Join the TN Chapter as we meet for our Winter Retreat at the Group Camp of Ce-
dars of Lebanon State Park, just north of Murfreesboro. Come for training, hiking, re-
xlaxing close to Nature, and the company of good friends, old and new. People from all
across the state come to these gatherings! Be a part of the fellowship, hikes, fireplace chats, meetings, and stargazing.

Once again, we’re delighted to have our Tennessee State Naturalist, Randy Hedges-
path, to lead us Saturday and Sunday. Hikes. Be sure to prepare for muddy trail
conditions (unless it is frozen) and winter weather that is likely in late January. Winter
hike Retreat at the Group Camp can be great experiences if you are properly attired! It’s a good idea to have a
daypack for carrying water, snacks, and extra clothing.

Saturday there will be citizen lobbying
training and well as a focus on passing the
TennCan bottle bill in the upcoming legisla-
tive session, with workshops to prepare us
to hit the ground running in February. Other
committee meetings will be happening too.
You can participate in as much or as little
as you wish, walking a short trail or sitting
by fire may be what appeals to you the
most and that’s ok!

Be sure not to miss the Saturday evening
program: Marge Davis will be our speak-
er; she’s been behind the Bottle Bill for
decades and believes this is the year we
can finally get it passed. Did you know that
Tennesseeans recycle just 10% of the 4 bil-
lion-plus beverage containers we consume each year? TennCan will boost that figure to
80%, possibly higher, and it will do it in
such a way that ensures the most benefi-
cial use of each container and generate
millions of dollars for countless non-profits,
schools, libraries, the homeless, etc. etc.
across the state through bottle drives and
donation bins or redemption centers!

We’ll be at the Group Lodge, where you
get bunkhouse lodging (women’s & men’s
dorms), 2 breakfasts and Saturday dinner –
bring your own trail lunches. You must bring
your own sleeping bag or linens/blankets,
and Saturday dinner -- pack your own trail
free.) For that price you get bunkhouse lodg-
son; fi rst-timers 1/2 off; kids 15 and under
by Apr. 26, after that price rises to $60/per-
($50/person with email or on-line reservation
auction.

Schedule of Activities (Preliminary):
Meal Times; Friday dinner on your own;
Saturday breakfast 6:30-8:00 am, lunch on
your own and dinner 6:00-7:30 pm; Sunday
breakfast 6:30-7:30 am
Hikes: Saturday 9 am and 1 pm; Sunday
9 am

Programs:
Saturday:
9-10 am - Conservation Education Day &
Loboying training - Bill Moll, et. al.
10-11 am - State Forest discussion - Da-
vid Arnold - State Forester/Asst. Commis-
sioned
11-12 noon - Legislative issues - PACE,
TennCan, Forever Green Tennessee - Scott
Banbury, Marge Davis, et. al.
Lunch time - Conservation videos and
vignettes - Bill Moll
1-2:30 pm - Sierra Club budgets and
families - Alice Dimetron
3-4 pm - Hiking adventures - Mac Post
4-5 pm - Jemez Principles - Marquita
Bradshaw
7:30-8:30 pm - TennCan presentation
with Marge Davis

Sunday:
8:00-noon - ExCom meeting
noon - cleanup and food sales
Venue information and directions are available at Cedars of Lebanon State Park
website here: https://goo.gl/LCKLM3
About Cedars of Lebanon State Park
The Park is named for Eastern Red Cedar
Tennessee trees found throughout the area. The trees
reminded early American settlers of the
famed Biblical cedar forests that thrived
across Mount Lebanon in what is now the
Mediterranean area. Cedars of Lebanon
became a state park in 1955. In the 1940s,
botanists noticed unique natural ecosys-
tems found in and around Cedars of Leba-
non State Park and Forest. These areas
are natural rock gardens called cedar glades.
The presence of glades is due to limestone
rock coming so close to the surface of the
ground that it causes the soil to be thin or
hust. Water and surface temperatures vary
so much throughout the year that a
harsh, desert-like, inhospitable habitat is
created with its own unique plant commu-
nity. Nineteen rare and endangered species
of plants grow profusely here and nowhere
else in the world. Winter activities include
hiking, birding and disk golf.

Nearby attractions include Stones River
National Historic Battlefield. So if our hikes
are not what you’re looking for, a 20-min-
ute drive over to the Battlefield provides
another possible excursion (https://goo.
gl/U1eXM6). They have a museum, where
you may view a short film about the famous
battle.
Looking Ahead: Spring Chapter Meeting

May 3rd through May 5th
Fall Creek Falls State Park

Put it on your calendar! Our Quarterly
Chapter Meetings are a great way to get to
know people from across the state that share
a common goal of exploring, enjoying and
protecting our environment. It’s a great
opportunity to learn about conservation
issues in Tennessee.

The Spring meeting, hosted by Harvey
Broome Group, will be held at Fall Creek
Falls State Park, a 26,000-acre park on the
eastern top of the Cumberland Plateau. This
heavily forested park is perhaps best known
for its spectacular waterfalls, cascades, and
streams.

Chapter committee meetings will be held
during the weekend, as well as a Chapter
business meeting on Sunday morning. Sit
in on one or all, or take off and enjoy the park
and its many offerings. The park has miles of
fantastic trails that show off the spectacular
scenery of the Cumberland Plateau, with its
many interesting geologic features. Outings
will be offered on Saturday and Sunday. We’ll enjoy
a spacious dining area and bunk-style
accommodations in the Group Lodge #1.
Of course, if you’d rather use your own tent,
that’s OK, too. Yet another attraction at this
year’s fall meeting is a not-to-be-missed silent
auction.

We’ll be at the Group Lodge #1: $15
($50/person with email or on-line reservation
by Apr. 26, after that price rises to $60/per-
son; first-timers 1/2 off; kids 15 and under
free.) For that price you get bunkhouse lodg-
ing (women’s & men’s dorms,) 2 breakfasts
and Saturday dinner – pack your own trail
lunches. Pay when you check in at the
Group Lodge. For additional information, contact
Ron Shrieves, HBG Chair (email ronshrieves@
googlemail.com). The Chapter retreat will begin at 4 PM on
Friday and end at 2 PM on Sunday. All TN
Chapter Retreat participants will be required to
sign the standard Sierra Club outings
waiver when checking in at the retreat
venue. See the bottom of page 2 for infor-
mation regarding the waivers.

