where poorer residents bear the brunt of deals that ultimately benefit those in wealthier areas.

The HOT lanes will be built and operated by a private company, similar to the Beltway's HOT lanes. Arlington's efforts have effectively stopped the project from going forward, as the Australian-based company needs to obtain financing to begin the project. A casual observer might conclude that it is not likely, in this economic climate, that a financial organization will grant a multi-million dollar loan for a project while a lawsuit that could cause revisions to the project is pending. ☺



Photo by Andy Field. All rights reserved.

tronically. We expect that these individuals will be able to "opt in" for printouts and continue to get newsletters delivered through the U.S. mail. All others who don't "opt in" will receive the newsletter electronically.

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](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org) or call Membership Services at 415-977-5500. It would probably be easiest 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/ConsProfileUser>. Note: when you provide your email address to the Sierra Club, you're automatically opted-into all Sierra Club correspondences—however, you can edit your preferences and "opt out" of any/all communications once you've logged in.

The March/April/May issue of the Sierran will come to your mailbox in hard copy and will contain further information about whether or not the newsletter will move to an electronic format later in 2011. ☺



# Wanted: Mount Vernon Group Webmaster

The Mount Vernon Group is seeking a volunteer who can dedicate 3-5 hours each month to maintain the Group's Internet site (see <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/>). You don't need to rock the world with mad web skills in order to apply—we're just looking for someone with a solid knowledge of HTML, the ability to do basic image manipulation (e.g., cropping feature photos) and the ability to FTP files to the servers at Sierra Club national. If this sounds like you, and if you'd like to play a small part in saving the planet while you wear your pajamas on the couch at home, let us hear from you!

Please contact Mary Kadera at [marykadera@gmail.com](mailto:marykadera@gmail.com) if you're interested.

# Wanted: Mount Vernon Group Treasurer

The Mount Vernon Group is seeking a treasurer to track the Group's revenues and expenditures. This involves developing an annual budget with the Group's executive committee, attending executive committee meetings (approximately every six weeks) to give financial reports, processing invoices and expense receipts, and managing paperwork with the state and national offices in order to reimburse certain costs and obtain the Group's local share of membership dues funds. On-the-job training is provided!

If interested, please contact Mary Kadera at [marykadera@gmail.com](mailto:marykadera@gmail.com).

**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	Annual dues include subscriptions to SIERRA (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1). Dues are not tax deductible. Enclose your check and mail to: <b>Sierra Club, P.O.Box 52968, Boulder, Colorado 80322-2968</b>
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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# 8 Questions for Phillip Ellis by Mary Kadera

The Sierra Club's efforts to end our reliance on coal got a shot in the arm recently when it hired Phillip Ellis as a field organizer for its national Beyond Coal campaign. Phillip is a familiar face to many in the D.C. area, thanks to his recent work on the Sustainable Metro DC initiative for smart growth and a strong transportation infrastructure. In September, he joined the Beyond Coal campaign and will be focusing much of his time on the Potomac River Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant located in Old Town Alexandria. For the enjoyment and education of the Sierran readership, I asked Phillip several questions about himself. His responses are below. If you think that the Dos Equis guy is The Most Interesting Man in The World, read on, my friends. If you think Phillip is the kind of organizer you could get behind, then I encourage you to contact him at [phillip.ellis@sierraclub.org](mailto:phillip.ellis@sierraclub.org) to find out how you can help.

**Q: What's the hardest thing you've had to give up, as an environmentalist? (Here's where you confess your love of 20 minute, scalding-hot showers...)**

A: I do have to admit that I love my showers, but I just can't seem to get a handle on how much paper comes into my life on a daily basis. I know it's not the most significant environmental issue, but it irks me that no matter how much I recycle or try to avoid, paper just won't go away.

**Q: What would Phillip Ellis recommend as a favorite environmentally-focused book or movie?**

A: Jaws, but I don't think that is the environmental theme you are looking for! This probably has nothing to do with an environmental theme, but the first book that came to mind was The Razor's Edge by Somerset Maugham. Its influence in my life was probably more about timing than content, but it really forced me look at the world in a different light.

**Q: Who's your environmental hero?**

A: As an employee of the Sierra Club I believe I am contractually obligated to say John Muir.

This may sound odd, but I never really had an environmental hero. Most of my heroes have been in the spiritual or civic arenas. As an organizer and as someone who tries to inspire the community, I have always been a huge fan of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. How he not only inspired, but also organized a movement where people literally put their lives at risk never ceases to amaze me. I am constantly thinking about (and obviously haven't figured out) how to bring this to the environmental movement.

**Q: What keeps you awake at night, environmentally-speaking?**

A: I see you added "environmentally-speaking" because you know my first answer would have been my two kids! What keeps me awake is the age-old question of how we truly evolve as a society. Is it through external circumstances or internal change?

**Q: A softball question: What's your favorite place in the great outdoors?**

A: The Gulf of Mexico at night, and the Coastal Dune Lakes in my former home along the panhandle of Florida.

**Q: Now a hardball question: if the A-Team added an environmentally-conscious character to "green up" the show, what would his or her special area(s) of expertise be?**

A: Speaking as the former Sustainable Metro DC Coordinator, I would encourage Howling Mad Murdoch to become a public transit expert. They're always drugging Mr. T to make him fly on an airplane that he's extremely scared of. Why not use some of our public transportation infrastructure by taking a train? I'm still not sure, though, if this would completely offset the pollution from all of the explosions on the show. Perhaps there is a more environmentally- friendly form of dynamite, but that's beyond my area of expertise.

**Q: What would you like to say you had accomplished in 2011 in your professional life?**

A: There are always two things I factor into accomplishments - what I do and how I do it. My goal is to retire the Potomac River Generating Station, and I truly believe that can be accomplished next year. In achieving this goal I always strive to strengthen my relationships with the volunteers and partners by consistently giving the best I have to offer.

**Q: Pick your poison: if you had to watch TLC's "Sarah Palin's Alaska" or The History Channel's "Swamp People," which would it be?**

A: I have to admit that I am fascinated with Sarah Palin because we're witnessing a change in how future presidential candidates will be marketed. However, I'm an Alabama boy who has spent more than his fair share of time in the swamps of Florida and Louisiana, so I have to choose the Swamp People. That said, if it's not "The Daily Show" or college football, then I don't watch it. ☺



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