



**SIERRA
CLUB**

**PRINCE GEORGE'S
COUNTY GROUP**

2020 Year in Review

Overview

We began the year 2020 with ambitious goals. By mid-March, it was clear that we would have to make major changes in how we could work toward those goals. Still, within the new constraints (no in-person meetings after March 16), we managed to make considerable progress using remote meetings, virtual outings and book discussions, new methods for email communications, newsletters and website content. In both internal discussions and public advocacy, we raised issues of systemic racism, health disparities, and environmental injustice, emphasizing how the coronavirus pandemic, racial justice, economic hardship and climate change are interrelated and must be addressed together. In addition to our regular committee meetings, our 33 other events scheduled on Campfire attracted over 500 registrants with at least 294 attendees recorded.

Climate Action

Our chief goal for the year was to prompt climate action: to advocate for local policy changes to decrease greenhouse gas emissions; to advocate for and contribute public input to a County Climate Action Plan; to support the community of Brandywine in their opposition to new fossil fuel infrastructure in Prince George's County; to increase member participation in advocacy for climate action; and to hold at least one educational forum about climate, clean energy and/or transportation. We engaged members to participate in the Prince George's County Environmental Forum, along with Greenbelt Climate Action Network, and the Patuxent River Keeper to discuss development of a Climate Action Plan. We mobilized members to provide individual comments and provided Group testimony in support of CR-07-2020 to create a Commission to develop a Climate Action Plan for Prince George's County. We formed a new Climate Action Committee to share information about climate action plans from other jurisdictions and develop ideas about what should be in the County Climate Action Plan. We hosted an educational panel discussion about Climate Action during our Fall membership meeting. Janet Gingold (Executive Committee Chair) was appointed to the Climate Action Commission as a representative from a local environmental or social justice non-profit groups. Joseph Jakuta of Climate Parents mobilized members to advocate for 100% clean energy schools. We partnered with Clean Air Prince Georges in their efforts in opposition to new fossil fuel infrastructure in an already overburdened majority-minority community, providing Group

testimony and mobilizing members with an Action Alert to provide individual comments to the Public Service Commission regarding the environmental injustice of clustered power plants and the need for a just transition to renewable energy in addition to the adverse effects of the proposed pipeline on downstream water quality.

Zero Waste

Transportation

The Prince George's Group used email communications to inform and mobilize members in opposition to the planned expansion of I-495 and I-270. At least 4 members provided individual comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We participated in Transit Equity Day on Feb. 4. A new Issues Forum on our website was created to engage members for public comment on the proposed Maglev train.



General Membership Meetings and Educational Activities

- Our Winter Potluck Social at Watkins Regional Park on January 19 featured a presentation on forest fragmentation and how to address it by Matthew Johnston and a special recognition of Martha Ainsworth for her 7 years of service as Chair of the Executive Committee.
- The Fall Membership Meeting on Oct. 17 featured a panel discussion on Climate Action in the Time of Coronavirus with Council Member Deni Taveras, Delegate Julian Ivey, and Climate Reality Leaders Ron Kaltenbaugh and Janet Gingold, followed by a game of Climate Jeopardy.
- Legislative Briefing about Priority Bills for the 2020 Maryland General Assembly on February 10
- [Zero Waste Tours](#) of the Materials Recycling Facility were held in person on March 6 and virtually on December 4.
- To engage members in the City Nature Challenge, we hosted two virtual trainings in the use of iNaturalist and presented



data collected during the challenge in a virtual meeting, “Celebrating Biodiversity of Prince George’s County,” on May 27.

Committee Work

- The Executive Committee met three times in person and 9 times virtually to plan events and formulate positions on local environmental issues. ExCom members participated in trainings regarding digital communications; equity, inclusion and racial justice; climate leadership.
- The Climate Action Committee met eight times, virtually, to support and shape the work of the county Climate Action Commission.
- The Diversity, Inclusion, Equity Membership Action Committee met 3 times, virtually.

Communications

- **Emails** were sent to members 2-3 times each month. The communications team attended trainings with the Maryland Chapter to learn how to use the email functions in Marketing Cloud. Emails were used to provide information about upcoming events and to engage members in advocacy activities, such as lobby night, the campaign against highway expansion, and advocacy for a county Climate Action Plan, for county pesticide regulations, and against new fossil fuel infrastructure our county, as well as tips for enjoying local natural places and getting out the vote for the 2020 presidential race.
- **Website content** was updated and augmented by the addition of articles from members about [news and events](#), [Earth Day](#), and the [Zero Waste](#) campaigns to reduce single-use plastic. We also developed a new [Issues Forum](#) where members can express views about environmental topics that are not necessarily official positions of the Sierra Club.
- **Quarterly electronic newsletters** were published for [Spring](#), [Summer](#) and [Fall](#).
- **Facebook** was used to disseminate information about events and action alerts
- **Campfire Events Platform** was used to publicize and record scheduled events and activities

Outdoors for all

Janet Gingold led three in-person half-day hikes: to Watkins Park in January, Merkle Natural Resources Management Area in February, and Cedarville State Forest in March. When in-person activities were not deemed safe, virtual outings were developed using photos and short video clips to high special natural places in Prince George’s County. Seven virtual outings (April, June, July, August, September, November, December) featured Watkins Regional Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, Governors Bridge Natural Area, Patuxent Research Refuge, Lake Artemesia, Bladensburg Waterfront Park, Rocky Gorge Reservoir, Huntley Meadows, Parris Glendening

Nature Preserve, Oak Creek West, Cedarville State Forest, Mattawoman Creek, and Guilford Woods.

