

Tennessee Sierran

SIERRA
CLUB
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

Bi-monthly newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

Volume 55, Number 3—May / June 2022

Ford's Blue Oval City Brings Green Trucks, Green Jobs, and Concerns to West Tennessee

Page 5



Masthead photo: Andrews Bald, North Carolina © Ron Shrieves

Cover photos: top, artist's rendering of Blue Oval City; bottom, testing Ford's F-150 Lightning electric truck; both, Ford Media Center

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect

From Dr. Cris Corley

Early Morning Thoughts from the New Tennessee Chair



Waking up a little after four this morning to a frigid 19 degrees, the forecast of clear skies meant a beautiful sunrise was likely over the Cumberland River. This time of the year, convection fog is common due to the warmer waters being released below Cordell Hull and Centerhill dams. The early morning twilight recharges me to conquer another day.

The Corleys have always been early risers, a family trait passed down over numerous generations. The genetic predisposition was beneficial to my early ancestors that settled in the Caney Fork river valley in 1802. They worked from sunrise to sunset in the unsettled eastern Middle Tennessee highlands. Having survived the Revolutionary War, two brothers loaded up their wagons with family possessions and a war land grant in hand, crossing the Smokies, heading west to the promised land. They found clean air in an untouched green

paradise, located on a crystal clear creek with pure spring water flowing out of Corley Cave.

With the "progress of man", came an interstate Highway (I-40) that runs nearby, carrying fossil-fuel guzzlers with noxious fumes. The Caney Fork was dammed in the late 1940s and continues to produce clean, hydroelectric power. With the rapid urbanization of Middle Tennessee, more electricity was needed, thus a large coal plant was built downstream on the Cumberland River in 1959. The Corleys were slowly losing the tranquility of their paradise.

Being an eighth generation Tennessean in pursuit of happiness, I continue to rise early and cherish each and every sunrise. From my early childhood, my parents and older brother instilled in me the vital importance of being responsible for my own actions and most importantly protecting the planet.

I sincerely appreciate the Tennessee Chapter Executive Committee's vote of confidence in my chairing the Chapter. Our mission statement implores us to "explore and protect". Fortunately, I have inherited a well-oiled machine maintained by our past Chair, Mac Post. Continuing our mission with tranquility will be my primary responsibility. Together, we must encourage new memberships, including family and friends. The bigger our army, the more battles we can fight. Please become an early riser—enjoy Tennessee's beautiful sunrises!

Happy trails,
Cris Corley, Chapter Chair

Want to Have More Impact?

Join a Committee!

Conservation Committees each focus on one issue and work on it year round. To learn more about what these committees do or to join one, please contact the chair listed.

Conservation Committees and Contacts

Land Management: Virginia Dale, Chair virginia.dale4@gmail.com

The goal is to have positive effects on land management processes across private, commercial, and public lands in Tennessee (including residential, agriculture, and forested areas).

Solid Waste and Mining: Dan Firth, Chair dwfirth@gmail.com

This Committee has been focused on both the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging bill recently introduced in the TN senate and the Bristol landfill (see story on page 3).

Energy: JoAnn McIntosh, Chair joann.mcintosh@tennessee.sierraclub.org

The Energy Committee has been active with outreach and communication, including attending a Listening Session with the TVA Board in Bowling Green and meeting virtually with staff of the Congressional Energy & Commerce Committee (E&C). Discussions re TVA include its 1) continued lagging deployment of renewables, 2) scheduled gas buildout, and 3) lack of transparency with the public.

Water: Axel Ringe, Chair onyxfarm@bellsouth.net

The committee is actively engaged with the Tennessee Water Group, meeting biweekly, in addressing water quality issues across TN. We have held meetings with both TDEC and OSMRE.

Transportation: Kent Minault and Bill Kornrich, Co-Chairs kminault@gmail.com

The State Transportation Team works on decarbonizing all aspects of our transportation system. We advocate for cities and counties to electrify their fleets, for school boards and transit districts to electrify their buses, and finally for individual drivers to get the support they need to stop burning gasoline and diesel in their personal transportation.

Forests and Public Lands: Davis Mounger, Vice Chair wdmounger@yahoo.com

Works with local officials to prevent the clearcutting of large sections the Bridge-stone-Firestone Centennial Wilderness. A side result has been getting legislation passed to increase the transparency of TWRA timber sales. We continue to monitor the Tennessee State Forest Timber Sale program. There is a continuing trend of clearcuts turning diverse mixed hardwood forests into low-biodiversity stands of a couple of species like poplar or white pine (often with encroaching invasive species).