Tennessee Chapter Winter Retreat 2019
January 25th through January 27th
Cedars of Lebanon State Park
The bi-monthly newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club.

SEND CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO:
*Email: address.changes@sierraclub.org
*Mail: clip the "Moving?" coupon on page 8 and mail
*Address changes are processed much faster if you include your Sierra Club membership number. To find your membership number, look on the address label of this newsletter.

SEND ARTICLES TO:
E-mail: eellis424@gmail.com
ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:
Submission Target Date is January 31st for the March / April 2019 issue.
1. E-mail and e-mail attached files are preferred. Send to eellis424@gmail.com with either embedded text or word processor files. Attached preferred. Word is preferred but Apple users may send articles in Pages.
2. Photographs should be scanned in a .jpg or a .tif file format then either attached to email or mailed via U.S. Postal Service on a 3 1/2" diskette or CD RM. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you would like your diskette or photo prints returned.
3. Hand-copy handwritten or typewritten articles may be accepted; however, pre-approval from the Editor is required.
4. Any materials submitted via USPS mail will not be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided.
5. Concerns or complaints should be addressed to: Tennessee Chapter Ombudsman, Joel Gearhardt at jgearhardt@yahoo.com. The opinions expressed in the Tennessee Chapter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Tennessee Chapter or the Sierra Club.

Join Sierra Club and help protect all creatures, great and small.

“Every good thing, great and small, needs defense”
- John Muir

SEND material to Emily Ellis at eellis424@gmail.com

Meeting Schedule

Chapter Retreat | Location | Dates
---|---|---
Winter | Cedars of Lebanon State Park | Jan 28-29
Spring | Fall Creek Falls State Park | May 3-5
Summer | Cedars of Lebanon State Park | July 26-28
Fall | Pickett State Park | Oct 25-27

Cutoff Date for the March/April Issue is January 31, 2019.

All meetings and outings notices, articles, and photographs should be in by then.

Sierra Club Officers
TENNESSEE CHAPTER:
Chair: Mac Post 865-806-0980 mpost3116@gmail.com
Vice Chair: Bill Mollich 423-702-5779
Secretary: John McIntosh 931-338-2530 mocjoann@gmail.com
Treasurer: Alice Demetres 660-247-2288 demetres1983@gmail.com
Conservation: Axel Ring 865-387-7398 onyxfarm@bellsouth.net
Outings: Denise Biver 865-384-5138 denisebivers@gmail.com
CCL Delegate: Mac Post 865-806-0980 mpost3116@gmail.com

TN LOCAL GROUPS:
Cherokee Group
https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/cherokee
Chair: Barbara Kelly 423-718-5009 bk.Tvers@gmail.com
Vice Chair: Kate Anthony 513-365-7899
Secretary: Rainbow Gardener 423-365-7899
Conservation: Barbara Hurst 423-885-9503 barbara360h@comcast.net
Outings: John Doyal 423-315-9065
Contact: 2n2doorsrracha@gmail.com
Mailing Address: 619 Arrowhead Loop, Lookout Mountain, TN 37350
Chapter Delegate Bill Mollich 423-702-5779 whitmol@aol.com
Upper Cumberlend
Committee: Josephine MoQuail 931-520-0449 jmquail@ctnitech.edu

Chickasaw Group - Memphis
https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/chickasaw
Chair: Dennis Lynch 901-361-8029
dlynch1@gmail.com
Vice Chair: Joe Ozegovich 901-361-8029
Chair: Joe Ozegovich 901-361-8029
Secretary: Dawn Nelsen 901-283-5887
dawnlees@comcast.net
Conservation: Joe Ozegovich 901-612-0399
Outings: Joe Ozegovich 901-612-0399
Contact: Joe Ozegovich 901-612-0399
Mailing Address: Joe Ozegovich, 901-612-0399
Chapter Delegate: Sue Williams 901-274-0524
STCMemphisOutings@gmail.com

Harvey Broome Group - Knoxville/Oak Ridge
https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/harvey-broome
Chair: Ron Shrieves 865-922-3518
vons@shrieves.net
Contact: Ron Shrieves 865-922-3518
Chair: Ron Shrieves 865-922-3518
Secretary: Joanne Logan 865-292-8277
christen@nasw.org
Conservation: Scott Hefling 865-898-5751
sheflinger@aol.com
Outings: Scott Hefling 865-922-3518
Contact: Scott Hefling 865-922-3518
Mailing Address: Scott Hefling, 865-922-3518

Middle Tennessee Group - Nashville
https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/middle-tennessee
Chair: Grace Strachan 615-646-1102
TENNESSEE CHAPTER:
gaces@bfiirm.com
Vice Chair: Charles High 615-500-5499
cahigh1722@aol.com
Secretary: Mary High mary.leigh@gmail.com
Geo Chair: Joel Gearhardt 615-598-0268
gearhardt@yahoo.com
Conservation: Scott Hefling 615-859-3553
shefling@aol.com
Outings: Craig Jenkins 615-254-5301
CMJervis@comcast.net

Watauga Group - Northeast Tennessee
https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/watauga
Chair: Gloria Griffin 423-727-4715
gba7497@bellsouth.net
Vice Chair: Sandy Cranford 423-727-5044
scranford1258@yahoo.com
Secretary: Dennis Shekiah 423-534-4804
bmwbruno@icloud.com
Treasurer: Cindy Johnson 423-895-1687
scranford1258@yahoo.com
Outings: Dawn Wilson 423-727-7214
dawnwilson@bellsouth.net
Contact: Dawn Wilson 423-727-7214
Mailing Address: Dawn Wilson, 423-727-7214

Chapter Staff: Scott Sanburn
Conservation Program Coordinator
901-619-8567
http://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee

“The Tennes-Sierran” is provided.
Concerns or complaints should be addressed to: Tennessee Chapter Ombudsman, Joel Gearhardt at jgearhardt@yahoo.com. The opinions expressed in the Tennessee Chapter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Tennessee Chapter or the Sierra Club.

