



WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the
Western North Carolina Sierra Club

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

MAY - JULY 2015

Upcoming Events:

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

Wednesday, May 6
Drew Jones
*Climate Change
Interactive Simulation*

Wednesday, June 3
Britten Cleveland
*The EPA's Clean Power Plan
and North Carolina*

Saturday, July 18
6th Annual Summer Picnic
Noon - 4 pm
*Blue Ridge Parkway
sheltered picnic grounds
(Bull Mt. Rd. off Riceville Rd.)*

WENOCA will hold meetings on the first Wednesday of the month. Executive Committee meetings will be held at 5:30 pm prior to the monthly programs. All members are invited to attend. For more information, call Judy Mattox at 828-683-2176 or email judymattox@sbcglobal.net.

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

Climate Change Interactive Simulation - May 6

Join us on Wednesday, May 6 at 7 pm to welcome Drew Jones of **Climate Interactive** who will lead a hands-on, interactive session where participants will work together to create a global scenario for addressing climate change and then test it in the simulator his team has built for a wide range of decision makers from the UN to the Chinese Government. He'll also share his reflections on the UN climate negotiations leading up to Paris in December.

Drew Jones is Co-Founder and Co-Director of Climate Interactive, a top-rated climate change think tank that creates accessible, policy-maker-oriented simulations. He and his team at CI and MIT Sloan developed

"C-ROADS", the user-friendly climate simulation in use by the U.S. State Department, John Holdren in the White House, and the analysts for the Chinese Government. Trained in system dynamics modeling at Dartmouth College and MIT, Jones has worked at Rocky Mountain Institute and served dozens of clients ranging from the CDC to Harley Davidson through the U.S. Government Climate Change Negotiators. He teaches Systems Thinking and Sustainability at MIT and the UNC Chapel Hill's Kenan Flagler Business School.



Drew Jones

The EPA's Clean Power Plan and North Carolina - June 3

Join Sierra Club on June 3 as Britten Cleveland, North Carolina's Sierra Club organizer, discusses the Clean Power Plan and what you can do to help North Carolina reduce its carbon pollution. Under this plan North Carolina is required to develop a strategy to reduce its carbon emissions by 2030.



Britten Cleveland

On June 2, 2014, as part of the President's Climate Action Plan, the U.S. Environment Protection Agency proposed the Clean Power Plan, our nation's first protections from carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants. While the Clean Power Plan will reduce carbon pollution from power plants nationally by 2030, the EPA has set a goal for North Carolina to reduce its carbon pollution from power plants by nearly 40% from 2012 levels.

The EPA is proposing four basic building blocks for emission reduction: (1) making coal plants more efficient; (2) using existing gas plants more effectively; (3) increasing the use of renewable energy; and (4) increasing end-use energy efficiency. Goals are individualized for each state and

North Carolina gets to decide how to meet this goal.

Because of North Carolina's landmark renewable energy portfolio standard and booming solar energy industry, our state is already well on its way to meeting the EPA goal. But we still have a long way to go if we want to get a strong and just Clean Power Plan from Governor McCrory who has been a vocal opponent of any effort to address the impacts of climate change in our state.

Sign our petition to Governor McCrory at www.cleanpowerplan.org/take-action, and join us for our June Sierra Club meeting with Britten Cleveland.

Britten Cleveland is an Organizer for the North Carolina Sierra Club and is based in Charlotte. She holds a degree in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of South Florida. Before relocating to North Carolina, Britten worked for the Sierra Club's Beyond Oil campaign in Florida promoting smart growth, mass transit, and electric vehicles.

In 2010, Britten worked for the Alliance for Climate Protection where she worked to build public and government support for clean energy and climate change legislation, the first attempt by the U.S. Congress to curb carbon emissions. Here in North Carolina, she is the lead organizer for the NC Sierra Club's campaign calling on Governor McCrory to take decisive action to cut carbon emissions and put forth a strong and just Clean Power Plan.

Hearing to Limit Sulfur Dioxide Air Pollution in WNC on April 29!

The Western Regional Air Quality Agency is holding a public hearing on its draft air permit for Duke Energy's Asheville Coal Plant on April 29, at 6 pm at Erwin High School, 60 Lees Creek Rd. in Asheville. We need you to send comments and to attend this important hearing. In spite of new evidence that demonstrates that Duke Energy's Asheville coal plant has been emitting harmful sulfur dioxide pollution at levels considered unsafe by the EPA for the past several years, the Air Quality Agency has released a draft permit that would allow Duke to release sulfur dioxide air pollution that is nearly 80 times higher than the EPA's public health standard.

Please join us to tell the air regulators to stop this dangerous air pollution from Duke Energy's Asheville Coal Plant! For more information and to sign up to attend the hearing, visit <http://bit.ly/1BSn3Mw>.

Talking Points

Duke Energy's Asheville coal plant has been emitting harmful sulfur dioxide pollution at levels considered unsafe by the EPA for the past several years. This pollution is dangerous, especially to children, the elderly, or those with existing respiratory illnesses such as asthma. The plant's pollution has exceeded minimum public health standards approximately one out of every three to four days since 2010.