Tennes-Sierran

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Submissions

July Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by June 24

August Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by July 22

July/August Issue of The Tennes-Sierran by June 31

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Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee

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Watauga Regional Conservation Committee (Johnson and Carter Counties)

Chair: Gloria Griffith 423-727-4798 gla4797@embarqmail.com

“The Beast” of Bristol

by Dan Firth, Tennessee Chapter Solid Waste Committee and Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee

Imagine living with air pollution that—in addition to having a strong odor—causes headaches and nausea, burns your eyes, throat, and nose, and causes fatigue and brain fog, among other acute symptoms, on a daily or near-daily basis. “The beast” as you, your friends, and neighbors call it, comes and goes, but it spends much of the night. It permeates your house, your car and all your belongings. You run one or more air purifiers constantly – if you can afford them – and your pets learn that the least noxious air is downstream. You plan your schedule around avoiding “The Beast” as best you can. You no longer grill out or work in the garden. Your children miss school after a bad night. You may have evacuated your home to live elsewhere if you had the resources. Meanwhile, regulatory agencies and experts minimize how the odor affects your quality of life. And they project a lack of urgency and emphasize that the pollution is not a health hazard because it does not cause disease or cancer. This is what the residents of the twin cities of Bristol, Tennessee, and Bristol, Virginia, are suffering because of the pollution emissions from Virginia’s Bristol Landfill.

Minority and low-income residents closest to the landfill have periodically experienced odors and acute symptoms since the landfill’s beginning. As 2021 progressed, the odors and the symptoms grew stronger and more frequent, expanding until no part of town was spared. Eventually, the better-off neighborhoods were impacted. A few residents separately began to investigate the landfill, its history, and its operations through records requests to the City of Bristol and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ). Those records showed evidence of serious problems in the landfill.

The Bristol, VA landfill started operations in the mid-1990s envisioned as a regional landfill. It was constructed in an old limestone quarry. As in many limestone quarries, the bottom of the landfill is well below the water table—in this case, 200 feet below. Currently, there are 200 feet of trash in the landfill with another 100-plus feet yet to be filled to the top of the quarry walls. Water is the enemy of a landfill, as it accelerates the decomposition of organic waste disposed of in the landfill. The faster the decomposition, the higher the temperatures and the greater the likelihood of unwanted subsurface reactions, excessive landfill gas generation, and emissions and odors. In addition, with the bottom below the natural water table, there is a greater chance of contamination of the surrounding groundwater. Additionally, a quarry is like a bowl that collects rainwater. As a result, it is imperative that the landfill be well designed and operated, with water continually pumped from beneath the landfill to maintain a “hydraulic gradient” such that groundwater flows toward the landfill and is also pumped from within the landfill to control the amount of water in it. Despite significant community objections, the landfill was permitted with numerous waivers to standard practices.

Records obtained from the City of Bristol, Virginia, revealed neglect of the landfill infrastructure, mismanagement of the landfill operations, and subsurface conditions raising concerns of serious catastrophic reactions occurring in the landfill. These records include: wellhead landfill gas temperatures approaching 200 degrees Fahrenheit, well above the action limit of 131 F; dangerously high oxygen concentrations in the landfill gas; over-pumping the landfill gas collection system, potentially damaging the collection wells; and very little methane compared to carbon dioxide instead of being nearly equal as is normal. All indicate undesirable subsurface reactions.

Several fissures venting pollution into the air, dispersing it throughout the community, have been discovered in the landfill.

Benzene emission concentrations from the fissures and in the community were measured by VADEQ to be at levels higher than allowed at a refinery’s

fence line. Additionally, the City of Bristol, Virginia, measured high benzene concentrations in the gradient- and leachate-produced waters which exceed limits for discharging to the sanitary sewer system resulting in further pollution in the community.

In September 2021, fed-up residents found each other and formed the community organization HOPE for Bristol (Healing Our Polluted Environment) with the goal of closing and capping the landfill. Together, they are diligently working to develop a technical understanding of the conditions in the landfill; working with state and federal regulatory agencies; conducting community-based air and water monitoring; rallying the community to build support; advocating for capping and closure; and communicating the extent of the suffering in the community. In addition, they have sought out experts and connected with communities that have experienced their own landfill catastrophes with subsurface reactions. Most importantly, they are fighting for the affected community to have a seat at the table in determining the future of the landfill.

At the same time, the faith community spanning both Bristols is working to alleviate the suffering of the low-income and minority residents by acquiring and distributing nearly 1000 air purifiers to residents who cannot afford them, thus filling a need that the City of Bristol, Virginia, refuses to fill.

The City did install 21 new landfill gas collection wells and connect them to the gas collection system—only to find that the emissions were not reduced. After publicly ignoring the plight of their citizenry, providing no assistance to those affected, the City’s government officials have now admitted that they are not landfill experts and they are unable to fix the landfill emissions on their own. Therefore, they are now seeking additional experts, as well as state and federal assistance. Unfortunately, these experts do not expect relief for the affected community within the next 18 to 24 months. VADEQ called together a panel of experts, selected from across the nation, to develop and evaluate potential corrective action including early closure. Impacted by any remediation actions, the community is seeking meaningful involvement, in the form of a seat at the table and in the selection of the final remediation measures.

