

Tennessee Sierran

SIERRA CLUB
TENNESSEE CHAPTER

The Bimonthly Newspaper of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

Volume 56, Number 5 - September / October 2023

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Cover Photo: At a June 28 Public Hearing, newly widowed Betty Johnson berates the EPA for not protecting her husband Tommy, seen standing at far right with fellow deceased Kingston coal ash cleanup worker Ansol Clark at the 2020 Kingston Cleanup Worker Tribute and Memorial, held on the site of the spill (Todd Waterman photo)

Masthead Photo: Fall in the Smokies © Ron Shrieves

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect!

From Tennessee Vice Chair Nancy Bell

It's Time for Action: What's Janis Joplin Got to Do with It?

"Oh, Lord, won't you buy me a ..." Yes, you know that song! Place the name of your Dream Car at the end of the plaintive phrase Janis sang in her raspy voice back in the day. I bet it would be an electric vehicle now — maybe one with an Inflation Reduction Act rebate!

In the cool church basement where we met with other Sierrans last week, we discussed the changes we feel we must make personally because of the heating planet. But we'd overheard conversations elsewhere bemoaning impending disaster that did *not* lead those folks to focus on actions they could take. Paralysis in the face of disaster, or grief, is common. Pondering the so-called five stages of grief, I wonder if the five phases — denial, bargaining with a higher power, anger, depression, and acceptance — are in play here. Typical varied and understandable responses include:



- The government should take action.
- I'll buy an electric car.
- I could move somewhere safe. OR I'll leave my country home to my kids.
- (And warily) Well, I *already* recycle and buy less.

If you already recycle and buy less, raise your arm, bend your elbow, and pat yourself on the back. But, really, Where to start? What to do?

Think back to the happiest times during Covid — yes, happiest! Was it eating home-cooked food unhurriedly with your family? Walking in your neighborhood, in the woods, or a park? Eating fresh veggies from the garden you grew? Playing board games? Or dancing in the living room as Paul and Linda McCartney sang, in "Silly Love Songs," "What's wrong with that? I'd like to know". These visions could be part of your life decisions going forward.

"The Tragedy of the Commons" is a well-known parable grounding us in our knowledge that each of us is part of a greater whole. We worry over the depletion, pollution, and heating of Earth's resources and the suffering already ensuing. We all care. But, what can a single person really do? You already recycle, you contribute money to environmental causes, you eat less meat and buy organic, you limit your vehicle trips. Moreover, members of your social group are doing quite a lot when taken together. But we could raise the bar. And, couldn't government help? Well, not unless we ask. Remember "government of the people, by the people, and for the people?" Did you ask your government to spend time making laws about who can use a public restroom or what women can do with their own bodies?

What you do want from legislatures and agency officials are energy-saving public transportation and energy solutions that will not pollute air and water. Make your new, all-encompassing, heart-wrenching request clear: *Let my children live and not suffer!*

Contact your state senators and representatives and tell them you're worried because it's so hot you literally can't stand it; that you're worried about severe cold snaps and destructive tornadoes. Ask for strengthening of clean air rules and clean water laws that preserve water sources, for banning single-use plastic bags, and for recycling that includes producer and packaging responsibility. Explain the need for public transportation. Talk to counties and city officials, too. Contact your power provider about TVA's EnergyRight Audit and buy that EV if you can. You could pick one issue and *show the strength and perseverance that you have within you*. Find a group to team up with, or create one.

Practical Advice and Moral Support

On the right side of this page find your Sierra Group or Regional Conservation Committee. Contact them and find out which issue and solution you can help with right now. Contact Conservation Program Coordinator Scott Banbury for excellent quick advice. Read both John Nolt's article about ecological moral dilemmas on page 4 (and note how he mows his lawn!) and Janet McAdams' review of *Inconspicuous Consumption* on page 6. Other articles in this issue show what members are concerned with. You can do something new, challenge yourself, and make a difference! Your life may depend on it. Your children's lives will depend on it. I leave you with this adage: *Live simply that others may simply live*.

Contact Nancy at nancywithbell@gmail.com

Executive Committee Candidates Needed

The ballot for the elections for the 2024-2025 Executive Committee (ExCom) positions will be in the November-December *Tennes-Sierran*. The Chapter ExCom activities include, but are not limited to, financial management, membership services, production of publications, conservation, outings and political programs. Authority may be delegated to carry out such activities. The Group ExComs manage those activities at the Group level.

If you would like your name on the list of candidates, contact:

Cris Corley — chapter.chair@tennessee.sierraclub.org for the Chapter ExCom

OR the Group Chair for your Group ExCom (see contact info on the right side of this page).

Tennes-Sierran

The bimonthly newsletter of the
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club
Volume 56, Number 5 — September/October 2023
Digital Edition

Change of Address

Email: Address.Changes@SierraClub.org

Online: MyAccount.SierraClub.org

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Sierra Club, P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041

Request no paper copy here: http://bit.ly/Stop_My_Paper_Copy

Submissions

October issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by September 22

November Issue of the Chapter E-Newsletter by October 20

November/December Issue of the *Tennes-Sierran* by September 30

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Harvey Broome Group—Knoxville

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Chair: Carl Richards 218-409-5150

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Middle Tennessee Group—Nashville

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REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

Clarksville-Montgomery County Regional Conservation Committee

Chair: JoAnn McIntosh 931-338-2530 mcjoann@gmail.com

Care NET Regional Conservation Committee (Claiborne, Grainger, Hancock, and Hawkins Counties)

Chair: Bill Kornrich 423-300-8764 bkornrich@gmail.com

Holston Valley Regional Conservation Committee

Chair: Dan Firth 423-390-0882 dan.firth.sierraclub@gmail.com

Watauga Regional Conservation Committee (Johnson and Carter Counties)

Chair: Gloria Griffith 423-727-4798 gl4797@embarqmail.com

Chapter Offers Small Grants

The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club (SC) now accepts applications for small grants of up to \$4,000 from non-Sierra Club individuals and organizations to fund environmental programs and projects. Organizations must be registered as a 501c(3) or 501c(4) entity. Applicants should submit the application form no later than September 21, 2023.