An analysis of operations at the plant points to the two causes of this increased pollution: Duke apparently has been running its pollution protection technology less and, at the same time, has switched to cheaper, higher-sulfur coal. The likely reason for these changes is to reduce the cost of running this plant, which is one of Duke's most expensive to operate. Duke's consumers paid for air pollution controls at the Asheville coal plant and we deserve the air quality and public health benefits of running those pollution controls to their fullest extent.



Progress Energy plant in Arden. Photo by Hartwell Carson.

Please include in your comments: "I ask the WNC Regional Air Quality Agency Board members to revise the SO₂ emission limit included in the Asheville coal plant's new air permit to reflect national health-based standards: 61.7 lb/hr for each coal-burning unit, equating to a plant-wide average SO₂ emission limit of 0.029 lb/MMBtu."

Send written comments to: Britt Lovin, Director of the Air Quality Board, 49 Mount Carmel Rd., Asheville, NC 28806

Send email comments to: Britt Lovin c/o Betsy Brown, betsy.brown@buncombecounty.org

Phone: Betsy Brown, Air Quality Board, 828-250-6787; 828-250-6777

Subject: Asheville steam electric plant Title V permit / Sulfur Dioxide Air Pollution

Comments will be accepted until April 30.

Join us for the 6th Annual Summer Picnic - July 18

On Saturday, July 18, the Sierra Club will enjoy its 6th Annual Summer Picnic from noon to 4 pm at the Blue Ridge Parkway sheltered picnic grounds located on Bull Mt. Rd. near the VA Hospital on Riceville Rd.

Directions: Exit 7 on I-240; go east on Tunnel Rd for 2 miles; turn north on Riceville Rd; go 1.3 miles and turn west on Bull Mt. Rd. The fenced-in, sheltered picnic area is on the left about ½ mile up the road. Please bring a pot luck dish to share and your own settings. Drinks will be provided. Badminton, horseshoes and music will add to the festivities. We hope to see you there!

French Broad Needs a Face Lift: River Cleanup Slated for May 30

By Richard Kark

The French Broad River is a local treasure, but lately it doesn't look like one. Join us on Saturday, May 30 for a French Broad River Cleanup Day. Sierra Club will be joining other area groups in this effort which lasts from 10 am until 2 pm. After our hard work is done ... and her beauty is restored, we will throw a party in her honor from 2-4 pm featuring food, fun, beer and other libations. If you would like to join the makeover effort, please call or email Mark Threlkeld at (828) 200-6280 or email focusmdt@gmail.com. Just let him know if you would like to join a crew on the river or on shore.



Help Pass a GOOD Solar Energy Law for North Carolina

Some exciting and positive news to share from the NC General Assembly: March 16, 2015 saw the filing of the "Energy Freedom Act," House Bill 245. **This bill would legalize third-party energy sales in North Carolina, which would allow energy users to buy their electricity directly from renewable energy companies.**

The Energy Freedom Act, if passed, will allow companies to offer business and residential customers long-term contracts for affordable solar energy without the up-front costs of having to purchase solar panels. The company selling the electricity would own and maintain the panels and sell affordable clean energy to customers. This is a common-sense policy that will save North Carolinians money and protect public health.

Only four states in the nation don't allow business and residents this option - and we are one of them. This bill, sponsored by Rep. Szoka (R) and Rep. McGrady (R-Hendersonville), along with 28 bi-partisan co-sponsors (including Buncombe County Dem. Reps. Ager, Fisher, & Turner) would give North Carolinians the freedom of energy choice that most other Americans already enjoy.

Unfortunately, **Duke Energy is working hard against this**



proposal to open up the clean energy market - so Sierra Club voices are key to ensuring that this bill moves forward.

To learn more about third party energy sales, check out the NC Chapter Sierra Club website at nc2.sierraclub.org/issue/solar.

If you live in Buncombe County, please thank Reps. Ager, Fisher, and Turner. If you live outside Buncombe County, contact your state representative and ask them to vote for this bill.

To find out who your representative is and how to contact them, go to www.ncleg.net and click on "Who Represents Me."



Spring-Summer Hiking Schedule



SAT, MAY 2 - DEVIL'S COURTHOUSE HIKE VIA MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA TRAIL – Meet at 10 am in Asheville, back around 5:30 pm. Distance is approx 6 miles round trip, rated as Moderate/Easy. This hike is mostly shaded with evergreens, offering refuge from the sun. Also offers a few nice vistas along the trail. When we reach our high point, Devil's Courthouse, provided we have good visibility, we'll view mountains in 3 other states. Also, there will be opportunity to learn about the birds in the area, some of which are easily identified by their calls. We'll have some wildflower ID as well. There is about a 500 ft elevation change, and the trail is rather rugged, with intermittent tree roots and a few 10" steps/rocks. Makes good footwear essential, and maybe hiking poles as well. **Experienced hikers only.** Contact hike leader to sign up. Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com, or call 828-713-4994.