Any actions recommended by the panel to eliminate the pollution spewing from the landfill are expected to take months to design and implement. Meanwhile, the community continues to bear the brunt of the pollution assault. The Tennessee Chapter’s Solid Waste and Mining Conservation Committee and the Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee are partnering with HOPE for Bristol and the twin communities of Bristol to: (1) provide technical assistance in understanding the reactions and condition of the landfill; (2) develop a network of PurpleAir monitors; (3) engage supporting resources; (4) advocate for community involvement in determining the landfill’s future; and (5) work with a broad range of partners for environmental justice for those without a voice.

The Solid Waste and Mining Conservation Committee

The Tennessee Chapter Solid Waste and Mining Conservation Committee works on issues and policies pertaining to landfills, recycling, composting, quarries, and coal mining throughout the State of Tennessee. Currently, we are forming a team focused on passing an extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging bill to keep recyclables out of landfills. If you would like to be a part of this team or if you would like to join us in working on other solid waste issues, contact Dan Firth at dwfirth@gmail.com or complete this survey – <https://forms.gle/huZ6WV4Mru14Tuur9>.

Sierra Club Member Actions

by Bill Moll, Conservation Chair

When I moved to Chattanooga in 2010 and started attending the local Sierra Club meetings, I soon learned that most Sierra Club members paid their dues to support the national organization and were scarcely aware that there were state and local level activities. Most environmental concerns were viewed as national issues with national solutions.

However, in recent years, both perceptions and reality have changed. What we do at the state and regional level is now essential to protecting our environment. The Tennessee Chapter is engaged in this challenge, but needs more members to get involved.

Chapter leaders have developed a list with a range of actions that members can take to help. Most are bite-sized contributions; some are for specific projects and some are ongoing activities; some have leaders and just need volunteers, while others are structured but need leaders. Some can be done from your desk at home, but some involve attending meetings or taking a hike.

Please go to the Chapter webpage, www.sierraclub.org/tennessee, click the “About Us” tab, then click “Our Leadership” for contact information. Even if you don’t have available time now to participate, you can see the breadth of what the Chapter is doing. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 404-401-7899 or whmoll@aol.com.

Cook Recreation Area to Remain Public

by Cris Corley, Chapter Chair

As reported in the January/February Issue of the *Tennes-Sierran*, the public was shocked in 2020 to learn that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) intended to send a private commercial partner a request for proposal for development of Cook Recreation Area (Cook). Cook is a 300-acre treasure, a public-use nature area on the eastern shore of Percy Priest Lake in southeastern Davidson County on the Stones River, managed by USACE. Good news, however: the Army Corp of Engineers has decided to let the Cook Recreation Area at Percy Priest Lake remain a public entity. Freddie Bell, the Nashville Operational Manager, stated that they will no longer seek a public-private partnership lease agreement. Tim Weeks, an area Sierra Club member, helped in the efforts to defeat the privatization of the last large tract natural area on the lake. Thanks to all Sierra Club members who mobilized to fight for this unique natural area located just a few miles from downtown Nashville. Hurrah!!!

Contact Cris at chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org

Memphis Has Transit Equity Day Community Forum



Speaking at Transit Equity Day 2022 are (left to right) Marquita Bradshaw, Sierra Club Tennessee Chapter Environmental Justice Chair; Ayanna Watkins, Executive Director and Lead Organizer of MICAH; Dennis Lynch, Sierra Club's Chickasaw Group Conservation Chair and MICAH Transit Equity Team member; Dorothy Conner, bus rider and frequent commenter.

by Dennis Lynch, Chickasaw Group Conservation Chair

“Better Transit for a Better Memphis.” That’s the theme chosen by the project team that conceived the Transit Equity Day Community Forum as the foundation of a campaign to increase funding for transit in Memphis. The “Transit Vision Plan”, describing exactly what changes would be made to the system, was endorsed by Memphis City Council three years ago, but only minimal, incremental funding has been allocated, when upwards of \$38 million per year are needed. But momentum is growing to change that.

A network of labor unions, community organizations, and environmental groups declared February 4 “Transit Equity Day,” a national day of action to commemorate Parks and other civil rights icons, and to advocate for accessible, reliable, and affordable transit powered by renewable energy. The Sierra Club Chickasaw Group in Memphis has held Transit Equity Day events for three years, two of them with the Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action and Hope (MICAH). Our 2020 event was highlighted by *The Tennes-Sierran* and other media outlets.