Criteria

Programs and projects supported by the funds must: (1) fit within the SC's mission, especially aligning with the SC's equity goals and policies and having a measurable environmental or public health impact; (2) result in reduction of pollution or greenhouse gases and/or preservation/stewardship of land, air and water; (3) be open to everyone.

Grant Application Review

A Review Team will evaluate each application and reach a consensus on funding recommendations. The Team will then provide a summary of grant applications to the Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) with its recommendations for consideration at the ExCom's November meeting.

Anyone can apply at any time. However, there will be a three-week outreach period in the summer during which applications will be encouraged for grant funding. For more information: [https:// bit.ly/TNSC-smallgrants](https://bit.ly/TNSC-smallgrants)

Opting Out of Chemical Spraying on Power Line Right-of-Ways

by Bill Kornrich, Chair, Care NET Regional Conservation Committee

Member-owned Powell Valley Electric Cooperative (PVEC) services five counties in Northeast Tennessee and three in Southwest Virginia. The advocacy group PVEC Member Voices (MV) was founded in the fall of 2017 by five PVEC member-owners, four of them Sierra Club members, in response to an unannounced chemical spraying of almost half of the co-op's members.

This resulted in destruction of flower and vegetable gardens, fish kills in ponds, damage to bee hives and pets, and negative health reactions for sensitive individuals. Large brown burn-like scars appeared throughout the sprayed terrain. Even homeowners who had no objections to chemical spraying were angry that no notice was given and that unidentified crews in HAZMAT suits showed up on their property in what is a very rural area.

Members were incensed, submitted petitions, and expressed their vocal dissatisfaction at the 2017 annual meeting. As a result, the PVEC board approved a plan for monthly meetings between MV members and executive staff at the co-op. These meetings resulted in the opening of monthly board meetings to co-op members, redesigning the website from its previous state as only a billing portal, and enacting a policy that enables members to opt out of chemical spraying on their right-of-ways.

It is essential that co-ops and electric utilities have unencumbered access to the power lines that bring electricity to homes, businesses, and offices. For residential areas, a clearance of 20 feet on either side of the line is required. With the adoption of the opt-out policy, members can now sign a two-year contract with the co-op to maintain and keep their property clear without being sprayed. Co-op staff inspect the power lines involved. Members receive "NO SPRAYING" signs to place at designated locations on their property. Spraying contractors are also given GPS and pole number listings for those who have opted out.

To promote this opportunity to PVEC members, MV produced a video about why and how members can opt out. This seven-minute video entitled "A Greener Right of Way" can be seen at pvecmembervoices.org (the MV website) and on YouTube, both directly and on the SC Tennessee Chapter YouTube channel.

This video is designed with three objectives in mind:

- to encourage PVEC members to opt out of chemical spraying;
- to encourage members of other electric co-ops to work for an opt-out policy;
- to discourage use of herbicides for right-of-way treatment.

PVEC is one of only two electric co-ops in Tennessee that have an opt-out policy.

For more information, contact MV at pvecmembervoices@gmail.com or Bill Kornrich at bkornrich@gmail.com.



Native Plant Sources for Tennessee

One way to support our food web is to plant native plants. Once you have decided to go native, you will need to find a plant source. A comprehensive list of native nurseries is available on the Tennessee Chapter website. Click the Issues tab, choose Improving Land Management in TN, and scroll about halfway down the page to find Native Plants. Or use this link:

<https://bit.ly/TNSC-Native-Plant-Sources>.

Contact Bill Moll (whmoll@aol.com) for more information.

Defenders Support Critical Lobbying Work

by Susan Johnston, Chair, Tennessee Chapter Defenders Fund

For over 15 years a dedicated group of donors has supported the Tennessee Chapter's lobbying work at the state Capitol in Nashville.

We refer to this team as our Defenders because these funds allow us, thanks to the excellent work of our lobbyist, Scott Banbury, to keep tabs on and influence state legislation that affects Tennessee's environment. **Of all the years that we have supported him, this upcoming one is the most critical. Why?**



- Scott's work, along with that of Tennessee's Sierra Club Chapter Chair, Cris Corley, has gained the attention of the national Sierra Club headquarters. This has led to a great eco-music event planned for Lebanon, as well as the possibility of Nashville hosting national Sierra Club meetings in the coming year.
- Although the federal government has made funds available to states for issues related to climate change, the deadline for applications was set with very little lead time. Scott has been urging localities to be ready for this possibility so that Tennessee doesn't miss out.
- But most importantly, while last year's work had some major successes, our state legislators saw fit to delay or kill many of the efforts that are critical to the health of our beautiful state. We must continue work on this legislation.

