



**SIERRA CLUB**  
FOUNDED 1892

# WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the Western North Carolina Sierra Club  
February - April 2020

**Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet**

## Upcoming Events:

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

### Thursday, Feb 6th

Preserving a Picturesque America  
by Scott Varn

### Thurs, March 5th

Asheville City Budget  
by Mayfield, Jones,  
Hendricks

### Thurs, April 9th

Nantahala-Pisgah  
Forest Plan Revision  
by Sam Evans and  
Josh Kelly

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

Open to the public

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

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

## Election Volunteers Needed

March 3rd is the primary for both presidential as well as state & local candidates in North Carolina. While the Sierra Club has not endorsed in the presidential primary, we have endorsed a number of good environmental candidates at the state and local levels. We need your help in handing out endorsement cards at the early voting and election day polling sites. Many voters only vote for the president and don't have any idea who to vote for regarding other offices. The Sierra Club endorsement card can make the difference in many races, and be helpful to these voters. Below are the locations, dates and times for Asheville/Buncombe County for early voting. Please contact judymattox@sbcglobal.net, 615-584-4570, 828-683-2176 or mayo.taylor@mtsu.edu to sign up.

### Early Voting Sites Feb 13-29, 2020 Shifts are 10-1, 1-4, 4-7

Elections services warehouse, 50 Coxe (across from the bus station)

Black Mountain Library	Enka/Candler Library
Fairview Library	Leicester Library
North Asheville Library	South Buncombe Library
Weaverville Townhall	West Asheville Library

Thursday, February 13 through Saturday, February 29

Monday through Friday: 8 AM to 7:30 PM

No voting Saturday, February 15 or Sunday, February 16

Saturday, February 22 and Sunday, February 23 from 10 AM to 6 PM

Saturday, February 29 8 AM to 3 PM

### Primary Election Day Tuesday March 3rd Shifts 7-10, 10-1, 1-4, 4-7

### Preserving a Picturesque America - French Broad Feb 6, 7 pm

Preserving A Picturesque America (P.A.P.A.) is an organization that seeks and revisits sites depicted in the book, "Picturesque America". These places were painted by adventure artists in the late 1800's and were influential in the early conservation movement in the United States. PAPA invites modern artists and writers to return to those same vantage points from the early book and create a contemporary rendition of these locations. Many sites from the book that have been located are now in national and state parks or other protected areas, while others are on private land. Some no longer exist due to human impact or natural causes.

Scott Varn of PAPA will return after three years to update everyone on the progress of this amazing conservation project. Early artistic representations and tales of natural wonders were key in creating the concept of conservation in 1800s America.

Scott will be sharing these stories of discovery, plus art and photos from many locations around America and now ways **you** can join the adventure. He will also be sharing a sneak peak of the PAPA art exhibition and the newly updated version of the French Broad serial, all to benefit and protect our local scenic wonders along the French Broad River. *(continues on next page)*



**Scott Varn**

### Duke Rate Hike Hearing - Thur, Feb 20, 7pm Buncombe Ct Courthouse, #1A

60 Court Plaza, sign up to speak to the Utilities Commission & ask Duke for more renewable energy  
Talking points to be posted on wenoca.org, and facebook

*Scott is a Fine Arts and Media Arts graduate from USC who is rarely caught without his hiking boots or sketch pad. As a story teller, artist, counselor, Scout Master and long time environmental educator, founding PAPA is simply the merging of his skills to help save our amazing natural wonders. [www.preservationthroughart.org](http://www.preservationthroughart.org)*

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## **Asheville City Budget: Funding Climate Change Priorities -- Thurs, Mar 5, 7 pm**

Come hear an update on city budget priorities related to transit, urban forestry, and renewable energy as well as details about each of those priorities. City Council woman Julie Mayfield will provide an overview of budget discussions to date. Our community has made each of these issues a priority and we need to encourage council to support them through funding.

### **Jeff Jones of the Asheville Transit Committee will discuss transit issues:**

In January 2020, the City Council made its first changes to Transit in keeping with the Transit Master Plan passed by City Council in July 2018: to increase service to keep on-time schedules and service more neighborhoods, possibly to increase evening hours, and possibly to increase frequency of transit along Hendersonville Rd. and to the Airport.

### **Steve Hendricks, chair of Asheville Urban Forestry Commission will discuss restoring our urban tree canopy:**

The October 2019 Asheville Tree Canopy Study revealed a loss of 6.4%, or 891 acres of trees, between 2008 and 2018. The urban heat island effect can lead to Asheville City pavement being as much as 18 degrees higher. We need a professional urban forester position to manage our urban forest and to develop an Urban Forest Master Plan.