The momentum building in support of transit is evident through four inter-related community events scheduled for Transit Equity Week. Unfortunately, two of these were delayed by the big ice storm of February 4. The rescheduled event was held March 28 in a hybrid format—in person and online. This format carried numerous benefits as well as difficulties.

Our rescheduled Community Forum featured a presentation on Rosa Parks and transit equity by Marquita Bradshaw, as well as presentations by Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) and Innovate Memphis on current and future transit in Memphis. This was followed by supportive comments from the Greater Memphis Chamber and multiple community groups and bus riders. The bottom line proved to be that Memphis does want “better transit,” and strongly believes that will bring us a “better Memphis.” Included in the agenda were videos of support from Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland and Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris. Before ending the Forum, Leo Arnault of MICAH issued a Call-to-Action for attendees to call or email their City Council and County Commission representatives urging them to support the needed funding increases.

One of the other transit-focused meetings was the “Business Roundtable for Transit” which consisted of six local business leaders in a moderated discussion on the importance of transit to their companies. This was organized by the Sierra Club in conjunction with the Greater Memphis Chamber. The discussion was very interesting and fruitful. The local business leaders contributed numerous quotable quotes to the discussion, like “Memphis is a 24-hour city. Transit must recognize that.” All who participated in the roundtable thought the discussion was valuable and were willing to have an updated discussion in six months.

Contact Dennis at dmlynch1@gmail.com

Ecological Corridors Enable Animal and Plant Migrations in Tennessee

by Russ Manning, Harvey Broome Group Member

The predominant conservation strategy for conserving biological diversity has become the preservation and reestablishment of ecological corridors. Most of us think of a “wildlife corridor” as a linkage for animal migration, but plant communities need to spread as well. So, although “wildlife” technically includes plants, the newer term “ecological corridor,” or on the larger scale “ecological network,” ensures consideration of all components of an ecosystem.



The corridor movement grew out of the realization that isolated state and national parks and preserves, no matter how large, are not sufficient to maintain wildlife populations. We need to reestablish migration pathways so wildlife can move between core habitats for gene flow as well as in response to climate change.

While there are modest ecological corridors throughout the remaining natural or wild areas of Tennessee, larger ecological networks pass through or brush the state and are supported by our Tennessee Chapter members. The largest of these is the Eastern Wildway that the Wildlands Network defines as stretching from Canada’s Quebec and New Brunswick south along the Appalachians, reaching the Gulf of Mexico and penetrating the Florida Peninsula.

While many core areas are scattered along the Appalachians, linkages between these areas often encounter roads that are major obstacles to migration. I-40 northwest of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a barrier to safe passage for wildlife because (Continued on Page 7)

“Clean Up TVA” Takes Off

by Todd Waterman, Harvey Broome Group

In an April 5th press conference, the Clean Up TVA Coalition, months in the making, publicly emerged as a formidably-united, thirteen-member partnership “working to propel TVA into a just, equitable, and fossil-fuel-free energy future by 2030.” As Amy Kelly, Sierra Club’s Tennessee Beyond Coal Campaign Representative, said in Clean Up TVA’s



press release, “TVA needs to step up its energy efficiency and renewable energy offerings, so our power provider isn’t a tagalong but a leader in the 21st century. It must reverse course and champion a new age for public power, centered on transparency, democracy, equity, and clean energy.” TVA is planning new natural gas plants at a time when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the International Energy Agency, and most scientists and economists agree we must immediately end new fossil fuel investments or face irreversible, catastrophic climate impacts.

“Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness. Such investments will soon be stranded assets—a blot on the landscape and a blight on investment portfolios. But, it doesn’t have to be this way.”

– United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

Learn more and sign on: cleantuptva.org Contact Todd at jtoddw@gmail.com

The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ford's Vast New West Tennessee F-150 Electric Truck Plant: Climate Solutions, Jobs, and Concerns

by Geoff Bakewell, Volunteer Writer

Blue Oval City is coming, one way or another. Work is underway at the 4,100 acre megasite in west Tennessee, preparing for the arrival of Ford. Together with SK Innovation, an intermediate holding company of SK Group engaged in petroleum, alternative energy, and oil exploration, the American automaker is creating from scratch a vertically-integrated plant that will assemble electric trucks, manufacture and recycle electric vehicle (EV) batteries, and knit together a vast network of suppliers. Billed as the largest single investment in Tennessee history (\$5.6 billion), the industrial project is massive. It will be the largest single Ford plant in the US; building it is supposed to create approximately 32,000 temporary construction jobs. When the facility comes online in 2025, Ford expects it to employ 5,800 people directly and another 21,000 indirectly. Once the plant is operational, it should contribute \$3.5 billion to the state gross product; its workers should earn more than \$1 billion each year. Much of this economic development will help Haywood County, whose small population is majority Black, shrinking, and relatively low-income. Communities in the surrounding counties will also benefit financially, especially those along the I-40 corridor between Memphis and Jackson.