Natural Places

Lily Fountain represented the Prince George's Group at Chapter Natural Places Committee meetings and initiated an advocacy partnership with Friends of Guilford Woods.



Book Discussions

The Prince George's Sierra Club Environmental Book Group hosted monthly on-line discussions of books about nature and environmental issues beginning in May. Discussion leaders included Na'ilah Dawkins, Anne Riley, Janet Gingold, Janis Oppelt, Nick Orrick, Lily Fountain. The books discussed included

- *American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of its Food (And What We Can Do About It)* by Jonathan Bloom
- *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* by David Wallace-Wells
- *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries from A Secret World* by Peter Wohlleben
- *The Thing with Feathers: The Surprising Lives of Birds and What They Reveal About Being Human* by Noah Strycker
- *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* edited by Paul Hawken
- *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* by Carolyn Finney
- *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- *The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children* by Rachel Carso



Testimonies

The Prince George's Sierra Club provided the following public advocacy, testimonies and comments during 2020.

Prince George's County Council

7/14/20

CB-03-2020

Supporting Healthy food priority area grocery store incentives

7/20/20

CR-50-2020

Comments on County Ten-year solid waste management plan 2020-2029

7/14/20	CB-33-2020	Objection to expedited consideration of CB33-2020 in which the bill's introduction is followed by a committee of the whole discussion on the same day
10/10/20	CB-08-2020	Supporting regulation of pesticides in Prince Georges' County
10/9/20	CR-56-2020	Supporting a stormwater assessment by Army Corps of Engineers
6/10/20	CR-07-2020	Supporting creation of a climate action commission to develop a climate action plan for PG Co
10/7/20	CB-83-2020	Supporting prohibition of fly ash landfills in Prince George's County
10/10/20	CB-84-2020	Supporting restriction of development in floodplains
7/14/20	CB-08-2020	Supporting regulation of pesticides in Prince Georges' County

Maryland State Highway Administration

11/4/20 Regarding Consolidated Transportation Program in support of transit and infrastructure for walkable, bike-able communities

Prince George's Delegation

11/19/20 PG407-21 Supporting a study on historic and recent flooding in Prince George's County by Maryland Emergency Management Agency, Dept of transportation and Department of Environment

11/19/20 PG402-21 Opposing Sunday deer hunting in Prince George's County

11/19/20 PG410-21 Supporting with amendments th Stop Environmentally Unjust Coal and Gas Plants Act of 2021

Maryland Public Service Commission

11/1/20 Regarding Mattawoman Energy Center's request to authorize dewatering for construction of a natural gas pipeline for power plant in Brandywine

12/9/20 Regarding potential adverse effects of pipeline construction on water quality in Zekiah Swamp and Mattawoman Creek Watersheds

County Executive Angela Alsobrooks

2/20/20 Regarding Prince George's County Budget in support of funds for developing a climate action plan and funding for the work of the Department of the Environment

Prince George's County Board of Education

6/8/20 Advocating for sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction in Education Facilities Management Plan

Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission

10/5/20 A letter advocating for protecting an approved afforestation area in the Pines of Laurel development from mowing

Partnership Activities

- Prince George's Environmental Forum Meeting (with Greenbelt Climate Action Network and Patuxent River Keeper

- Transit Equity Day Feb. 4 (with Montgomery County Sierra Club, CASA, Chispa, and local unions)
- Opposition to new fossil fuel infrastructure (with Clean Air Prince George's)
- Education of community about straw ban (with Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority)
- Climate Action Planning (with Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and Greenbelt Climate Action Network)

Leadership Team

Executive Committee

Janet Gingold, Chair
 Lily Fountain, Vice Chair
 Sydney Jacobs, Representative to MD Chapter
 Na'ilah Dawkins, Conservation Chair
 Kim Shelton, Membership (unavailable after April)
 Susan Stewart, Secretary
 Anne Riley, Water liaison
 Barbara Sollner-Webb, Assistant Secretary
 Joseph Jakuta (appointed 12/6 to fill vacancy)
 David Brosch (appointed 12/6 to fill vacancy)

Treasurer: Nancy Hammond

Webmaster: John Straub

Communications: Janis Oppelt

Transportation: Nick Orrick

Zero Waste Team Lead: Martha Ainsworth

Climate Action Committee:

Janet Gingold	Sydney Jacobs
Lily Fountain	Joseph Jakuta
Cheryl Rollins	David Brosch
Jamal Rollins	Treda Grayson
Pat Jackman	Ben Fischler
Maureen Fine	Natasha McGrath
Lore Rosenthal	Kathy Bartolomeo
James Lawson	Roxana Amaya-Fuentes

Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Membership Action Committee

Lily Fountain
 Na'ilah Dawkins