



WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the
Western North Carolina Sierra Club

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

AUG-OCT 2015

Upcoming Events:

Unitarian Congregation
1 Edwin Place, Asheville
(corner of Charlotte St. & Edwin Pl.)
Social: 7 pm / Program: 7:15 pm
Free and open to the public

Wednesday, Aug 5
Timothy Spira

*Waterfalls & Wildflowers in
the Southern Appalachians*

Wednesday, Sept 2
Dr. Chris Lechner

French Broad River Odyssey

Wednesday, Oct 7
**Marc Hunt,
Vice-Mayor & panel**

Mike Sule
Jim Grode
Claudia Nix

*Community Greenways
and Bikeways:
Where We've Been and
Where We Are Headed*

WENOCA will hold meetings on
the first Wednesday of the month.
Executive Committee meetings
will be held at 5:30 pm prior
to the monthly programs.

All members are invited to attend.

For more information, call
Judy Mattox at 828-683-2176
or email judymattox@sbcglobal.net.

WENOCA SIERRAN is the newsletter
of the Western North Carolina Sierra Club.
The newsletter is published four times a year.
Articles and comments are welcome.

Waterfalls & Wildflowers in the Southern Appalachians - Aug 5



Timothy Spira

Join us on Wed.,
August 5 at 7 pm to
hear botany professor
and author, Timothy Spira
discuss the wonders of
waterfalls and wildflowers
in the southern Appala-
chian Mountains.

Waterfalls are natural
magnets for hikers,
photographers, and
nature enthusiasts.
Some waterfalls enchant
us with their softness as water gently glides
over bedrock; others impress us with the
height of their falling water; still others awe us
with their power. The constantly falling
water, sparkling light, and swirling spray is

exhilarating, soothing, and inspiring. For
whatever reason, waterfalls seem to make us
feel good. Exploring wildflowers (and other
natural features) along the trail adds to the fun.
Learn about the lure of waterfalls, including
the plants associated with the spray cliff
community, as well as a selection of interesting
wildflowers one might encounter on a waterfall
hike in the southern Appalachian Mountains.

*Timothy P. Spira is an avid hiker, wildflower
enthusiast, and emeritus professor of botany
at Clemson University. He is the author
of "Wildflowers and Plant Communities of the
Southern Appalachian Mountains" and
"Piedmont: A Naturalist's Guide to the Carolinas,
Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia." Tim's latest
book is "Waterfalls and Wildflowers in the
Southern Appalachians: Thirty Great
Hikes." (University of North Carolina Press).*

'A French Broad River Odyssey' with Dr. Chris Lechner - Sept 2



Chris Lechner

On Wed., September 2,
come learn about the
adventures of Asheville
physician, Chris Lechner
and his life-long relation-
ship with the French
Broad River starting at
age 12. Hear how the
river "pulled" him to
Asheville - and how his
new-found hobby of stand-
-up paddle boarding
changed him from a hard

core whitewater kayaker to a photographer and
student of the river, deeply concerned for its
ecology and preservation.

To read more about his trip, see the Citizen-
Times article at <http://goo.gl/qlDawq>.

*Christopher T. Lechner, MD received his Doctor
of Medicine Degree from Ohio State University
College of Medicine in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Lechner
has received additional hand surgery training
in England, Germany, France, Switzerland, India,
Singapore, and Australia. Dr. Lechner joined the staff
at Carolina Hand and Sports Medicine, PA in May of
1993.*

Community Greenways and Bikeways - Oct 7

On Wed., October 7, join a panel of
Asheville-Buncombe's best experts to explore
the status of our quickly-evolving greenway
and bikeway system. Moderated by Vice-
Mayor, Marc Hunt, learn about the history, the
planning, the challenges, and the opportunities
for us as we move toward a multi-modal
future in and around Asheville. The greenways
movement started here about twenty years ago,
and to-date has achieved about 5 miles of
greenway development. We could more than
quadruple that number over the next ten years
and establish our community as a regional
model. Come learn all about it from those who

are making it happen.