Let's look at issues that will be part of Scott's focus going forward:

- The Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act (TWRRRA) is Sierra Club's own proposal, intended to require companies to pay for the reuse or recycling of their packaging materials. Although it didn't make it through committee this year, the immediacy of the solid waste issue in our area should certainly make it viable for the coming year. Our Solid Waste Conservation Committee will be working to build support so that Scott has a better chance of convincing lawmakers to adopt it.
- The Supreme Court's *Sackett v. EPA* decision determines that protection of wetlands now applies only when they directly feed into or draw from rivers or other waters, a decision that very much narrows the protected areas. Our wetlands both filter pollutants from our water and provide space for floodwaters in periods of heavy rain. Millions of acres of wetlands across the country are now at risk, as permits will not be required for dumping of fill material from construction sites and other uses. The Tennessee Legislature considered passing a bill that said our state laws could be no stricter than the federal ones. Although this did not pass, it will likely re-emerge going forward.
- Dumping sewage sludge from wastewater treatment plants on or near farmland is often permitted by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). While it must be tested for some contaminants, it does *not* get tested for cancer-causing Per- and Poly-fluorinated Substances (PFAS) and many other hazardous materials. From this sludge, clearly the crops grown on these farms will be affected.
- While we did manage to get nuclear energy defined by the state as "clean" rather than "renewable," natural gas is still considered "clean." This issue needs to be revisited, particularly since localities are not allowed to adopt their own definitions.

Your dollars help protect Tennessee.

Donate online: <https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/give#defenders>

OR mail a check payable to TN Chapter Sierra Club with "Defenders" in the memo line to: Sierra Club Tennessee Chapter, P.O. Box 113, Powell, TN 37849, Attn: Defenders

The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(4) organization. Contributions to the Defenders Fund are not income-tax deductible. Contact Susan at susan.johnston2011@gmail.com

Justin J. Pearson Wins Sierra Club's Highest National Award

by Rita Harris, Member, Sierra Club Board of Directors

We are proud to announce the organization's top national honor, the 2023 Sierra Club Changemaker of the Year Award, goes to Justin J. Pearson, Tennessee State Representative from Memphis. Pearson graduated from Mitchell High School in Memphis and Bowdoin College with honors, and later pursued a fellowship at Princeton University. After returning to Memphis he co-founded Memphis Citizens Against the Pipeline, an environmental justice advocacy organization that organized successfully to prevent a proposed crude oil pipeline that would have cut through southwest Memphis. Since this initial mammoth victory, Justin has led the group (now with a new name Memphis Community Against Pollution [MCAP]) to rally around several other critical issues such as strengthening the Environmental Protection Agency's ethylene oxide regulations and monitoring 'accidental' releases from the local oil refinery.

Pearson's most popular taglines, often heard and seen at his rallies and in his commercials, are "people power" and "people power can never be defeated." He generates enthusiasm and inspires activism with his amazing oratorical skills, speaking truth to power. He has amassed followers all across the country, but most importantly, in his own Tennessee District 86.



Sierra Club State Chair Cris Corley (left) and Justin Pearson, co-founder of Memphis Community Against Pollution and now a Tennessee State legislator, at a Sierra Club Chickasaw Group gathering in Memphis in 2022.

On August 3, Pearson captured almost 94 per cent of the votes to be solidly elected to represent his district in the Tennessee Legislature. Pearson is a strong unwavering advocate for all things environmental and supports both his community and the entire State of Tennessee in his advocacy. Pearson is an individual who never takes a day off when it comes to speaking out for justice. Whether offering comments on a national TV news program or speaking at local or national events, he has a commanding presence and knows how to capture an audience. Last but not least, he is the son of a preacher and is invited regularly to speak at churches on Sunday mornings.

Due to his amazing leadership skills and magnetic personality, the sky is the limit for Rep. Justin J. Pearson. "The challenges we face from the climate crisis require us to have untiring individuals such as Justin willing to work on our behalf.

Congratulations, Representative Pearson, on winning the highest honor bestowed on an individual in Sierra Club! The Award is scheduled to be presented at the Annual Meeting in Chicago. And he will be a part of us far into the future, since the Changemaker Award includes a lifetime Sierra Club membership!

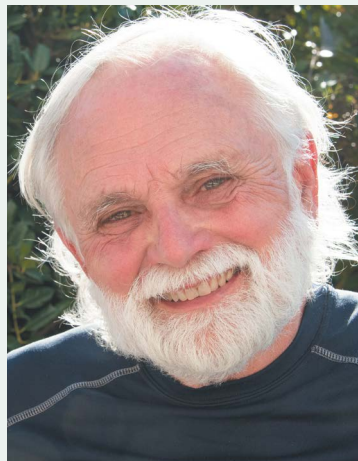
Contact Rita at rita2600@gmail.com.

Living Sustainably: Personal Choice and Citizen Action

Here is the first in a series exploring the question we ask ourselves daily: how do the choices I make promote sustainability?

Dilemmas of Environmentally Responsible Choice

by John Nolt. Harvey Broome Group



I'm driving my 2011 Honda Fit ten miles through racing traffic to the monthly meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club's Harvey Broome Group, leaving petroleum exhaust in my wake. I want to do good, but am I doing more harm? Forests around the world — the trees that were supposed to buffer us from climate change — are burning in the unprecedented heat. Summer breezes carry the pall and odor of smoke from Canadian forest fires. Those fires are burning because of climate disruptions caused mainly by our emissions of CO₂, the stuff coming out of my tailpipe.

Maybe I'll sell the Fit and buy a plug-in car. But, although electric cars are efficient in use, the environmental costs of their production are high. Their batteries, for example, require lithium, which is produced at great environmental cost. The old Fit still gets excellent mileage, and continuing to use it has no production cost. What should I do?