Preparing the way for Blue Oval City. Photo courtesy of Patrick Lantrip/*The Daily Memphian*.

Tennessee owns the property and is committed to the Ford project. At a special session in October, the Legislature created the Megasite Authority of West Tennessee (MAWT) to run the site, approving an investment of \$884 million. The bulk of the funds will be administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development to improve infrastructure including area roads, water supply and wastewater treatment facilities, and electricity and natural gas lines. The Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) will also open a new, on-site campus focused on the future convergence of auto mechanics, robotics, engineering, and computing.

Blue Oval City is an important part of Ford's overall strategy to become a leader in EVs, which produce no tailpipe emissions. By 2030, the company wants 40% of its new sales to be electric; by 2055 it plans to end its production of gas vehicles. In addition to fighting climate change, the plant will have eco-friendly design features. It will reclaim and reuse large amounts of its wastewater. By improving technology and making batteries easier to recycle, it will reduce demand for rare metals like lithium and cobalt, whose production is destructive and linked to human rights violations. It will also run on renewable energy resources, be carbon-neutral, and send no waste to local landfills.

Blue Oval City is nevertheless creating significant concerns. For one thing, the facility will have an enormous environmental footprint, turning almost six square miles of agricultural land in the recharge zone of the Memphis Sand Aquifer into an industrial labyrinth of roads and structures filled with hazardous chemicals. Existing connections with the CSX railroad will be expanded; I-40 will acquire a new interchange. More than 2.5 miles of local streams and several ponds will be impacted (compensatory work is planned elsewhere in the watershed). The state has contracted to build a separate, publicly-owned water treatment plant (POWT) and pumping station, along with 40 miles of buried pipe, to carry 5.1 million gallons of treated wastewater each day from the megasite to the Mississippi River below Randolph. And then there are the effects of massive growth, ranging from increased air pollution and runoff to sprawl, as thousands of additional people seek housing in or commute to the rural area each day. Brownsville attorney and MAWT board member Michael Banks rightly called the development of the Ford plant "bittersweet," noting that Haywood County "will never be the same again."

Other concerns come from Ford's need for speed. The company has already taken orders for hundreds of thousands of its new electric pickups and is pressing to gain market share and not lose out to competitors like Tesla, GM, and Rivian. As a result, it pushed for and received several unusual provisions in the legislation creating MAWT. This entirely appointed body has broad authority and can exercise eminent domain; its decisions are exempted from local regulations. Although MAWT is committed to a policy of open records, its CEO (chosen by the governor) has the power to declare confidential for a period of five years any public record, subject only to the approval of the state attorney general (another appointed official). Trade secrets are also exempt; binding contracts and agreements entered into by MAWT are not available for prior public review. In short, the Legislature chose to expedite construction by vesting a tremendous amount of power in individuals rather than institutions; it has reduced both transparency and accountability.

In a related vein, Tennessee's Comptroller of the Treasury Jason Mumpower recently assumed control over the struggling finances of Mason, a rural town located just five miles from Blue Oval City. In addition to flying in the face of local governance, this "hostile takeover" has an apparent racial dimension. Mumpower is white, Mason 68% Black. Moreover, previous all-white (and allegedly corrupt) administrations played a substantial role in creating the town's budget deficits. Finally, the move occurs against the broader backdrop of west Tennessee's history of racism, including lynchings as late as 1937 and 1940 and widespread voter suppression lasting into the 1960s. Why is the takeover of Mason only occurring now that the town has an elected Black administration and there is money to be made? We need to keep a close eye on: 1) who is reaping the benefits of Blue Oval City; and 2) who is bearing the costs, both direct and indirect. Our Chapter's Environmental Justice Chair Marquita Jackson and our Transportation Chair Kent Minault are coordinating the Sierra Club's support for Mason's independence with the Tennessee Chapter of the NAACP.

The Sierra Club continues its focus on the quantity of water that will be withdrawn from the Memphis Sands Aquifer and has been working with its partner Protect Our Aquifer to communicate concerns to Ford. So far the company seems willing to go above and beyond the state's minimum requirements to reuse/recycle water onsite and utilize green infrastructure to allow clean stormwater to recharge the aquifer. (If you'd like to know more about these efforts, email or call: scott.banbury@sierraclub.org 901-619-8567.)

David Rumbarger is President and CEO of the Community Development Foundation in Mississippi and helped bring Toyota to Tupelo. He admiringly notes that in planning its new facility, Ford did due diligence: it had "wrung out the risk in that site and workforce . . . to be able to staff the plant, run the plant, and be productive." Residents and Sierra Club members must be equally diligent going forward. Even as we welcome the clear economic benefits of Blue Oval City and the vital environmental contributions of EVs, we need to remember the risks we are taking on.