Participating are: Marc
Hunt, Panel Moderator;
Claudia Nix, board-member
and leader of the county-
wide advocacy group
Friends of Connect
Buncombe, co-founder of
Liberty Bicycles; Mike Sule,
founder and leader of
Asheville on Bikes; Jim
Grode, current chair of the
Asheville Multi-Modal Commission.



Marc Hunt

Bad News from the NC Legislature

By Cassie Gavin - Sierra Club lobbyist

Unfortunately, the NC legislature is back in session and once again is attacking environmental protection regulations. So far the 2015 NC legislature has targeted riparian buffers, bike lanes, environmental reviews of public projects and renewable energy policies.

Riparian Buffers

The reason the state of North Carolina enacted buffers protecting the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse Rivers is because buffers are the cheapest, easiest and most fair way to limit the inflow of pollution that causes harmful algal blooms, low oxygen levels and fish kills. Bills being considered would eliminate or reduce the buffers along these rivers.

Bike Lanes

The bike lane bills, House Bill 44 and Senate Bill 617, would basically insert the Board of Transportation into a decision that is now locally controlled for turning road lanes into bike lanes, which is an effort to integrate bike and pedestrian lanes - (called road diets.) The state should be doing everything possible to encourage biking rather than putting up new barriers to smart transportation projects.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

North Carolina's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires an environmental review of public projects using public funds or public lands, to ensure that the full impact on communities and the environment is taken into consideration. It is not a regulatory program and does not affect private companies. SEPA has served as the state and local government counterpart to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). SEPA is not duplicative: where a federal environmental impact

statement is required, SEPA is not triggered.

Passage of HB 795 is a top priority this session for the NC Chamber of Commerce, which sets new lower thresholds for when SEPA will apply, so that going forward, only projects that impact more than 10 acres of public lands or use more than \$10 million of public funds will have to do a review under SEPA. The concern is that the higher the thresholds are set, the fewer the projects will be reviewed. There is no direct correlation between the cost or size of a project and its adverse environmental impacts.

Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard

House Bill 332, House Bill 681 and House Bill 760 contain provisions to freeze North Carolina's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard and reduce the standard contracts that solar projects are assured to a much lower level. The combined effect of these measures would likely be a stifling of the solar industry in our state.

Please thank the following state legislators for opposing these bad bills: Terry Van Duyn, Susan Fisher, John Ager, Brian Turner (all in Buncombe County), Joe Sam Queen (Haywood, Jackson, and parts of Swain County) and Chuck McGrady (Henderson County).

Please contact: Michele Presnell (Haywood, Madison, Yancey Counties), Roger West (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Macon Counties), Senator Jim Davis (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain Counties) and ask them to oppose these efforts to harm environmental protection in our state.

Go to www.ncleg.net to find out who your representative is and how to contact them.

Clean Power Campaign Needs You!

The Sierra Club has been working hard to build support for the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed limits on harmful carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants, also known as the Clean Power Plan. We're now gearing up for the EPA's release of the final carbon pollution rule this August, at which time Governor McCrory's administration has one year to develop and submit our state's Clean Power Plan to the EPA.

But the agency responsible for developing our Clean Power Plan, under the leadership of Governor McCrory, has indicated that critical stakeholders will not be included while developing our state's Plan!

That's why we need you. We are currently collecting signatures from local elected officials around the state on a letter to Governor McCrory asking the his administration to take action and develop a Plan informed by North Carolina stakeholders --

including clean energy businesses and environmental justice allies.

On July 21, we released our letter to the Governor signed by local elected officials and we're also joining forces around the state to make a coordinated call-to-action to the McCrory Administration to give us a Clean Power Plan that builds upon our strong foundation as a clean energy generator as a way to cut harmful carbon emissions and protect public health. We need you to join or organize a phone bank, write a letter-to-the-editor to your local newspaper, use your social media network to reach the Governor directly, gather petition signatures, and recruit others to help. We need this **help now** and over the next year!