All Creatures Great and Small

“Every good thing, great and small, needs defense”
- John Muir

Named Contributor

Join Sierra Club and help protect all creatures, great and small.

3. Hard-copy handwritten or typewritten articles may be accepted; however, pre-approval from the Editor is required.
4. Any materials submitted via USPS mail will not be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided.
5. Concerns or complaints should be addressed to: Tennessee Chapter Ombudsman, Joel Gearhardt at jgearhardt@yahoo.com. The opinions expressed in the Tennessee Chapter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Tennessee Chapter or the Sierra Club.

Send material to
Emily Ellis at eellis424@gmail.com

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Spring | Fall Creek Falls State Park | May 3-5
Summer | Cedars of Lebanon State Park | July 26-28
Fall | Pickett State Park | Oct 25-27

The Chapter retreat will begin at 4 PM on Friday and end at 2 PM on Sunday. All TN Chapter Retreat participants will be required to sign the standard Sierra Club outings liability waiver when checking in at the retreat location. To review this waiver, please visit http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/sites/content.sierraclub.org.outings/files/forms/local-outings-sign-in_waiver.pdf

Any attendee under the age of 18 not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian will need to have a signed liability waiver and medical authorization form with them when they arrive. To review these waivers, please visit http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/sites/content.sierraclub.org.outings/files/forms/individual_waiver.pdf and http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/sites/content.sierraclub.org.outings/files/forms/local-outings-minor-release-wavier.pdf

Conservation Education Day - February 12-13, 2019

By Bill Moll

Conservation Education Day has been a joint effort of the Tennessee Environmental Council, the Tennessee Sierra Club and the Tennessee Conservation Voters for many years. Environmentalists take a day to meet with their state legislators in Nashville to promote the passage of bills which preserve and protect our water, air and lands, and to block those which would do harm. The goal is to have a meeting with every Tennessee legislator.

Most legislators are in attendance on Wednesdays during the legislative session, so the Cordell Hull building, the location of the legislative offices and hearing rooms, is full of people meeting with their legislators. There are usually classes of students on field trips, several health-related groups, and many lobbyists for businesses and special interests. Our Conservation Education team is about the only ensemble of ordinary citizens coming to speak with their legislators.

Last year’s CED was the first time that many of our group had met with their legislators. There was a bit of initial apprehension, but that rapidly dissipated. Despite the seemingly hos- tile political climate in DC, all of the Tennessee legislators have been friendly and most have engaged in real conversations. They don’t always agree, but there is an exchange of ideas, and that is the purpose of our day on the hill.

In advance of CED, the Political Committee and others will work with our partner conservation groups to develop a common agenda of key legislative items for 2019. Due to the dynamics of the legislature, the final list won’t be known until the week before CED. Wednesday, February 13, has been chosen to be after the key bills are known, but before crucial votes are taken.

The “asks” will be developed with the emphasis on getting bills passed. Example of “asks” might be Forever Green Tennessee (funds for land acquisition), TennCan (bottle deposit) and PACE (energy efficiency financing). There will be lobbying training and “ask” education in Nashville on Tuesday evening, February 12, plus information and discussion on Sierra Club Listserv, starting as soon as the legislature convenes. Last year, most of the issue discussion and training for participants took place in the days just before the meetings. This year, we will all be better prepared for our discussion.

The legislator meetings, each about 10 minutes long, cannot be arranged unless there will be a constituent at the meeting. Last year, 45 of us met with 35 of the 132 total legislators. We need you to schedule time in Nashville on February 12 and 13 so that we can at least double the number of legislators with whom we meet in 2019.

Much of the Chapter Sierra Club activity is centered in Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga. For CED, that doesn’t work well. The key committees for many Sierra Club issues are the Agriculture And Natural Resources Committees and the Government Operation Committees. Most of the members on these committees are not from the major cities. We need more CED participation by Sierra Club members from the non-urban/suburban areas.

These legislators get fewer constituent visitors today than in every case last year; there was some personal link with the Sierra Club constituent and the legislator. We need you to come to begin establishing a relationship with your legislator, if you don’t already have one.

The intention last year was to develop a state-wide program to support building these relationships. That only partially succeeded. We will do better this year with your help.

Come joins us! We will be contacting members to visit the state, so please don’t hang up. This is an important event and it is very satisfying.

For more information, questions or suggestions, or if you would like to help organize Conservation Education Day, contact Bill Moll at whnmoll@aol.com or 404-401-7899.

Nancy Bell, Bill Kornrich and Todd Waterman meeting with Senator Frank Nicey. Photo by Todd Waterman

A More Positive Outlook for Public Lands in 116th Congress, Key States

By Lena Moffitt

In 2019, we’re looking forward to a wave of pro-conservation and pro-public lands elected officials being sworn in and setting to work on policies that will protect our public lands, water, and wildlife. Many of these new leaders made their support for these cherished places and opposition to Trump’s and Zinke’s attacks on them central to their campaigns, proving that support for our nation’s public lands is just good politics.

Here are some highlights of the new leadership that we are expecting to advance good public lands policy in the coming year.

Representative Raúl Grijalva (AZ-3) will return to Congress and chair the House Committee on Natural Resources. He has consistently campaigned on public lands issues and is the leading voice in the House on natural resources issues, as well as a champion for protection of our public lands.

In Colorado, Democrat Jared Polis was elected governor, vowing to continue his long-standing efforts to protect the state’s vast public lands, touting their important role as economic drivers in the burgeoning outdoor economy. Governor-elect Polis has vowed to be an “environmentalist” in the growth of the outdoor tourism and recreation economy.

Nevada elected Democrat Jacky Rosen to the U.S. Senate. In Congress, Rosen has championed Nevada’s monuments and been vocally supportive of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is supported by 84 percent of Nevadans. Senator Rosen will be more likely to support Sierra Club conservation priorities in both Washoe and Clark counties, where the county commissions have proposed legislation that would sell off federally managed public lands for development.

Democrat Debra Haaland (NM-1) will be one of the first two Native American women ever to serve in Congress. She criticized Trump’s attacks on Bears Ears National Monument and has advocated for stronger protections for the Chaco Canyon region. Michelle Lujan Grisham will serve as New Mexico’s Governor, flipping the seat from Republican to Democratic. She has committed to implementing a state methane rule and supports our renewable-portfolio-stand bill being slated for the upcoming legislative session.