And we need to be proactive. The pristine Memphis Sand Aquifer is what ultimately makes life possible in this region. Will Ford's demands on it be sustainable? And what about our commitments to democratic self-governance, racial equity, and environmental justice? Finally, at an individual level, we need to distinguish our wants from our needs. The world will indeed be a better place if F-150 Lightnings replace gas-powered vehicles on a grand scale. But how many of us really need a pickup truck to begin with?



Tennessee Chapter ExCom member Marquita Bradshaw chats with residents of Mason, Tennessee, about the pending Ford plant and its impact. Photo by Kent Minault

A Special Request from Dear Eartha

Dear Reader,

Please offer up your answer to the question, "What matters now?" Please send your brief thoughts in about 100 words to: Enews.sierratn@gmail.com. Here's a thoughtful submission from our very own Chapter E-news Editor:

What Matters Now

by Allie Stafford

What matters now is humility and bravery. The wisdom to know when to speak and when to listen, and to use whatever privileges we have for good and not evil. It's time to put away childish things, like selfish egos, white fragility, & patriarchal power. Remember that guilt and shame are unhelpful, except in small, strategic doses.

What matters now is truth and resilience. It's easy to feel discouraged and overwhelmed sometimes, when there is something to be angry or sad about at every turn. Compassion fatigue and burnout is real. Give yourself grace to rest sometimes, so you can be ready for that next fight. There is still truth—it takes patience and perseverance to share it.

Dear Eartha is written by Rita Bullinger.

Submit your question for Eartha to SierraTNNews@gmail.com

Thanks to These Generous Contributors to the Defenders Fund!

The Defenders Fund supports the work of our State Conservation Program Coordinator Scott Banbury. Please see "Help Us Reach Our Goal" below to contribute.

Craig Canan	David Bate Parsons
Bill Kornrich & Yvonne Apol	Mac Post
Don Scharf and Teri Davis	Nancy Bell
Bill & Dorothy Devan	Robert Oravetz (again)
Elizabeth Garber & Steve Vining	Jay Roberts
Stephanie Johnston	Robin Peeler
Jesse McCabe	Ken Brame & Judy Mattox
Kathleen Mahoney-Norris	John Todd Waterman
Joy Mayfield	

Corporate Climate Pledges Under Fire

An analysis of "net-zero" pledges made by 25 major corporations found that they fall far short of their promises, amounting to only about a 40% reduction of future emissions—far less than what's needed to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The report by NewClimate Institute and Carbon Market Watch found that behind the flashy press releases, these corporate commitments were full of greenwashing tricks, loopholes, and data omissions. Here's one thing you can do: Tell your members of Congress to cosponsor the National Climate Emergency Act, which would declare the climate crisis a national emergency.

Help Reach Our Goal: Support Our State Lobbyist!



The first trip I ever took with my partner of 28 years was a wildflower pilgrimage in the Gatlinburg area. I have always loved to walk in the woods, but I never knew the names of the lovely little flowers that bloomed amongst the trees and in the meadows at this time of the year. She knew them all. She opened my eyes and won my heart with her close observation of each species, along with their colorful names: Beardtongue. Beebalm. Trilium. Trout lily. Fire pink. Trumpet flower. I'm still in awe of her knowledge of all these lovelies. Because of them I look forward to this time of year with special pleasure.

And to protect their beauty, along with so much else that needs our protection, I joined Sierra Club and began my work as Defender chair to help fund our lobbyist, Scott Banbury, one of only two lobbyists for environmental issues at our state legislature. Our donations go a long way toward aiding our cause for the preservation of the natural world. Thank you for your past support. And if you have not yet given this year, please consider sending this form with your donation to the address at the bottom of the page. Scott's our man! And sign up for legislative updates at: <https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/newsletter-signup>

Contribute to the cost of keeping Scott working for us by sending me this form with your check or credit card info.

Or if you prefer, you may contact me with your credit card info either by phone or by email:

Susan Johnston 270-991-6575
susan.johnston2011@gmail.com

YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT OUR LOBBYIST! [] \$50 [] \$100 [] \$250 [] \$500 [] \$1000 \$ _____ **Surprise us!**

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

Please select a method of payment. Make checks payable to Sierra Club Tennessee Chapter with "Defenders" in the memo line or use your credit card:

[] Mastercard [] Visa [] Discover

Credit card number _____ Expiration date (mm/yy) _____

Name on card _____ Signature _____

[] Please send me email alerts when there is a critical vote and Sierra Club needs for me to contact my State legislators.

[] Please send me weekly email updates from the Tennessee Conservation Voters during the legislative session.