*Julie Mayfield was elected to Asheville City Council in 2015, and she leads council's work on transportation, the environment, and clean energy. She chairs council's Planning and Economic Development Committee and Housing and Community Development Committee. She is also the co-director of MountainTrue, a regional environmental advocacy organization. Prior to moving to Asheville and MountainTrue in 2008, she was the Vice-President and General Counsel for the Georgia Conservancy*

*Rev. Jeff Jones is an Affiliated Community Minister with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville. After 20 years serving as a UU parish minister, in 2017, he left full-time parish ministry in order to serve as an unpaid Community Minister creating a ministry in Compassionate Living. His current ministry is focused around transit, learning and practicing Nonviolent Communication, and Veganism.*

*Stephen Hendricks is an environmental planning professional with over 40 years of experience. He holds a bachelor's degree in architecture, a master's degree in landscape architecture, and has done extensive post-graduate work in natural resource planning. A 32-year veteran of the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, in 2010 he received the Aldo Leopold National Conservation Stewardship Award.*

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## **Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan Revision, Need Comments April 9th (2nd Thurs.), 7 pm**

An update on the release of the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan Revision plan, will be presented by Sam Evans, lawyer with Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), and Josh Kelly, public lands biologist with Mountain True. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the new Forest Plan is expected to be released in February followed by a 90 day public comment period. Josh and Sam will give a review of the content of the Draft Forest Plan and tell us how to write impactful comments on the DEIS, which we will write during the meeting. The draft plan will be amended based on public comment to produce the Final Decision and Environmental Impact Statement. This DEIS comment period is the most important time for public participation in the forest planning process, which will determine forest management, wilderness, timber harvests: the quality of our 1.1 million beautiful acres of forest in western North Carolina.

*Sam Evans is a Senior Attorney and Leader of SELC's National Forest and Parks Program, Asheville office. He graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Law with highest honors.*

*Josh Kelly is the Public Lands Field Biologist for MountainTrue. Josh is a native of Western North Carolina and studied biology at UNC-Asheville. Since 2004, Josh has worked to promote ecological restoration and protect the outstanding natural areas present on Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.*

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## **Hikes February-April**

**SATURDAY FEB 15, DuPont St Forest Hike; Exact location TBA**, depending on the weather. (Maybe Burnt Man & Corn Mill Shoals.) Meet at 10 a.m. Return time ~ around 5:30 p.m., depending on the hike location. Learn about the history of this beautiful area, and the grassroots effort that preserved it as a park. For questions, please contact hike leader (closer to the date of the hike). All hikers please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at [lisamcw2@gmail.com](mailto:lisamcw2@gmail.com) or 828-713-4994.

**SATURDAY MARCH 21, GREEN RIVER Gamelands Hike.** Mostly Pullium Creek Trail, plus some Green River Cove trail. Meet at 10:00 in Asheville. Back around 5:30. Moderate with some easy level of difficulty. Approx 6 miles R.T. on this there & back trail with elevation gain of 900 ft. It's a beautiful trail that ends at the Green River just below the narrows, with rapids moving through large boulders. On the way there, there's a tedious creek crossing with wiggly step-stones, requiring good footwear & maybe hiking poles. Plan to learn about the beautiful early-blooming wildflowers there, and a few trees. NOTE: Sorry, no doggies this trip due to Pullium Creek crossing. This hike is for experienced hikers, or one can contact the hike leader with questions/concerns. All hikers please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at [lisamcw2@gmail.com](mailto:lisamcw2@gmail.com) or 828-713-4994

**SUNDAY APRIL 12 (Easter): GREYBEARD OVERLOOK**, heading North on the Mountains to Sea Trail. Length is approx 4.5 miles (round trip); Level of difficulty is Moderate (due to rocky terrain & slight elevation change). Offers nice views, and a high shrubby area, and a beautiful grove of Spruce & Fir trees. There should also be some wildflowers (maybe Wake Robin trillium) for our viewing pleasure; includes occasional wildflower ID. Learn about this fragile habitat with its grove of Fraser Firs, and the import of protecting this area. Please contact hike leader to sign up, or for any questions/concerns; Lisa McWherter at [lisamcw2@gmail.com](mailto:lisamcw2@gmail.com) or 828-713-4994.

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## **WNC Sierra Club Honors Local Individuals, Institutions, Businesses**

The WNC Sierra Club presented its annual Environmental Recognition Awards on December 5 at its Potluck Holiday Party.