Visit www.cleanpowerplan.org to get more information on the EPA's Clean Power Plan, to **sign and share the online petition**, and get more information on how you can get involved in the campaign for a strong and fair Clean Power Plan for North Carolina.

French Broad Clean-up Success!

Sixteen intrepid Sierra Club paddlers in eight tandem canoes cleaned up the French Broad River May 30. Starting at the Sculpture Garden in the River Arts District, the group cleaned its way to the Pearson Bridge 1½ miles downstream. In addition to picking up trash, the group learned about the sources of river trash and pollution as they worked.

Support for the effort was provided by Asheville GreenWorks and included canoes, paddles, life jackets, bags and "grabbers." A party afterward allowed the group to celebrate with others who were participating in Clean Streams Day. A sunny day with mild breezes helped make a dirty job pleasant and fun.

The next river cleanup will be held Saturday, September 26. For information, contact Mark Threlkeld at focusmdt@gmail.com.



Bruce Clarke and Nelson Copp were two of the paddlers who filled canoes with river trash at the Sierra Club's May cleanup.

The End of the Coal Era for Asheville

By Kelly Martin, Sierra Club Beyond Coal
& Julie Mayfield, Mountain True

Today, we are one giant step closer to a clean, healthy Western North Carolina. For the past three years, Asheville Beyond Coal has exposed the Clean Water Act violations, the coal ash pollution, and the air pollution at the Asheville coal plant.

Duke Energy's announcement that the plant will retire in the coming years reflects an incredible demonstration of grassroots power that held one of the nation's most powerful companies accountable. Now, there will be a reprieve for the French Broad River from coal ash, and the region's biggest source of air and climate pollution will be eliminated.

We applaud Duke's decision to retire the Asheville plant. That decision makes good environmental and financial sense. But company leaders failed to hear what people wanted in its place.

Our community wants a bright future that supports clean energy. Instead, Duke gave us a gas plant that locks our community into burning fossil fuels for decades to come. While we will no longer get electricity by burning coal that comes from Appalachian communities being devastated by mountaintop removal coal mining, natural gas—though cleaner to burn—creates water pollution and emits the potent greenhouse gas methane when extracted.

We deserve electricity options that invest and create jobs here in our community.

The retirement of the Asheville plant is a step in the right direction, but it is a half measure, undermined by continuing reliance on an economically unpredictable and polluting source of power. With just a fraction of the money that Duke Energy will spend on upgrades in its western region, the company could run programs to make our homes and businesses more efficient, so that less energy is wasted and consumers save thousands on their electricity bills. Duke could invest in putting solar panels on our schools; it could build a battery storage project that allows



them to capture the electricity from renewable energy and use it even when the sun isn't shining; it could develop better incentives for homeowners that install solar panels on our roofs.

In short, Duke could create a truly modern electricity plan for the communities of Western North Carolina — one that doesn't just look at its economic bottom line, but that also considers long-term solutions -- solutions that will keep our air and water clean and slow down climate change.

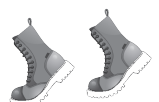
When we set out to secure retirement of the Asheville coal plant, no one thought it was possible. Yet this community has demonstrated that anything is possible.

With tireless, creative, and innovative campaigning, we sent a message loud and clear that our community wants to move beyond coal and on to clean energy. Duke heeded the first part of that call, but failed on the latter. So there's still more work to be done for clean energy.

Ours is a community ripe for innovation and clean energy projects. We have set our sights high and, together, we will create the clean energy economy we deserve.