SAT, MAY 16 - HIKE THE MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA TRAIL from Bee Tree Gap Road to Rattlesnake Lodge and then down to the Parkway, about 6 miles. There are good views from Lane Pinnacle and many wildflowers along the trail. Learn the history of Rattlesnake Lodge and view the ruins of family structures dating back to 1903. Moderate level of difficulty with a 1200 foot elevation change. Involves a car shuttle. Meet at 10 am in Asheville and return around 3 pm. RSVP to outings leader at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or call 828-772-0379.

SAT, JUNE 6 – MONTREAT, SHORT LOOP HIKE – Meet at Black Mtn meeting place at 10:30 am with return around 2 pm. Distance approximately 4 miles, rated at Easy/Moderate. Planning to hike up Greybeard trail along the beautiful shaded creek, continuing over a couple of babbling brook crossings, where we might take a lunch break & get our feet wet. Then we'll double-back on Greybeard trail long enough to catch the Harry Bryant trail. Will go to small meditative waterfall, and return via a loop trail. Wildflowers & maybe even salamanders along the way. RSVP to leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SAT, JUNE 13 - SKINNY DIP FALLS - Easy to moderate, 5.3 mile mostly downhill hike near Looking Glass Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway that ends at wooden steps and a bridge with breathtaking views of the falls on the Pigeon River. Learn about the various ecosystems that the trail passes. Requires a car shuttle. Meet in Asheville at 10 am and return by 4–5 pm. RSVP to outings leader at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or call 828-772-0379.

SAT, JULY 11 - BUCK SPRINGS - Easy/Moderate, 6 mile one-way hike from Pisgah Inn on the Blue Ridge Parkway to NC 276. Mostly downhill with several shallow water crossings. Lush vegetation and many water features make for an interesting and educational hike. Requires a shuttle. Leave Asheville at 9:30 am and return by 4-5 pm. RSVP to outings leader at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or call 828-772-0379.

SAT, JULY 25 – SPLASHING WATERFALL HIKE! (Splashing is optional!) John Rock area. Meet in Asheville at 10 am and return around 4 pm. Cat Gap Trail to Butter Gap Trail (following Grogan Creek). Moderate/Easy, approx 4 miles R.T. Offers 2 nice waterfalls. There will be a splashing opportunity (self-splashing only, please!) on Butter Gap trail's waterfall. We'll have opportunities to learn about wildflowers, and also to gain understanding of protection of fragile streamside habitat. Kids who do hiking are welcome w/accompanying parent/guardian (with signed liability waiver). **NOTE:** There are optional trails (very short) to reach the base of the falls, but they are steep and possibly muddy. Makes good footwear essential, and may be hiking poles as well. RSVP to leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

Update on Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest plan revision – Please attend upcoming public meetings

Thanks to all of you, the US Forest Service has received over 12,000 comments on their proposed 15 year plan revision for the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest, which would have opened **70% of the forest to timber production** ("suitable for timber production"), including many beloved backcountry and potential wilderness areas. This public outcry showed that the process wasn't on the right track to reach a collaborative outcome. Following this public outpouring, the Forest Service wrote to the Asheville Citizens-Times in Feb, 2015 and asked for a "reset." The timeline for the forest plan has been revised to allow more time for communication and public collaboration.

As a first step in the "reset" - there will be another round of public meetings, sometime this spring and/or summer. The exact dates and locations will be sent out as an alert; **public attendance will be very important!**

During the meetings and afterwards, there will be opportunities for you to give feedback to the forest service. Please go to www.wenoca.org for important points to be stressed, including specific hiking trails, Wilderness Society Mountain Treasures, and NC Heritage Program Management Areas to be protected, as well as wilderness designation recommendations.

We need everyone who is concerned about the wildlands of Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest to attend these upcoming meetings. The Forest Service needs to hear from citizens that you support preservation and conservation of our irreplaceable natural heritage. For more information contact judyattox@sbcglobal.net or call 828-683-2176.



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10 Reasons to Donate to the Sierra Club NC State Chapter

- 1. The North Carolina Clean Power Plan** - We're working to make sure that our state will use clean energy and energy efficiency to meet the requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that all states develop plans to reduce climate-warming emissions from coal-fired power plants.
- 2. Solar Energy** - We'll work to remain a leader in ground level solar energy development.
- 3. Off-Shore Wind Energy** - North Carolina has the best potential on the east coast.
- 4. Stopping Off-Shore Drilling** - We'll fight to protect our pristine coast from high-risk off-shore drilling.
- 5. Sea Level Rise** - The Governor and the legislature need to recognize scientific studies showing the risk to our coast.
- 6. Fracking** - Stronger regulations are needed to protect the water and air in communities where fracking might occur.
- 7. Coal Ash** - We haven't forgotten the disastrous coal ash spill in the Dan River last year and the need to move coal ash away from our drinking water.
- 8. Wilderness Protection** - We want to be sure that the Pisgah-Nantahala Forest Revision Plan protects wilderness and limits logging.
- 9. CAFOs** - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations continue to put our drinking water at risk, particularly in low-income communities in eastern NC.
- 10. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund** - We need to support budgeting for this critically important trust fund that preserves natural areas and protects our waterways.

To make a donation today, go to nc2.sierraclub.org and click on the 'Donate Now' button at the top of the page. Thank you for all that you do to protect the environment!