Even with good and well-informed intentions, it's easy to make unfortunate choices. Decades ago, when TVA still generated electricity mostly by the burning of coal, Annette and I switched our home power usage from what we then saw as dirty electricity to cleaner natural gas. In the meantime, TVA has moved away from coal (though it still burns a lot) and increased their reliance on natural gas, nuclear reactors, and green energy. Ultimately, our national goal is to power everything from the electric grid without using any fossil fuels. It will be costly for Annette and me to switch back. Should we have stuck with electricity?

Environmental responsibility requires choices like these—choices among multiple values. How can we decide what is best? Often, even if we have all the relevant information, we can't. Environmental values

can't all be assessed by the same scale; they are, in other words, to some degree incomparable. With incomparable values at stake, there may, as a matter of logic, be no best choice. We may have to settle for one of many unexcelled but incomparable options. It is pointless, in such cases, to obsess about whether we have made the best choice. We have fulfilled our responsibility so long as we make a choice no worse than any of the available options, even if it is not best.

Usually, of course, we can't be sure of doing even that, because we lack relevant information. Environmental decision-making requires knowledge of facts as well as an understanding of values. The more we know, the better our choices can be. But because the facts are practically infinite and our minds are finite, we always choose in a fog — sometimes thinner, sometimes thicker — of ignorance. Recognizing that may help us cultivate an apt humility.

Despite all difficulties and complications, sometimes our choices turn out right. Several decades ago, I chucked my lawn mower and began mowing with an old-fashioned scythe. Though now in my 70s, I still do. It takes more time and effort than with a mower but is practically noiseless and burns calories instead of fossil fuel. I think of it as part of my fitness routine. Another part is riding my bike instead of driving, which I do when it's practical and relatively safe. (It is neither safe nor practical for me to attempt the 20-mile round trip to a Sierra Club meeting that ends after dark — which is why I am driving the Fit.)

I've been fortunate, of course. Many people can't bike or mow with a scythe. Inevitably, soon I'll be among them. But there are innumerable ways of being environmentally responsible. For each of us, they depend on our abilities, talents, and health. And each of us inevitably decides through a thicker or thinner fog of ignorance.

It's only a few more miles to the meeting. I don't like driving here. Traffic on I-40 generally runs about 15 mph faster than the speed limit. And there are maniacs who go much faster, weaving from lane to lane. Some months I stay home and attend the Sierra Club meeting by Zoom. That eliminates fossil fuel use and irksome driving, but it also prevents in-person interaction. Which is better?

Contact John at nolt@utk.edu

John Nolt, a long-time member of the Harvey Broome Group, is Professor Emeritus in Philosophy at the University of Tennessee and a Research Fellow in the Energy and Environment Program at the UT Center for Energy, Transportation, and Environmental Policy. His most recent books are *Environmental Ethics for the Long Term* (2015) and *Incomparable Values* (2022) both from Routledge.

In Smoky Chicago, We Testify for a More Just EPA Coal Ash Rule

by Todd Waterman, Assistant Editor

TVA's 2008 Kingston coal ash calamity and its appalling, relentlessly increasing worker death toll taught us all what happens when managing coal ash is left to polluting utilities – and taught us that coal ash is filled with highly respirable and ingestible arsenic, lead, mercury, radionuclides, and other carcinogens, poisons, and particulates. But the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Coal Ash Rule which Kingston prompted exempted any impoundment that could be closed before it went into effect in 2015. Utilities like TVA could even claim new impoundments were exempt because their sites could have been pre-contaminated. That left out half the impoundments in the U.S., including one of Kingston's, all of Bull Run's, and many more of TVA's. Coal ash management was left to utilities like TVA, and enforcement to citizens suing them. But in 2016, Congress allowed state agencies like the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) to regulate toxins like coal ash, so long as they met EPA standards.

Last year Earthjustice sued the EPA, for Sierra Club, Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM), and five other co-plaintiffs, for an updated Coal Ash Rule that would at last cover *all* coal ash sites – and the EPA agreed. As a neighbor of Bull Run, I'd been a standing declarant for SOCM, as had Mac Post for Sierra Club, and others. So I agreed to testify at the EPA's June 28 public hearing in Chicago on their proposed new Coal Ash Rule. Earthjustice's lawsuit had cited Bull Run's exempt impoundments, which were already contaminating our groundwater and the reservoir from which Anderson and much of Knox County drinks.

But how could I speak for someone who'd endured decades of living right beside Bull Run, under a constant rain of carcinogenic coal soot? Or for someone dying because they'd been denied a mask while cleaning up the Kingston coal ash spill? Nonetheless, there I was in a Chicago hotel, at 5 AM, groggily groping for words to persuade the EPA, in a five minute comment that afternoon, to protect my neighbors and friends from millions of tons of Bull Run's toxic coal ash. TVA hopes it can get away with abandoning all of it in place when it closes the plant later this year – just as they and other utilities hope to do in communities everywhere.

I needn't have been so nervous. By the time I testified, many hours of powerful, sometimes tearful comments from experts and activists from all over the country would have made the case for a strong new rule. First to comment were Appalachian Voices' Bri Knisley, Duke University coal ash researcher Avner Vengosh, and Susan Wind, whose cancer-decimated home town was built over coal ash. But the most powerful comments I'd ever heard would come from Tennessee's own Kingston spill survivors. Betty Johnson, whose former cleanup fuel truck driver Tommy had just died, angrily rebuked EPA's panelists: "My husband and I had plans whenever he retired, when I retired, to travel to new states. Now he's in the graveyard. And I'm here for everyone that's been hurt by you – *you* – because you are not doing your job!"