Email address _____

May we publish your name in the Tennes-Sierran as a donor? [] Yes [] No

[] I do not need an acknowledgment letter. Please save the Defenders' funds for program purposes.

Mail to: Susan Johnston, Sierra Club Defenders, 1325 5th Ave N #23 Nashville TN 37208. Thank you!

Sierra Club Chapter Election Results!

Congratulations to the following winners for the 2022-2023 term!

Chapter ExCom Delegate at-Large: Marquita Bradshaw, Charlie High, Grace Stranch, Nancy Bell

Cherokee Group ExCom: Tony Wheeler, Bruce Blohm, Lisa Luck, Alice Demetreon

Chickasaw Group ExCom: Shenée Simon, Carl Richards, Charlie Belenky

Harvey Broome Group ExCom: Dr. Melanie Mayes, Axel Ringe, Kristen Johnson, Julie Elfin, Maggie Longmire, Stefen White

Middle Tennessee Group ExCom: Diane Scher, Mary High, Karen McIntyre, Jack McFadden

Ballots were collected through Dec. 15, 2021. Current memberships, as of Nov. 1, were verified by the Sierra Club database on Dec. 18 at the Freedom Law Center in Nashville. Two envelopes were not opened due to lapse in membership. Election results were certified at the January 2022 Chapter ExCom meeting. Special thanks to Gary Bowers for his technical expertise in setting up the Zoom link with Mac Post during the membership verification and vote counting process, Todd Waterman for gathering information for the candidate bio sheet, and sincere gratitude to John Behn for his patience.

At the January ExCom meeting, a new Chapter Chair was chosen: Congratulations, Cris Corley! Read Cris' column on page 2.



Marquita Bradshaw, (Memphis)



Charlie High (Nashville)
Photo by Patricia Garrison.



Grace Stranch (Nashville)



Nancy Bell (Rogersville)

Above: Newly elected as at-large members to the Sierra Club Tennessee Chapter ExCom.

Ecological Corridors (Continued from Page 4)

it bisects public land—Cherokee and Pisgah National Forests on one side and the Smokies on the other.

National Parks Conservation Association facilitates the I-40 Pigeon River Gorge Wildlife Crossing Project for identifying key areas where bear, elk, deer cross along a 28-mile section of the interstate. The project's goals include developing strategies for safe passage and providing recommendations to departments of transportation. So when the North Carolina Department of Transportation announced plans to replace the existing bridge at Harmon Den exit, the project collaborated with the agency for wildlife passage there. As a result, plans to replace the aging bridge include paths along Cold Springs Creek to help wildlife safely migrate from one side of the interstate to the other and a 9-foot fence to guide animals to the trails under the bridge.

The Cumberland Plateau, also part of the Eastern Wildway, stretches southwest through Tennessee into Alabama and the northwest corner of Georgia. To the north, the Plateau passes through Kentucky and a slice of western Virginia. Much of the Cumberlands remains in a "natural" state, which has led to a multitude of parks, forests, and preserves that together serve as a corridor. The Cumberland Trail, initiated by the Tennessee Trails Association and continued by the Cumberland Trail State Park and the Cumberland Trail Conference, stitches together many of these preserves. As often happens, land for outdoor recreation also supports preservation of ecosystems, and in this case, an ecological corridor along the Plateau.

The Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has made remarkable progress on preserving the Cumberlands. In 2007, the Conservancy partnered with the state and two timber investment firms, with financial assistance from foundations, to secure 127,854 acres, acquired through a combination of purchase, working forest agreements, and conservation easements. The acquisition became known as "Connecting the Cumberlands." Everyone thought there would never again be such a huge success in preserving Cumberland Plateau lands. However, twelve years later the Conservancy did it again. In 2019, the TNC Tennessee Chapter created an investment fund to purchase 100,000 acres on the Plateau in Tennessee and Kentucky and another 153,000 acres in Virginia as the Cumberland Forest Project, part of its overall plan to protect the wildlife corridor through the Appalachians.

Many of us are also members of Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP) that has, from the grassroots up, advocated for preservation of the state's natural lands. On the Plateau, TCWP was the primary leader in the successful establishment of Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and also Obed Wild and Scenic River.

On the other side of the state, the Mississippi River hosts a concentrated migration of birds north and south, each spring and fall. One of North America's four primary flyways, the Mississippi Flyway is perhaps the most important, funneling 40% of all waterfowl and shorebirds north and south; including passerines brings the total to 325 species. The organization "1 Mississippi" is working for the health of the river system to ensure preservation of this flyway as well as the well-being of the aquatic creatures that inhabit the river.