Late Summer-Early Fall Hiking Schedule



SAT, AUG 29 – WARREN WILSON RIVER TRAIL – Easy, approx 4 miles round trip on this there & back hike. This shady trail follows a nice section of the Swannanoa River. There will be an OPTIONAL SPLASHING OPPORTUNITY to cool yourself off. (Sorry, no swimming.) Meet at 10 am in Asheville. Back around 2:30 or 3 pm. Wear good footwear (good traction) because there are occasional rocky & muddy places. Swim wear for splashing purposes is optional. There will be learning opportunities about the water quality in the area, and also about the river's course/route, and how it is changed over time. **NOTES:** Please contact hike leader directly if you would like to bring a child/youth, because special liability form is required. RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SAT, SEPT 19 - FLAT LAUREL CREEK – (which is in vicinity of Black Balsam). Mostly Easy with some moderate; 5 miles round trip on this, there & back hike. We'll hike along the beautiful Flat Laurel Creek, which includes a creek crossing. We'll then venture into densely shaded evergreen area, and up to another creek for lunch. There will learning opportunities related to wildflower & bird identification, as well as the welfare of the local evergreens (hemlock & firs). Please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SAT, OCT 17 - BLACK BALSAM-TENANT MTN. HIKE - Meet at 10 am in Asheville, back around 5:30 pm. This is a moderate 5 mile round trip hike with some great rock outcrops – one of my FAVORITE PLACES. Has beautiful panoramic views from two peaks which are above 6000 ft. Good footwear required, and be prepared for heavy winds on top. Consider hiking pole for rocky areas. This hike is for experienced hikers or those in good condition. There will be learning opportunities related to what wilderness designation means and what it could do for this area. Check w/hike leader if you wish to bring a dog. All hikers please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

The Executive Committee meets monthly. For more information, please contact Judy Mattox at 828-683-2176 or at judymattox@sbcglobal.net. All WENOCA members are invited to attend.
Our website is www.wenoca.org.

WENOCA OFFICERS - 2015 LEADERS

Judy Mattox – Chair - 828-683-2176

Lisa McWherter - Outings Leader

Rich Wasch - Treasurer

Mark Threlkeld - River Cleanup - At Large

Ken Brame - Political Committee

Gail Solomon - Media - At Large

Anne Marie Doherty - At Large

Gene Keil - Website/Membership Committee

Rober Zieber - At Large

Elaine Lite - Newsletter Editor

Emma Greenbaum - Beyond Coal - 828-251-1272



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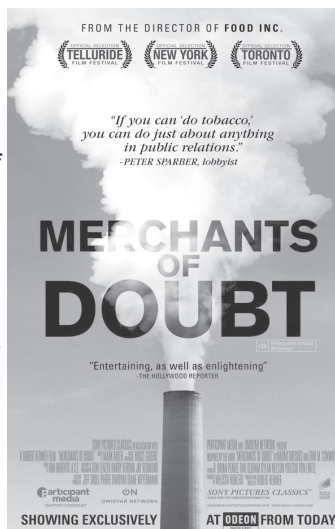
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Benefit for Sierra Club and Mountain True at Orange Peel on August 13

The documentary *Merchants of Doubt* will be presented by The Orange Peel, the Sierra Club, and Mountain True at the Orange Peel in downtown Asheville on Thursday August 13 at 7:30 pm with doors opening at 7.

By the creator of *Food, Inc.*, *Merchants of Doubt* is an important new documentary that focuses on climate change and its deniers' political agenda to discredit the inarguable facts. This will be a fully seated event, open to all ages. Entry is free, but a \$5 donation is suggested to support the event's co-sponsor organizations, Mountain True and Sierra Club of WNC. The bar will be open for beer, wine, popcorn and snacks.

The documentary, based on the book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, is an inside look at how public opinion is formed in our country, how spin doctors and media manipulators get people to ignore science at their own



peril.

In his film, Kenner posits that it all goes back to the tobacco industry and the battle over the hazards of cigarettes to health. As the corporate-backed pseudo scientists and PR reps working for the tobacco industry once argued that, "No one knows for sure if tobacco causes cancer" now these same tactics are used to discredit scientific studies on human caused climate change.

Created and directed by Academy Award nominee Robert Kenner, the film is a look at how the "climate change denier" industry has found such success.

The film was an official selection at the Toronto, New York, and Telluride film festival. Its important message, told in an entertaining and captivating style, will spark audiences to take action and continue this vital conversation.