The Sierra Club was proud to support Stephanie Garcia Richard, the new lands commissioner for the state of New Mexico, who has vowed to protect special places near and far. Lena Moffitt is the Senior Director of the Sierra Club’s Our Wild America Campaign, which is dedicated to protecting our lands, water and wildlife, to increasing equitable access to the outdoors, and to keeping fossil fuels in the ground. Lena most recently served as the Director of the Sierra Club’s Dirty Fuels campaign, a key initiative of the Our Wild America Campaign, where she focused on protecting our climate, communities and special places from fossil fuel development. As Senior Director, Lena is excited to engage people from all walks of life to get outside and protect special places near and far. Lena hopes to build on the groundswell of activism and engagement needed to ensure our communities, wildlife and outdoor spaces can thrive in the face of climate disruption and other threats. She is excited to help broaden the tent of advocates engaged in protecting our natural world and inspire a new generation of environmentalists.

She is originally from New Mexico where she developed a love of the outdoors which she maintains in Washington, D.C. through regular visits to Rock Creek Park and the wild places beyond.

The Tennes-Sierran
The Tennes-Sierran
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The public is very welcome at ALL Sierra Club Meetings and Activities! All members traveling across the state should feel free to drop in and attend another Group’s meetings. You will find yourself among friends and learning something interesting.

CHEROKEE GROUP

January 6, 2018 - 4:00 P.M. - Cherokee Group Annual Welcome 2019 Pot-luck/Social YOU are invited! Bring friends and a covered dish. We’ll supply drinks, utensils, plates, etc. Come start the new year off by joining people sharing the same interests, energy and dreams for our environment as you. All welcome, don’t worry if you haven’t got a dish there’s always plenty of food and wine as well. Before dark we’ll take a short walk to the bridge over South Chickamauga Creek. Also the Visitors Center, where we’ll be dining, is a mini-museum with interesting archeological artifacts to explore; Audubon Acres is a registered site on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Location: Audubon Acres Visitor Center, 900 Sanctuary Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37404. Contact brian@sierraclub.org to let us know you are coming. Don’t forget to bring a $5 donation for the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Location: Audubon Congregational Church, 400 Glenwood Dr., Chattanooga, TN 37404. Come add your ideas, share your concerns. We’ve got our fingers in a number of issues (clean energy, climate, forestry, water quality, parks,) and will be making plans for 2019. Come to the meeting – take the first step to learn more. Come in the front door, we’ll be in the second room on the right. All are welcome!

January 28, 2019 - 7:00 P.M. - Frogs and Snakes Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga, 3224 Navajo Dr.; off I-24, just east of the Missionary Ridge cut. Take the Germantown Road Exit, turn north onto Germantown Road. Take the 2nd left onto Navajo, go about 1/2 mile, UUCC will be on your left, up the hill! We meet downstairs, in the Forum Room.

Mr. Paul Erik Bakland will make a presentation that focuses on a general overview of local herpetofauna, threats to herp populations, the importance of preserving biodiversity, and current conservation efforts. Mr. Bakland has had a lifelong interest in reptiles and amphibians and that interest influenced the direction of his academic career towards herpetology. He assisted with various amphibian and reptile studies as an undergraduate Biology major at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga (UTC). As an Environmental Science Masters student at UTC he was interested in examining various ecological factors influencing amphibian populations specifically, the effects of habitat type on disease prevalence in frogs. Currently, he is an adjunct faculty member at UTC, teaching Ecology and Biology courses while continuing to stay active in the field of herpetology.

Letter-writing materials on current issues with talking points will be available for those interested. Hand-written letters do count! Phone calls and e-mails too. Bring a friend. The public is very welcome! Free as always

February 4, 2018 - 6:00 P.M. - Strategy/Business Meeting Location: Pilgrim Congregational Church, 400 Glenwood Dr., Chattanooga, TN 37404. Come add your ideas, share your concerns. We’ve got our fingers in a number of issues (clean energy, climate, forestry, water quality, parks,) and will be making plans for 2019. Come to the meeting – take the first step to learn more. Come in the front door, we’ll be in the second room on the right. All are welcome!

February 25, 2019 - 7:00 P.M. - Migratory Birds Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga, 3224 Navajo Dr.; off I-24, just east of the Missionary Ridge cut. Take the Germantown Road Exit, turn north onto Germantown Road, take the 2nd left onto Navajo, go about 1/2 mile, UUCC will be on your left, up the hill! We meet downstairs, in the Forum Room.

Dr. David Abom will make a presentation on the migration of birds through Tennessee and how urbanization in Tennessee affects successful migration. Dr. Abom is an associate professor at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. His primary interests are in bird migration, especially stopover biology, the process and consequences of habitat selection, and the effect of urbanization on bird populations.

Letter-writing materials on current issues with talking points will be available for those interested. Hand-written letters do count! Phone calls and e-mails too. Bring a friend. The public is very welcome! Free as always

CHICKASAW GROUP (Memphis)

Check http://www.facebook.com/ChickasawGroup for more meeting information.

Sierra Social Hour
Join the Middle Tennessee Group of the Sierra Club for a Happy Hour Meet & Greet Refresh after work and meet other new members Renew friendships with those that you haven’t seen for a while Thursday, January 17, 2019 5:00 to 7:00 PM and Thursday, February 21, 2019 5:00 to 7:00 PM Tailgate Brewery in Bellevue, 7300 Charlotte Pike We will be in the front room of the facility. See you there! For additional information please email paulalennon615@gmail.com

The Human Damage from Coal Ash

Fallout from the Kingston Coal Ash Spill - jury reaches verdict in workers’ suit against TVA contractor

The verdict was in favor of the workers’ claims in the federal toxic tort lawsuit against Jacobs Engineering, the contractor hired by TVA to clean up the Kingston coal ash spill in December, 2008. More than 30 workers at the cleanup are dead and more than 250 are sick or dying. Closing arguments were heard in the 3-week trial in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee Nov 6 and the jury returned a verdict Nov 7. The jury found that workers were inadequately protected from the toxins in the coal ash. This verdict opens the door to another trial in which the workers are seeking damages.