The Sierra Club plays an overarching role by advocating for ecological health throughout the State. The Club's "Beyond Coal Campaign" is working to phase out mining of our mountains and the burning of coal that leads to air pollution and deposition across the state. For example, the Chapter partnered with local

Coyote Tells Why He Sings (English)

by Carter Revard

There was a little rill of water, near the den,

That showed a trickle, all the dry summer

When I was born. One night in late August, it rained—

The Thunder waked us. Drops came crashing down

In dust, on stiff blackjack leaves, on lichen rocks,

And the rain came in a pelting rush down over the hill,

Wind blew wet into our cave as I heard the sounds

Of leaf-drip, rustling of soggy branches in gusts of wind.

And then the rill's tune changed—I heard a rock drop

That set new ripples gurgling, in a lower key.

Where the new ripples were, I drank, next morning,

Fresh muddy water that set my teeth on edge.

I thought how delicate that rock's poise was and how

The storm made music, when it changed my world.

©Carter Revard

governments and businesses to request a "Lands Unsuitable for Mining" petition for the North Cumberlands; in response, the Department of Interior designated 75,000 acres of ridgelines as unsuitable for surface coal mining in 2016. More recently, the Chapter has opposed pipelines, encouraged the development of renewable energy, and specifically is resisting TVA's plans to install natural gas generation in retiring coal plants instead of solar.

All of these efforts contribute to healthy ecosystems and help to strengthen ecological connectivity through Tennessee so that wildlife populations may be free to migrate in response to climate change and in search of food and home.

Russ is working on a book on ecological corridors and is posting his writing and photos on his website: northamericancorridors.com



Linda Carlough collects discarded dolls in Johnson County's latest litter pick up. Watauga Conservation Committee plotted and planned with the Johnson County Mayor, the litter control officer, residents, the school system and other partner groups like the "Litter Chicks," to execute Johnson County's 2nd annual roadside litter pickup. Final weight of roadside litter was 4600 pounds of trash county wide. Middle school students were asked to supply posters or essays with a litter free theme. Photo by Dennis Shenikah.

The Appeal of March

The annual March Appeal fundraising letter was sent last month. To save expense and to use less paper, we send this letter only to members that have contributed something, beyond their membership dues, in the past 3 years. If you didn't get a letter and want to make a contribution please use the handy online donation button at the top right hand side of the Chapter's website homepage at: www.sierraclub.org/tennessee

Even if you did get the letter and prefer to donate through a secure website, the direct link is here for the Chapter: <https://bit.ly/TNSCdonate>



Be a champion for the environment. Join today for \$15.

From delisting endangered species like the Gray Wolf to drilling for dirty tar sands, the threats to our environment have never been greater. Your support is absolutely essential to preserving our most precious natural resources - join the nation's largest and most effective grassroots movement today.

We'll thank you with this free insulated cooler tote (limited time!) as well as these exciting Members-only benefits:

- One-year subscription to *Sierra* magazine
- Worldwide Members-only outdoor trips
- Automatic membership in your local Chapter and Group
- Discounts on Sierra Club calendars, books, and other merchandise.



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.

Please charge my: Visa Mastercard AMEX

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Exp. Date ____/____/____

Signature _____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail with this full ad to:

Sierra Club
P.O. Box 7059
Merrifield
Virginia 22116-7059

Or click JOIN on our website:
<http://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee>

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

COVID-19 NOTICE

COVID-19 NOTICE: Sierra Club activities may enforce group size limits, PPE, social distancing requirements to comply with COVID-19 restrictions of the meeting venue, city, and county rules where the activity takes place. Please contact the activity organizer for any updates. Check website for Zoom or in-person meeting status or contact your chair (see page 2).

Group Program Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 5/23, 6/27, 7/25	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Thu 5/19, 6/16, 7/21	6:00 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 5/10, 6/14, 7/12	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Thu 5/12, 6/9, 7/14	7:00 PM

Group Business Meetings

Group	Date	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 5/2, 6/6, 7/11	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Wed 5/4, 6/1, 7/6	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 5/24, 6/28, 7/26	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Mon 5/16, 6/20, 7/18	6:30 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Program Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
Holston Valley	Tue 5/10, 6/14, 7/12	7:00 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

Committee	Date	Time
CareNET (Rogersville)	Thu 5/26, 6/23, 7/28	6:00 PM
Clarksville	Tue 5/17, 6/21, 7/19	6:00 PM
Holston Valley	Wed 5/25, 6/22, 7/27	6:00 PM
Watauga (Mountain City)	Tue 5/10, 6/14, 7/12	5:00 PM

RETREAT SCHEDULE

	LOCATION	DATES
Fall 2022	Pickett State Park	October 7-9*
Winter 2023	Cedars of Lebanon State Park	January 20-22
Spring 2023	Fall Creek Falls State Park	April 28-30
Fall 2023	Pickett State Park	October 13-15
Winter 2024	Cedars of Lebanon State Park	January 19-21

* Note change of date