### **Lifetime Environmental Leader: Molly Diggins**

Molly Diggins recently retired after 22 years as the North Carolina's state chapter director, during which time, the club grew to more than 100,000 members and supporters in North Carolina. Molly has led efforts to accomplish groundbreaking environmental policies on both the local and state level including the Clean Smokestacks Act (2002), and the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (2007). The Charlotte Observer proclaimed Diggins a "Guardian of the Environment," saying, "It would be difficult to name a single environmental issue in North Carolina that Molly Diggins and the staff of the state chapter have not been involved in." Molly was awarded "The Order of the Longleaf Pine," the highest award of the state of North Carolina, by Governor Roy Cooper, the "Dogwood Award" from Attorney General Josh Stein, as well as the "Lifetime Environmental Leader" award from Wenoca.

### **Green Elected Official: Brownie Newman**

Brownie Newman, Chair of the Buncombe County Commission and co-founder of Headwaters Solar, has led the county to adopt the most aggressive 100% Renewable Energy Goal in the southeast, calling for 100% renewable energy by 2030 and the entire county to reach that goal by 2042. He is now leading the efforts to aggressively install solar on city, county, public school and AB Tech-owned property in an effort to reach the county's goal well ahead of schedule. Previously, Brownie had served on the Asheville City Council where he led efforts for the city to adopt an 80% carbon reduction goal, a goal which has led to the city reducing its energy usage by 30%.

### **Forest Protection Award: Sam Evans**

A senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center in Asheville, Sam has been involved in the Pisgah and Nantahala Plan revision, representing conservation values and public involvement, while coordinating with Sierra Club and other conservation-aligned groups. Sam has played a lead role in fighting newly proposed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Forest Service rules that would exclude public participation from most National Forest activities.

### **Green Business Award: REI - Kimberly Miller**

Not only does REI push its own stores to sustainable practices, but it influences its vendors to do the same. At the same time, it takes a stand for reversing climate change and helping everyone, regardless of clothing size or economic status, to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Its goal is to leave the planet healthier than it found it and to use 100 % renewable energy for its operations. The local retail store has skylights that bring in as much natural light as possible, solar hot water, timer-controlled HVAC and lighting, and a commitment to achieve zero waste by 2020.

### **Green Volunteer Club: Carolina Mountain Club - Randy Flauty, past president, and Ron Navik, maintenance**

Established in 1923, the Carolina Mountain Club (CMC) is one of the oldest hiking clubs in the United States. Its mission is to encourage and support hiking in the Western North Carolina Mountains, by leading hikes and welcoming all who are capable of participating, building and maintaining over 450 miles of hiking trails. The club has accepted responsibility for sections of the Appalachian Trail and Mountains to Sea Trail, with its more than 1000 members and 8 crews.

### **Green Solar Congregation Award: The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville**

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville (UUCA) installed 105 solar panels creating a 37kW system that generates an average of 85% of the electricity used in the main campus building. This figure stands to rise as the congregation further updates its lighting. Simultaneously, UUCA installed a new white roof membrane. Together, the panels and roof are expected to last decades. UUCA is committed to becoming a net-zero and a carbon neutral energy use campus.

Help us save trees...let us e-mail your newsletter! Send your email to [judymattox@sbcglobal.net](mailto:judymattox@sbcglobal.net)

## Top 2019 Actions Supporting a Healthy WNC Environment

2019 has been a busy year for Western North Carolina Sierra Club activists seeking to protect the region's environment. Judy Mattox, chair of the WENOCA Sierra Club Group, shared her top five highlights from a year of advocacy with *Mountain Xpress*, December 25th, 2019.

1. Our local Western North Carolina Sierra Club has been very involved in working with Chair Brownie Newman of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners to issue a request for proposals to place solar installations on county, city and school properties, as well as A-B Tech, as the first major step to fulfill the 100% renewable energy resolution passed by the city and the county. The RFP was issued in December.
  2. We worked with Youth for Environmental Stewardship, a coalition of all nine area public high schools, to gather over 2,000 petition signatures and speak before the Buncombe County Board of Education, Asheville City Board of Education and Buncombe County to achieve their participation in the solar RFP. *(continued below)*
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3. The Sierra Club and other environmental organizations worked with Gov. Roy Cooper's staff to create a carbon reduction plan for the state, which sets the goal of a 40% reduction of carbon emissions by 2025 and a 70% reduction by 2030.
4. A coalition of environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, partnered with the Southern Environmental Law Center to file lawsuits that halted the construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.
5. WENOCA created the Kids' Adventure Club, which this year partnered with Hillcrest Community summer camp and Marvelous Math of Pisgah View Apartments to connect as many as 35 youth with 20 adult volunteers for excursions involving creeks, animal encounters, the natural world, and trains.

Sierra Club volunteers needed. Please contact Judy Mattox at [judymattox@sbcglobal.net](mailto:judymattox@sbcglobal.net),  
828-683-2176