The workers alleged that:
• Jacobs’ supervisors told them coal ash was safe and refused them protective gear.
• Jacobs’ supervisors tampered with testing designed to keep them and the public safe.
• Jacobs’ safety manager shredded documents and sent bags of shredded material to a private document shredding service (any destruction of such material from the cleanup site is a violation of the EPA order).
• Video cameras were installed at the spill site in key areas where workers were likely to be exposed to high levels of coal ash dust, but the recordings were not made available to the court by either Jacobs or TVA.

See the latest in the series of articles in the Knoxville News Sentinel by Jamie Satterfield.
VW Diesel Mitigation - Sierra Club Involvement in Important National Issue

By Dennis Lynch (Chickasaw Group)

Most people have heard that VW cheated on their diesel car’s air pollution testing. The EPA negotiated and signed settlements that Volkswagen violated the Clean Air Act (“CAA”). VW was made to sign a consent decree in 2016, and agree to spend up to $14.7 billion to settle the case. The settlement is in 3 parts: a) offending vehicle buy-back, b) Zero-emission vehicle infrastructure development (now a VW division named “Electrify America”), and c) $2.7 billion for state-by-state mitigation plans.

The Sierra Club is involved and providing input to development of each state’s specific mitigation plan. In Tennessee, we have worked with TDEC’s Office of Energy Programs, which has provided many opportunities for public input. The Tennessee Chapter sought input from SC members across the state, through our Transportation Chair, Dennis Lynch, and worked with TDEC to advocate for certain details to be incorporated in the state’s Mitigation Plan.

With the Sierra Club’s Environmental Law Department, we developed a 26-page comment letter, and then obtained sign-ons from multiple ally agencies.

TDEC analyzed all the input they received and then developed a Draft Mitigation Plan. We again responded, and then finally in September of this year, TDEC published the final plan. The final plan contains many details, but perhaps the key element is that Tennessee’s $45.8 million share of the mitigation funds is to be allocated as follows:

- 15% for Light Duty Zero Emission Vehicle Supply Equipment (primarily electric vehicle charging stations & infrastructure);
- 60% is to be provided for transit buses, school buses and shuttle buses;
- 15% for Class 4-7 Local Freight Trucks, and 10% for Class 8 Local Freight Trucks and Port Drayage Trucks (Google it). Much more information about this subject is available. Email any questions to ChickasawSierra@gmail.com.

Westmoreland Bankruptcy Spells Trouble for Coal Industry

By Peter Morgan

When Westmoreland Coal Company filed for bankruptcy this fall, some might have assumed it would be nothing more than a continuation of the recent trend of coal giants such as Alpha Natural Resources, Arch and Peabody Energy falling through bankruptcy reorganizations. We now know that’s not the case, and that the Westmoreland bankruptcy has potentially disastrous consequences for workers and the environment. Different forces drive the Westmoreland bankruptcy, and all signs indicate that the outcome will be far uglier.

Founded in 1854, Westmoreland is the oldest coal mining company in the US, and its demise is a harbinger of the fate of the thermal coal mining industry as a whole.

Unlike the prior bankruptcies, which were driven by badly-timed investments in metallurgical steel-making coal, Westmoreland’s bankruptcy reflects the plummeting demand for coal-fired electricity generation. Westmoreland’s business model involves almost exclusive investment in “mine-mouth” operations, which are coal mines inextricably tied to a single power plant that serves as their sole customer.

Initially, this approach was heralded as a way to use long-term coal purchase agreements to achieve some stability in the generally volatile coal sales market. But now that many of Westmoreland’s customers are shutting down their power plants, it looks more as if the company has lashed itself to the mast of a sinking ship.

Whereas Alpha, Arch, and Peabody were able to use the bankruptcy process to shed debt and otherwise emerge more or less the same as they’d been pre-bankruptcy (particularly now that Alpha has re-merged with Contura, the company it spun off), Westmoreland’s proposed reorganization plan allows the company’s lenders to act as vultures: picking the choicest morsels from the corpse and leaving the rest to rot.

Westmoreland’s debts exceed $1 billion. In the months leading up to its bankruptcy, the company secured additional loans of over $100 million, largely from a group of banks and hedge funds that had already made bad investments in the company.

Those additional loans now allow the lenders to control the bankruptcy, and they are using this power to acquire just four of Westmoreland’s US mines. Those mines are the Rosebud, Haystack, and Absaloka Mines in Montana and the San Juan Mine in New Mexico. The fate of Westmoreland’s other mines—in Wyoming, North Dakota, Texas, and Ohio—is uncertain. Ominously, the company’s proposed reorganization plan includes the formation of a “Liquidation Trust” for the purpose of offloading an unspecified number of remaining assets.

None of the Alpha, Arch, or Peabody bankruptcies involved liquidating trusts for coal mining assets.

The irony is that even the mines that Westmoreland’s lenders are using the bankruptcy process to acquire will be worthless in a few years. The Rosebud and San Juan mines each sell coal to a single power plant buyer, and each of those power plants has announced that it is shutting down. The Rosebud Mine provides coal to the Colstrip plant, which has announced that it will close two of its four units in 2022 and is widely expected to close the remaining units in 2027. The San Juan Generating Station, the sole purchaser of coal from the San Juan Mine, already closed two of its four units in 2017, and is on track to shut down completely in 2022.