Then came Julie Bledsoe, whose Kingston cleanup worker husband Ron is now hobbled by COPD. She paraded before EPA's panelists a photo of a worker whose coal ash-spattered face revealed he'd been made to wear goggles and no mask. "He's a hero. My husband's a hero. But they were treated like trash. We want our loved ones protected!"

Hours later, I testified. "I'm here for my distraught community and friends – some of them Kingston cleanup survivors – to beseech you for a *universal* and *strongly enforced* Coal Ash Rule. And please, quit calling coal ash "Non-Hazardous," so utilities can't say it's safe." I showed them an aerial map of Bull Run surrounded by leaking coal ash; our beautiful but contaminated lake; and drinking water intakes for 134,000 people. I pointed to the homes of hundreds of people living in Bull Run's shadow, saying they have big dreams now – but that they, like millions of others, sorely need EPA's help to make those dreams come true.



At the EPA's June 28 public hearing on its Proposed Legacy Coal Ash Rule in Chicago, Kingston spill cleanup worker's wife Julie Bledsoe points to the coal ash-spattered face of a worker who'd been required to wear goggles – but forbidden to wear a mask. Photo by Todd Waterman.

In my written comments I added, "Never, ever let this happen again. Without enforcement, utilities will not do the right thing, any more than fossil fuel companies will quit selling fossil fuels because you ask them politely."

"Please protect my own and others' communities by requiring that coal ash be excavated – by well-protected workers – and removed to high, dry, lined storage, away from people and waterways, in fully sealed barges or trains – not unsafely trucked through and dumped in poor Black communities, as TVA did in Alabama with the Kingston cleanup's coal ash, and is now doing with the Allen Fossil Plant's highly-contaminated coal ash in Memphis."

Chicago was a triumph for organizers and activists from 22 states and Puerto Rico – and an organizing tour de force for Earthjustice Attorney Lisa Evans. Together with her law partners and co-plaintiffs, she hadn't just successfully sued the EPA for an updated rule: with their help, she'd lit up folks in communities everywhere; raised travel money for commenters; helped us book flights and hotels; and prepared us to testify with a webinar, commenting tips, and talking points. She and others would go on to encourage many more of us to comment at EPA's July 12 Online Hearing, and to submit our written comments by the July 17 deadline.

Though no utilities dared comment on camera in Chicago, they will be lobbying hard against Sierra Club and partners' expensive consensus ask: require coal plants to clean up all their coal ash. But we departed Chicago as a united, nationwide movement. We know each other now. We know we're not alone. And we know we'll keep raising our voices together until justice is won.

The EPA now knows that, too. And we're winning already. The EPA just issued its first proposed denial of a state coal ash permit program, from Alabama's equivalent of TDEC, for failing to stop groundwater contamination just like that at TVA's Kingston, Bull Run, Allen, and other impoundments. They also threatened enforcement wherever their standards are not met.

Contact Todd at jtoddw@gmail.com

Chattanooga Area Will Have Busy Fall Full of Conservation Events

by Dave Hoot, Chair, Cherokee Group

The Cherokee Group invites you to participate in these conservation events this fall.

Rock the Ridge. The Sierra Club will be one of over two dozen exhibitors at Rock the Ridge Fest on Saturday, September 16, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm atop beautiful Signal Mountain. Featured will be food vendors, live music, native plant sales, wildlife rehabilitators and more. One of the Cherokee Group's members, Tony Wheeler, will speak about the region's ecology. More: <https://bit.ly/FB-RockTheRidge> – <https://www.instagram.com/rocktheridgefestival/> or contact organizer Barbara Womack: bgwomack@epbfi.com

Climate Week. Cherokee Group will participate in Climate Week (September 17-24) in coordination with the U.N. Climate Ambition Summit 2023 and NYC Climate Week. The March to End Fossil Fuels will take place Sunday, September 17 at 1:00 pm and will begin at the south end of the Walnut Street Walking Bridge. Additional events are being planned. More here: <https://www.endfossilfuels.us/> and on the Cherokee Group Facebook page: <https://bit.ly/FB-Cherokee-Sierra>. Another event for the end of the week is in the planning stages. For details. sierra.tn.cherokee@gmail.com

Chattanooga Electric Drive Fest. The second annual Everything EV Fest on September 30 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. will build on last year's successful inaugural event, but at a new location, Chattanooga State McCormick Center at 4501 Amnicola Highway. Contact Cherokee Group's Dave Graham dgraham3611@gmail.com or visit <https://bit.ly/Chatt-Drive-Electric-2023>

Tennessee River Rescue. Cherokee Group's David Riall will be leading a river cleanup October 7 on the Camp Jordan section of the West Chickamauga Creek through the Tennessee Valley Canoe Club. This is part of the annual "Tennessee River Rescue," sponsored by Waterways, a Chattanooga-based nonprofit working to bring awareness and stewardship to their watersheds. Sign up to get a t-shirt. Bring a boat (a canoe or large cockpit kayak) if you want to work on the river. Others will be walking the creek edge. To sign up: <https://tvccpaddler.com/events/> and click on the "Conservation" link.

Contact Dave at sierra.tn.cherokee@gmail.com

Dear Eartha: Advice from An Eco-Guru

Dear Eartha,

I was reading about the SAG-AFTRA strike on the pro-union newsletter “The American Prospect” which led me to the idea of a “creator economy.” Naturally, being a Sierra Club environmentalist, I became curious about how these creators are creating influence regarding climate change. What do you know?
— Not a Luddite in Brentwood

Dear Not a Luddite,

Greeeeaaat question! For those of us unsure of what the “creator economy” is, *The Washington Post* defines it as “the wildly popular market of online influencers and video makers who increasingly rival industry titans for money, attention and cultural power” ([bit.ly/wapo-hsce](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/07/23/creator-economy/) Harwell, Lorenz, 7/23/23 edition). With the explosion of online streaming, at nearly 37 percent of all video viewing nationwide, money is being made by relative amateurs, with the biggest streaming service being — you guessed it — YouTube. Leaving discussion about scabbing for another time, some of these creative influencers are online environmental activists — and big time.

Wired Magazine in 2021 reported this: “Thomas Schinko, leader of the Equity and Justice Research Group at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, says the storytelling aspect of TikTok is what makes it so effective: ‘From our research experience we know that storytelling is key for communicating the climate crisis in a way that can lead to taking action.’” Of *Wired’s* TikTok climate influencers, one I found most compelling, 24-year-old Louis Levanti, who lives with his parents (or at least did then) on Long Island, has gained a following on TikTok. Check him out:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@louislevanti>

I’ve recently worked with climate folks in a national environmental group of older Americans who pooh-poohed TikTok as beneath the dignity of serious climate activism. But my cursory review disproves their doubts. TikTok, YouTube, and other online streaming services — where amateurs are storytellers with 21st century panache — allow climate activism to reach and influence large swaths of American and global youth.

An internet search brought me to “Climate Creators to Watch 2023,” a collaboration between Pique Action and Harvard’s Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment. This group lists and shares dozens of creators who, by changing the “conversation around climate by producing content that elevates solutions and drives action,” are reaching wider audiences of young people. News sources such as *The New York Times* and National Public Radio are listed on their website. Visit <https://climatecreatorstowatch.com/> to check out any of these climate influencers’ sites on TikTok and Instagram (owned by META).

I’m thinking you, Dear Reader, agree with me that how young and old are influenced to active solutions and generative climate decisions is requisite now to saving planet Earth. These mostly young creators are reaching their peers in ways that others aren’t.

Yours, as always, in climate change gear,
Eartha

This column was written by Rita Bullinger.

Submit your question for Eartha to: SierraTNNews@gmail.com

Social Media Leader

The Tennessee Chapter is seeking a volunteer to manage social media for the Chapter’s conservation committees.

Conservation committees each focus on one issue.

A social media leader increases member engagement in conservation issues using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Make a difference and build your resume.

Contact Conservation Chair Bill Moll
404-401-7899 whmoll@aol.com

Cow Burps, Corn, and Climate

A Review of *Inconspicuous Consumption: The Environmental Impact You Don’t Know You Have*. by Tatiana Schlossberg. New York: Balance Books, 2022. \$17.99

by Janet McAdams, Guest Writer

A journalist who covers climate change for the *New York Times*, Tatiana Schlossberg discovered early on how “much was left out of the conversation, including what might make the issues relatable.” Schlossberg wanted to write a book pitched toward those of us who may understand climate change “in broad strokes” but who may lack the necessary “background knowledge and context” to grapple with more technical material. A tricky task — yet she has delivered a highly readable and thorough book, rich with information, providing that very background each of us needs to understand our own participation in climate change. Schlossberg acknowledges the overwhelming body of information, that “almost everything we do, use, and eat in the United States. . . has a lot to do with climate change,” and chooses to focus on four areas: technology and the internet, food, fashion, and fuel.

As someone who has forced herself to slog through a handful of sort of technically challenging books on climate change (and “boring,” to borrow a word from Schlossberg), I was surprised to be fascinated by her history of the physical internet and its relation to railroads and telegraph lines, which she maps in some detail. Along the way, Schlossberg pointedly notes how terminology like “the Cloud” mystifies the very real and material presence of the internet—and its material cost to the planet.

Her chapter on food is equally illuminating. I imagine most readers of this newsletter are aware, for example, of how much food is thrown out daily in the U.S. That said, the book offers a much deeper understanding of the hows and whys of that waste, as well as its profound—and global—effects. Particularly trenchant is her section on “the greediest crop,” corn, in which she details the political stagnation attached to America’s massive corn belt. (But if you want to know about cow burps, you’ll have to read the book).

Schlossberg’s agenda is to inform, to give her readers the tools to wrestle with the challenges that attach to what we do, use, and eat. As she notes in the book’s conclusion, she does not intend to give us a “to-do list for fixing climate change.” The choices we are called on to make are, more often than not, neither clear nor easy; in her chapter “Fuel,” her discussion of online vs. in-person shopping is a case in point, since the environmental cost of each is so contextual. My takeaway from this chapter (and the one on fashion)? Just stop buying stuff.

Her concluding chapter is an argument for collective action; she eschews the usual placatory (and to my mind, politically useless) advice to “turn out the lights when you leave a room and bring a reusable bag to the grocery store.” She offers, instead, what she calls a few “major ideas” for ways to insert yourself as a citizen into the conversation about climate change. Particularly useful is a list of talking points — *talking back* points, you might say — to respond to politicians and others who argue that robust challenges to climate change are unaffordable. That list — and the book as a whole (Tatiana Schlossberg’s) — could serve as a useful primer to activists hoping to change hearts and minds on climate change issues. *Inconspicuous Consumption* would also be a wonderful starting point for non-specialist book groups — I read it alone, mostly in my study, but along the way I couldn’t keep from sharing various bits from it with friends and relatives. I would recommend *Inconspicuous Consumption* to any reader who would just like to know more about the lived choices they can make daily, both as consumers and as activist citizens.

Janet McAdams is a writer from the American South, She currently lives in Mexico. Her books include The Island of Lost Luggage, Feral, and Red Weather. Contact Janet at janetmcadams@gmail.com

The Blue-Green Stream

by Wang Wei

Translated by Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell

Every time I have started for the Yellow Flower River,
I have gone down the Blue-Green Stream,
Following the hills, making ten thousand turnings,
We go along rapidly, but advance scarcely one hundred li.
We are in the midst of a noise of water,
Of the confused and mingled sounds of water broken by stones,
And in the deep darkness of pine trees.
Rocked, rocked,
Moving on and on,
We float past water-chestnuts
Into a still clearness reflecting reeds and rushes.
My heart is clean and white as silk; it has already achieved Peace;
It is smooth as the placid river.
I love to stay here, curled up on the rocks,
Dropping my fish-line forever.

This poem is in the public domain.

Tennessee Chapter Fall 2023 Retreat

October 13 – 15 ~ Pickett State Park

The Middle Tennessee Group cordially invites you to the Tennessee Chapter's Fall Fun Retreat at beautiful Pickett State Park, Friday, October 13, to Sunday, October 15. Enjoy the company of other environmentalists during the Fall hardwoods color season! Be a part of the fellowship, hikes, fireplace chats, and meetings. Don't miss the silent auction and Saturday evening live music, bonfire, S'mores and fun. Join others who share your love and respect for the environment. This retreat will focus on community connections, outdoor adventures, and interesting encounters. Have you tried forest bathing?

FAMILY FRIENDLY

We particularly encourage families to bring children of all ages to introduce them to the wonderful natural landscape of Pickett State Park! We are planning some special nature activities just for kids and, if the weather cooperates, we will have a bonfire at the amphitheater where kids (of all ages) can make S'mores.

HIKES

Tennessee State Naturalist Randy Hedgepath will lead us on Saturday and Sunday hikes. Come enjoy the Fall colors. Details about hikes are in the retreat schedule to the right. A daypack with water, lunch, and rain gear is recommended. In addition to Randy's hikes, and if the weather cooperates, we will try an experiential hike that will get us out of the meeting room and into the forest for presentations about environmental subjects.

RETREAT MEALS

Full registration includes the cost of two breakfasts (Saturday & Sunday) and Saturday evening dinner. These will be prepared and served in the Group Lodge kitchen. Lunch each day is on your own due to the variety of activities and the probability that many will not be at the Group Lodge at lunchtime. Bring food for your lunches and use the lodge kitchen for any preparation you need. There is ample space in the lodge refrigerators and freezers for your personal food and drinks. A personal drinking cup is a good idea, but you do not need a mess kit or utensils. Dishes, cutlery, and cups are provided from the lodge kitchen. Adult beverages are allowed for consumption within the Group Lodge.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Pickett State Park Group Camp is located 15 miles northeast of Jamestown, Tennessee. Venue information and directions are available at <https://tnstateparks.com/parks/pickett>. The Group Camp has multiple dorm-style buildings. There will be men's, women's, and mixed lodging available. Be sure to bring your own bedding or sleeping bag, pillow, and toiletries. Towels are one of the most forgotten items. If bunkhouse living is not for you, camp in your tent or RV in the official campground or in the open field behind the Group Camp. For reservations go to: <https://reserve.tnstateparks.com/pickett/campsites> or call (888) 867-2757.

PARK GPS COORDINATES

36.5513, -84.7967 takes you to the park office. Continue north on Pickett Park Highway to reach the Group Camp.

PICKETT STATE PARK

Pickett CCC Memorial State Park lies within the 20,887-acre Pickett State Forest and is adjacent to the massive 125,000-acre Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. In 1933, the Stearns Coal and Lumber Company donated nearly 12,000 acres of land to the State of Tennessee to be developed as a forest recreational area. Initial development of the area by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) occurred between 1934 through 1942. The CCC constructed hiking trails, five rustic cabins, a recreation lodge, a ranger station, and a 12-acre lake. Pickett was the first state park in the southeast to be listed as a certified dark sky viewing location!

ON A SAD NOTE

The Tennessee Chapter has been holding our fall retreats at this location for many years. Unfortunately, the Tennessee Parks Department has determined that they will not rent the facility during the Fall for the foreseeable future. Come and enjoy it with us while you still can.

RETREAT COSTS

Registration: Register by October 5th – Adult \$60 for lodging, 2 breakfasts, Sat. dinner
Register October 6th or later – Adult \$70 for lodging, 2 breakfasts, Sat dinner

First Chapter Retreat? Receive a special price for lodging, 2 breakfasts, Saturday dinner – Adult \$40

Students: \$30 for lodging, 2 breakfasts, Saturday dinner

Payment: Due when you arrive at the retreat. Cash or check only. (No credit cards).

Scholarships (Limited number available): If you want to attend, but can't afford it right now, apply to Charlie High – (615) 500-5499 – for a scholarship.

Youth 16 and Under: Free when registered and attending with a parent or guardian

RETREAT SCHEDULE

The Retreat will begin at 4 pm Central Friday, October 13th, and end at Noon Central Sunday October 15th.

Friday

Prepare your own dinner on Friday in the lodge kitchen. OR meet at the Group Lodge and carpool with friends for dinner to Jamestown – which is about 30 minutes on a very windy road. OR join those of us eating at Freddie's Hitching Post, which is just outside the Park. We will leave the Group Lodge at 6:30 for Freddie's. Please call Freddie's – (931) 879-3733 – to make reservations for 7:00 pm. Be sure to let them know that you are a part of the Sierra group.

Saturday

7:30 to 9:00 am: Breakfast

9:30 am: Hike with Randy Hedgepath

Join Randy just outside of Pickett State Park for a walk through the spectacular Pogue Creek Canyon. We will set up a shuttle for this moderate, five-mile walk. Meet at the parking lot on Highway 154.

9:30 am to noon: Activities at the Lodge or close by for those not hiking or in case of rain. Details are being finalized as this goes to press. Check the website for details.

Noon – 1:00 pm: Lunch on your own

1:00 pm to 5:00 pm: Activities at the Lodge or close by for those not hiking or in case of rain. Details are being finalized as this goes to press. Check the website for details.

5:00 – 5:45: Evening program

6:00 - 7:00 pm: Dinner at the Group Lodge

7:00 – 8:00 pm: Silent Auction

This is a good chance for you to look through things that you have been thinking about parting with, but haven't decided to let go of. Excess outdoors equipment or clothing, nature books, live plants, wine, artwork, and crafts are good things to auction. Be sure to bring some cash so you can take advantage of the offerings.

8:00 pm: Live music by Antoinette Olesen, Buddy Farler, and friends

9:00 pm: Bonfire with S'mores at the amphitheater or in the lodge fireplace, depending on the weather

Sunday

7:30 to 9:00 am: Breakfast

9:30 am: Hike with Randy Hedgepath

One of the best walks at Pickett, this trail has beautiful rock formations and thick forest. The walk is about 2 miles and moderate. We will meet at the group camp and drive to the lake where we will start the walk.

9:30 – 11:30: Forest bathing led by Melissa Jean, an Assistant Professor in the Mindfulness Studies masters' program at Lesley University. Forest bathing is a Japanese wellness practice that can be translated as "taking in the forest atmosphere."

REGISTRATION HERE:
bit.ly/Fall-2023-Retreat-Reg

QUESTIONS?

Ask Charlie High at (615) 500-5499

Middle Tennessee Group Annual Picnic

September 30 2023 * 2:00 – 7:00pm
 Nashville's Edwin Warner Park * 50 Vaughn Rd * Shelter #6

*Food *Friends *Games *Music *Door Prizes *Hiking

We invite all Sierra groups to join us at the beautiful Edwin Warner Park Shelter #6. We had a wonderful time last year, it was so nice to gather with friends amidst nature. Families and friends welcome.

Please register before 9/27 so we can plan properly for food. Bring a lawn chair or blanket if you want to lounge beyond the picnic tables.



Come Swim with the Fishes in Citico Creek!

On Saturday, September 2, the Harvey Broome Group will host a snorkeling adventure in Citico Creek, one of the cleanest and most biodiverse streams in Tennessee. Sometimes called "the hillbilly coral reef," Citico Creek drains the Citico Creek Wilderness and is known for its wide diversity of native fishes, freshwater clams, and myriad aquatic insects. Patrick Rakes (M.S., Zoology), co-founder of Conservation Fisheries, Inc., and Jerry Thornton (M.S., Aquatic Ecology) will lead this outing. Bring your own mask & snorkel and sneakers, sandals or booties for crawling upstream. A wet suit is helpful, but a hot day will balance the cold water. Limit 12. Must be able to swim. Contact Jerry for information and to sign up: gatwildcat@aol.com or 865-719-9742.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

| | LOCATION | DATES |
|-------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Fall 2023 | Pickett State Park | October 13-15 |
| Winter 2024 | Cedars of Lebanon State Park | January 19-21 |
| Spring 2024 | Fall Creek Falls State Park | May 3-5 |
| Fall 2024 | Fall Creek Falls State Park | October 18-20 |

UPCOMING MEETINGS

COVID-19 NOTICE

There is always a risk of acquiring a communicable disease in any group setting. Please contact your local department of health for guidance in protection and prevention.

Group Program Meetings

| Group | Date | Time |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------|
| Cherokee (Chattanooga) | Mon 9/25, 10/23, 11/27 | 6:00 PM |
| Chickasaw (Memphis) | Thu 9/21, 10/19, 11/16 | 6:00 PM |
| Harvey Broome (Knoxville) | Tue 9/12, 10/10, 11/14 | 7:00 PM |
| Middle TN (Nashville) | Thu 9/14, 10/12, 11/9 | 7:00 PM |

Group Business Meetings

| Group | Date | Time |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------|
| Cherokee (Chattanooga) | Mon 9/11, 10/2, 11/6 | 7:00 PM |
| Chickasaw (Memphis) | Wed 9/6, 10/4, 11/1 | 6:30 PM |
| Harvey Broome (Knoxville) | Tue 9/26, 10/24, 11/28 | 7:00 PM |
| Middle TN (Nashville) | Mon 9/18, 10/16, 11/20 | 6:30 PM |

Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

| Committee | Date | Time |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| CareNET (Rogersville) | Thu 9/28, 10/26, no Nov meeting | 6:00 PM |
| Clarksville | Tue 9/12, 10/10, 11/14 | 6:00 PM |
| Holston Valley | Tue 9/19, 10/17, 11/21 | 6:00 PM |
| Watauga (Mountain City) | Tue 9/12, 10/10, 11/14 | 5:00 PM |



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

From TVA's planned methane gas plants to species extinction to climate change to coal ash 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 trail cooler tote (limited time!) and these exciting Members-only benefits:

- One-year subscription to *Sierra* magazine
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Card Number _____

Exp. Date ____/____/____

Signature _____

| Membership Categories | Individual | Joint |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
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| 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 |

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