Westmoreland’s bankruptcy further demonstrates that thermal coal production is no longer an economically viable or sustainable industry by highlighting the cruel measures the company is willing to take to

Continued on page 6

Group Business Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee (Chattanooga)</td>
<td>Sun 1/6</td>
<td>Annual “Welcome the New Year Pot Luck” at Audubon Acres 900 N. Sanctuary Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37421</td>
<td>4:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mon 2/3, 3/4</td>
<td>Pilgrim Congregational Church, 400 Glenwood Dr., Chattanooga</td>
<td>6:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasaw (Memphis)</td>
<td>Sat 1/12</td>
<td>Annual Strategy Meeting - location TBD Cheffie's Cafe, 483 High Point Terrace, Memphis</td>
<td>9:00 A.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wed 2/6, 3/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Broome (Knoxville)</td>
<td>Sat 1/12</td>
<td>Annual planning meeting - 10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. 4064 Kingston Park Drive, Knoxville, TN 37919-6674</td>
<td>7:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tue 2/26, 3/26</td>
<td>The Church of the Savior, 934 N. Westgate Rd., Knoxville</td>
<td>10:00 A.M.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7:00 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle TN (Nashville)</td>
<td>Mon 1/21, 2/18, 3/18</td>
<td>House of Kaboth, 218 Thompson Lane, Nashville</td>
<td>6:30 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watauga (Mountain City)</td>
<td>Tue 1/8</td>
<td>ExCom Annual Planning, 5902 Highway 421 South, Mountain City 5908 Highway 421 South, Mountain City</td>
<td>5:00 P.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tue 12/11</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:00 P.M.</td>
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Group Program Meetings

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<tr>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee (Chattanooga)</td>
<td>Sun 1/6</td>
<td>Annual “Welcome the New Year Pot Luck” at Audubon Acres 900 N. Sanctuary Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37421</td>
<td>4:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mon 1/28, 2/25, 3/25</td>
<td>Unitarian Universalist Church, 3224 Navajo Dr., Chattanooga</td>
<td>7:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasaw (Memphis)</td>
<td>Thu 1/17, 2/21, 3/21</td>
<td>Benjamin Hooks Public Library, 3030 Poplar Ave., Memphis</td>
<td>5:55 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Broome (Knoxville)</td>
<td>Tue 1/8, 2/12, 3/12</td>
<td>Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalists Church, 2931 Kingston Pike</td>
<td>7:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle TN (Nashville)</td>
<td>Thu 1/10, 2/14, 3/14</td>
<td>Radnor Lake Nature Center, 1160 Otter Creek Rd., Nashville, TN</td>
<td>7:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watauga (Mountain City)</td>
<td>Tue 1/8, 2/12, 3/12</td>
<td>5908 Highway 421 South, Mountain City</td>
<td>6:00 P.M.</td>
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Westmoreland bankruptcy continued...

minimize costs. In its filings, Westmoreland has described its obligations for employee health and safety, the environmental reclamation of its mines, and the restoration of polluted waters as “burdensome regulations.” The company has now begun using the bankruptcy process to try to strip away those obligations. Specifically, it’s indicated its willingness to force renegotiation of collective bargaining agreements and pension and retiree health benefits. And it has announced its intention to default on its pension, healthcare, and black lung obligations. Westmoreland is seeking bankruptcy court approval to default on nearly $335 million in post-retirement medical benefits, $41.7 million in pension obligations, and $21.8 million in black lung obligations.

Westmoreland has made clear that it intends to transfer the few remaining assets of value to its lenders with “no obligation to assume or otherwise pay for . . . liabilities arising under retiree medical benefit plans, the Black Lung Benefits Act or the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969.”

Dozens of retired miners and widows who rightfully fear for the loss of their pension and retiree health benefits have submitted moving letters to the bankruptcy court. “Judge, as you know, coal miners, both underground and surface miners, are the hardest working people in America, and their safety and working conditions are the most dangerous in this country, with black lung, silicosis, and other breathing disorders, and from a safety standpoint, falling roofs, rocks, slips, falls, equipment mishaps, and working around beltlines, pulleys and other pinch points,” wrote retired miner Jim Villos in one of those letters. “We the miners kept our end of the deal and Westmoreland needs to keep their promise, too!”

Although Westmoreland has not yet taken steps in the bankruptcy to evade its environmental reclamation obligations, it has been underfunding this work for decades. For example, only about 3 percent of the company’s Rosebud mine has been fully reclaimed, even though mining has been going on for approximately 40 years. Should Westmoreland choose to walk away from any of its mines, regulators would first try to cover the clean-up costs by foreclosing on third-party surety bonds. If those bonds failed to cover the full costs, taxpayers could be on the hook for the remainder.

Meanwhile, Westmoreland is throwing cash at its executives to try to entice them to stay. But the executives are fleeing the company, presumably because they recognize that the prospects for future employment in this dying industry are nil. Westmoreland laid out millions of dollars in retention bonuses in the year leading up to its bankruptcy, and is now seeking approval from the bankruptcy court to offer millions more. Westmoreland paid six of its highest-ranking executives a combined $5.9 million in the 12 months prior to its filing. It’s also secured bankruptcy court approval for additional incentive payments of up to $1.5 million per quarter. Despite this, Westmoreland’s Chief Financial Officer Gary Kohn—who already received $1 million in retention payments over the last year—announced his departure this month. The company’s CEO left the company in November 2017 in the run-up to the bankruptcy.

Westmoreland’s bankruptcy remains in process, and new twists are likely. The company has not yet announced what it plans to do with most of its operations; sale, closure, or abandonment are all options. Meanwhile, groups like Sierra Club and the United Mine Workers are opposing the company’s efforts to strip away its obligations to workers and the environment.

The final trajectory for the company and its many mines and workers will come into clearer focus in the early months of 2019. But it is already apparent that—unlike in the Alpha, Arch, and Peabody bankruptcies—Westmoreland itself will cease to exist. When the oldest coal mine operator in the country shuts down, the company’s bankruptcy court should take notice. The rest of us need to make sure these companies don’t succeed in shirking their responsibilities to the workers who dedicated their careers to coal mining, or to the lands that were sacrificed for the company’s economic gain.

Wins At North America Largest Inland Port

Photo by Daniel Peters

It all started at a village hall meeting in Elwood, Illinois. Elwood is both a rural village of 2500 people and a critical hub in the global economy. On the eve of World War II, Elwood was selected as the site for one of the largest ammunition plants in the country—the majority of TNT used by the Allies was produced in Elwood—due to its interior location, access to rail and highways, and access to a large number of workers. The redevelopment of the ammunition plant—the Joliet Arsenal—in 1995 drew on these same traits, especially the access to rail, to create the largest inland port in North America. BNSF Railroad redeveloped Arsenal land into a massive rail intermodal, moving shipping containers off trains and onto semis. As the warehouses grew, so did the companies. Elwood houses for many Fortune 500 companies located nearby. These warehouses help distribute trillions of dollars worth of goods around the country.

It was at an Elwood Village Board meeting that Brandin McDonald, who had worked at the massive WalMart warehouse in Elwood, traveled from his home in nearby Joliet to describe his experience working in the warehouse. At this meeting, the village was debating whether to approve an additional 2200 more acres of warehouses as part of the proposed “Northpoint” development. Opposition to more warehouses at these meetings had focused on community quality—the tens of thousands of trucks that travel the area daily, the pollution caused by these trucks, municipal debt and TIF taxing issues—but no one had heard much from the workers, many of whom travel daily for work from the neighboring Joliet.

To the predominantly white village, Brandin described the working conditions at the warehouses. “My personal experience is that the warehouses have all these temps in them and they work you like a slave and underpay you. They also have sexual harassment, discrimination and they never give raises, benefits or permanent jobs even though you work hard.” It was a moving testimony never before heard at these many meetings. The residents of Elwood led by Just Say No To Northpoint and organizers from the Sierra Club would go on to defeat the proposed development but the work between the predominantly white and rural Elwood community and the urban, mostly people of color workers from Joliet had just begun.

Elwood and Joliet leaders would continue to meet and mutually support one another and would also educate the public on the problems of limitless development without regard to the environment, community, infrastructure and labor concerns. The solidarity the work would grow and the same leaders would host the Chicagoland People’s Climate March event to further draw attention to the need for environmental, community and worker justice for those living next to America’s largest inland port. This march would further collaborative efforts in the area and when it came time for Elwood residents to return solidarity to the workers who supported their fight for environmental and community justice, the environmentalists were there to support workers demands in Joliet to deny two more staffing agencies from coming into the community. Together, they won again, this time for the workers, who convinced the Joliet City Council that staffing agencies were central to the labor problem in the area. Significant, in the fact that 63% of workers in the warehouses in the area are not direct hires of the companies they make billions for, but are employed by outside employment agencies that generally do not have benefits, health coverage and paid time off. While thought of as transitional employers, workers can spend years working at temp agencies at the same warehouse and not even get a directly hired, let alone receive benefits and a living wage.

While the collaboration between labor, community and environmental justice organizers has begun to change the narrative in Will County, much work lays ahead in challenging the push to continue developments that have left many in the community aggrieved. The lesson of Joliet and Elwood’s solidarity is that seeing past our own self interest and working in a principled way across communities is a way to win for both labor and environmental justice organizers.

Roberto Jesus Clack is the Associate Director of Warehouse Workers for Justice, a worker center dedicated to fighting for economic, racial and gender justice for the hundreds of thousands of warehouse workers in the Chicagoland area. He is also a native of Joliet. Ann Baskerville is a conservation organizer with the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club.
By Michael Brune

Here in North America, today marks the winter solstice, the shortest day (and longest night) of the year -- and a time when most of us could use some good cheer to help tide us over until spring. And during this particular midwinter (which is also mid-term for a president who supposedly hates holiday parties because they're 'not about him'), we could all use some reminders that it won't always be this dark. Because -- really! -- it won't. In spite of the Ebenezer Grinch sulking at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, good things do keep happening. To prove it, here are a few highlights from just the past week or so that you can take into 2019.

In spite of the Ebenezer Grinch sulking at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, good things do keep happening.

With a load of compromisin' on the road to his horizon, Ryan Zinke finally called it quits after leading the Interior Department for 21 destructive, disgraceful months. Like the equally unalмented Scott Pruitt at EPA, Zinke managed to rack up so many scandals that he actually became an embarrassment to what is already the most corrupt presidential administration in history. His overdue downfall sends an important message. We will hold those in power -- and their accountability to the American people accountable. Zinke didn’t just act like he worked for the fossil fuel industry -- he came right out and said he did.

Speaking of the fossil fuel industry, you’d think they'd be doing better under an administration pocked with their former lobbyists. Instead, coal, oil, and gas keep losing -- especially in court. Judges at the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals tossed out Dominion Energy’s permit to bury part of its 600-mile-long Atlantic Coast fracked gas pipeline under the iconic Appalachian Trail. That follows recent major setbacks for TransCanada’s Keystone XL tar-sands pipeline, too. The Sierra Club had ambitious goals for opposing these kinds of infrastructure projects this year -- and far exceeded them. Thanks to our allies, grassroots activists, and ace legal team, we’ve helped stop or delay an astonishing $29 billion worth of these projects.

Here’s one reason we don’t need those pipelines: California announced that all new city buses must run on electricity beginning in 2029 (and that all city buses would be electric by 2040). That will be the equivalent of converting 4 million cars from gas to electric. It’s not that surprising to see the Golden State leading on clean transportation, but just a few days ago, we learned the East Coast isn’t far behind. Much as we like to win victories against pipelines and drilling projects, it would be much better if they never got proposed in the first place -- and that means electrifying our transportation sector asap. By the way, did you see that the one millionth electric car hit the road in the U.S. this year? Perhaps you’ve noticed that during the past two years, virtually all progress on clean energy and climate action in the U.S. has been happening outside of Washington, D.C.

The current administration and Congress get zero credit. It’s the District of Columbia itself that has taken the initiative. This week, the D.C. Council approved the Clean Energy DC Act in a unanimous vote. It requires that the District, on run on 100 percent renewable energy by 2032. That means our nation’s capital joins two states (Hawaii and California) and more than 100 cities in committing to 100 percent clean energy.

Not bad for one week, right? The truth is, we had lots of weeks like that this year, and we’re going to have even more of them next year. And I haven’t even mentioned until now that the rate at which coal is being replaced by clean energy has accelerated over the past two years. This doesn’t make the terrible policies of the current administration any less terrible, but it’s enough to keep our spirits up until it’s springtime in America again.

Finally, in the spirit of the holidays, I’d like to congratulate our president on one honor he truly did earn this year: having a newly discovered species named after him. To the untrained eye, Dermophis donaldtrumpi might look like a large, shiny worm, but it’s actually a sightless, legless, burrowing amphiphan. A blind creature that sticks its head to the ground? Sounds about right. Unfortunately, its rainforest habitat is threatened by climate change. Can we get the president to care about the fate of his new namesake? Perhaps if he can be convinced that it’s really all about him.

How to keep the house warm without cranking up the fossil fuels

By Alison Cagle

Winter’s chill can blindside home dwellers with icy window drafts breathing down one’s neck. Before cranking up the heater, consider that 40 percent of US households rely on electric resistance heating to stave off the cold. Another 47 percent rely on natural gas-- and the government forecasts an increase in utility costs this winter because of higher global electricity prices.

Keeping warm in winter doesn’t have to mean a dramatic increase in nonrenewable energy use. Sealing up your home to trap heat is just as important as using energy-efficient appliances at the right time of day. Try warming up with these sustainable heating hacks and smartly monitoring your energy consumption. If you want to calculate your winter energy usage, the Department of Energy has this handy tool you can use to estimate costs.

Seal Up Openings and Air Leaks

Air leaks are super greedy. They account for 30 percent of heat loss in homes, allowing built-up warmth to escape and wrecking temperature regulation for thermostats. Overall, drafts can drastically decrease the efficiency of how your home retains heat throughout the day and night. Keep that heat inside: Apply caulk to the sides and the inner track above the window. Window insulation that lasts all winter, cover window at night. If the sides of your curtains don’t reach around to the wall, use duct tape or velcro to seal them down. Remember that two drapes hung side-by-side create a tighter air space than one pulled all the way across.

Keep Furnaces Unclogged and Dust Free

If your furnace cover is closed, a furnace cover is much less efficient. If you use a gas furnace, hold off on lighting that pilot light until you pop out the cover, and inspect the wires and vents for heavy dust (there will likely be a lot. Make sure the gas is turned off, then use a soft-tipped paintbrush to give the tubes, wires, and slatted vent cover a good once-over to loosen up a year’s worth of dust. Afterward, suck up all the debris with a portable vacuum cleaner.

When you start using your heater, make sure it’s not blocked by a bed or furniture, to allow for maximum heat circulation (also . . . fire hazard). If you don’t feel comfortable cleaning a furnace yourself, you can always set up an appointment with a local utility provider, and a representative can inspect each component for security, replace outdated filters, and clean hard-to-reach areas.

Use Curtains to Harness the Sun’s Warmth

According to the US Department of Energy, about 76 percent of sunlight that falls on standard double-pane windows enters a room as toast-y heat. And yet, 30 percent of that energy gets lost through windows due to convection currents, when cool outdoor air enters the window and sinks to the floor as indoor heat rises and escapes. During the day, regardless of how sunny or cloudy it is, keep the curtains pulled back and blinds up to capture the sun’s heat. Once the sun sets, close all window coverings to prevent the heat from escaping back out the window. Make sure your curtains reach all the way to the floor, to trap frosty air coming in from the window at night. If the sides of your curtains don’t reach around to the wall, use duct tape or velcro to seal them down. Remember that two drapes hung side-by-side create a tighter air space than one pulled all the way across.

Adjust Your Thermostat

By lowering your thermostat at times when you don’t need it--like when your windows receive direct sunlight or you’re asleep--you can save as much as 10 percent on your heating costs. Try setting the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day and five to 10 degrees lower at night.

Instead of keeping a heater on for eight hours, stay warm under the covers at night with flannel sheets and thick comforters. A programmable thermostat is great for winter, as you can set it to automatically regulate with your waking and sleeping hours.

Dress Warmly and Stick to the Warmest Areas

Why waste energy heating up a whole house or apartment if you’re only in one area? Attic and storage room spiders can come to you if they want to get out of the cold. Only turn on furnaces or space heaters in rooms that you’re inhabiting; more energy is wasted trying to heat up a bathroom or bed-room that you’ll only be in for a few minutes. While the common-held wisdom of closing up vents for central heating in unused rooms is now debated (doing so can decrease the efficiency of your HVAC system, and draw hot air into the colder rooms), you should still stick to the warmest parts of your home to conserve energy, like rooms with south-facing windows.
The recent Tennessee Chapter Retreat (which was held at the Pickett Memorial State Park) included a presentation and discussion about Environmental Justice and the Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing. Marquita Bradshaw led the discussion and asked all of the attendees to comment on their own personal experience of how they might have been impacted by any environmental justice issue. Attendees were also asked to review the 6 Jemez Principles and consider how to incorporate these principles into their own activities in support of our mission. These principles are: 1) Be Inclusive, 2) Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing, 3) Let People into their own development; 3) Let People in on Bottom-Up Organizing, 3) Let People in on the 6 Jemez Principles and consider how to incorporate these principles into their own activities in support of our mission. These principles are: 1) Be Inclusive, 2) Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing, 3) Let People in on their own development; 3) Let People in on Self-Transformation.

By Dennis Lynch (Chickasaw Group)

The Tennessee Sierra Club’s annual Defenders of Tennessee campaign funds our advocacy and lobbying activities. The Legislature reconvenes this month, so now is the time to make your financial contribution. During the past 23 years, this program has been very effective in representing the Sierra Club’s environmental agenda on Capitol Hill. Our Defenders can be very proud of the work we have done, the accomplishments of our Legislative Committee, and our lobbyist, Scott Banbury. The Tennessee Chapter is able to hire Scott only because you and other dedicated members donate to this once-a-year solicitation.

Your contribution is not tax-deductible but is critical in enabling us to continue to have an advocate on “the hill”. If we don’t have a lobbyist, we don’t have a voice. Whether you give a little or give a lot, each contribution is very important in enabling us to continue this vital program. The Defender campaign brings in a significant portion of the funds that we need to carry out our legislative and lobbying activities.

Those of you who have contributed in the past have received a letter inviting you to contribute again. If you fire in your contribution back – thanks. If you haven’t, consider this your reminder. Your contribution is not tax-deductible but is critical in enabling us to continue to have an advocate on “the hill”. If we don’t have a lobbyist, we don’t have a voice. Whether you give a little or give a lot, each contribution is very important in enabling us to continue this vital program. The Defender campaign brings in a significant portion of the funds that we need to carry out our legislative and lobbying activities.

Tennese-Sierran
2712 Ringgold Rd., #415
Chattanooga, TN 37412-1638

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Attach mailing address label, or fill-in current name, address & Membership ID#

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Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041

REMEMBER: Donations to this fund are not tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes.