



**SIERRA
CLUB**
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WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the
Western North Carolina Sierra Club

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

MAY - JULY 2017

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 3

Scott Dean
*Wildflowers and Trees of
our Appalachian Spring*

Wednesday, June 7

Julie Mayfield, Brownie
Newman, and Jason Walls
*We CAN Prevent a 3rd
Gas Powered Peaking
Plant by Duke Energy*

Saturday, July 22

8th Annual Summer Picnic
Noon – 4 pm
*Blue Ridge Parkway
sheltered picnic grounds*

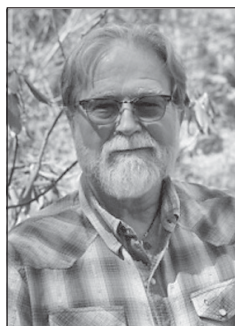
WENOCA will hold meetings on
the first Wednesday of the month.
Executive Committee meetings
will be held at 5:30 pm prior
to the monthly programs.

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.

Wildflowers, Trees, and Mountains of our Appalachian Spring – May 3



Scott Dean

It's time for WILDFLOWERS! and flowering trees! and beautiful mountain flora of our breathtaking Appalachians!

Let Scott Dean take you away on a guided tour with lovely photos and charming stories.

Scott Dean, naturalist and photographer, has been apart of both UNCA & the Great Smoky Mountain Spring Pilgrimages for years, and as well as a teacher for field classes in the Blue Ridge Naturalist program at the NC Arboretum.

Scott was born and raised in the mountains of southern Appalachia, specifically the coalfields of West Virginia and southwestern Virginia. Western North Carolina has been his home since 1992. He attended UNC-Asheville, earning a degree in biology, with a focus on the flora, fauna and geology of the southern Appalachians.

He was a walk leader and featured speaker for the UNC-Asheville Wildflower Pilgrimage from 1995 until 2015. Scott has led wildlife and wildflower walks at the Western North Carolina Nature Center, where he worked for a year building the cougar and bobcat habitats, and has served as First Vice President of the Friends of the Nature Center as well as serving on the Town of Weaverville Tree Board. He developed curricula, and teaches field classes for the Blue Ridge Naturalist program now offered at the N. C. Arboretum.

How We CAN Prevent a 3rd Gas Powered Electric Plant by Duke Energy – June 7...An Update on the Energy Innovation Task Force

Join us on June 7 as we welcome Julie Mayfield of Asheville City Council, Brownie Newman of Buncombe County Commission, and Jason Walls of Duke Energy. Brownie, Julie and Jason will provide an update on the County-City-Duke partnership to reduce energy use in Buncombe County and to avoid construction of a new natural gas peaking unit. The Energy Innovation Task force has been

working for just over a year and has made recommendations to the City and County for new programs and investments, and Duke has made groundbreaking announcements on deployment of new technology in our area. Come hear the update.

Julie Mayfield is co-director of MountainTrue. She was also elected to Asheville City Council in November 2015 where she continues her advocacy for improved public transportation and clean energy. She has served on and/or chaired numerous board and commissions, including Asheville's Multi-Modal Commission, Transit Committee, Mountain Resources Commission, the



Julie Mayfield, Jason Walls,
Brownie Newman with Task Force
facilitator Virginia Lacy (in front)

WNC Chapter of the ACLU, the Environmental Quality Institute, and the North Carolina Conservation Network.

Brownie Newman grew up on a working farm in Pickens County, South Carolina. He is a graduate of Warren Wilson College. Brownie served two terms on the Asheville City Council. He was elected to the County Commission in 2012 and was elected Chairman of the County Commission in 2016. In addition to his service with local government, Brownie has worked in the renewable energy industry since 2007. He is an owner and partner at

Headwaters Solar.

Jason Walls currently leads Duke Energy's local government and community relations efforts in Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Madison, Mitchell and Yancey counties. In this job, Walls is responsible for working with governmental, community and environmental leaders on the company's regional issues and initiatives.

He currently serves on the board of directors of Asheville Buncombe Chamber of Commerce, the Buncombe County Schools Foundation, the Asheville-Buncombe Economic Development Coalition, Asheville-Buncombe United Way, the Haywood County Chamber of Commerce and chair of the Haywood County Economic Development Commission.



The clean-up crew from May 2016.

Calling All River Cleaners!

By Mark Threlkeld

The Sierra Club biannual French Broad River Clean-up is planning to set sail Saturday, May 20th starting at 10:00 am. Please mark your calendars. Those of you who have participated in the past know very well, the river needs our help every year to make it the wonderful summer recreation resource we've come to enjoy.

Please note: The starting location is up in the air for now. The massive reconstruction project in the River Arts District means our normal put-in is unavailable. We'll email an update as soon as Eric Bradford, our great Asheville Greenworks partner, is able to determine what alternate location is available. Greenworks is once again outfitting us with all we'll need in terms of boats and gear. AND there will be the usual party after the clean-up with FREE BEER from Highland Brewing. (Location for the party is also changing.)

So, if you're on the clean-up email list, you'll be getting a notice as soon as we know more. If you're not on the list and would like to join us, please send an email to that effect to: Mark Threlkeld at FocusMDT@gmail.com. If we have enough participants, we will have a shore crew as well as a river crew in canoes.

Hope to see you on the river!

North Carolina Legislative update 2017

By Cassie Gavin, Director of Government Affairs, NC Sierra Club

The NC Sierra Club is an environmental and political organization – which means the state Chapter has an office, staff and a lobbyist in Raleigh to advocate for the environment at the General Assembly. It's important for WNC Sierrans to lobby legislators in-district as well to ensure they know that protecting the environment is a top priority for constituents.

The big picture:

Since the makeup of the state legislature did not change significantly this year – environmental groups are still working hard to defend against legislative efforts to roll back protections. Luckily, Asheville-area voters have sent environmental champions to the legislature including Representatives Susan Fisher, John Ager, Brian Turner, and Senator Terry Van Duyn. **However, areas outside of Buncombe County have legislators that need all the encouragement we can give them to vote correctly on protecting our environment.**

The NC Sierra Club is most engaged on any legislation having to do with water quality and clean energy. Worrisome environmental legislation filed so far includes regulatory reform, anti-wind energy bills, anti-solar bills, proposals to tinker with North Carolina's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard and an effort to protect factory hog farms from citizen suits.

Regulatory reform often means rollbacks of environmental protections

There are a handful of regulatory reform bills filed – one is Senate Bill 131 which includes several bad water quality provisions that would create loopholes in our stormwater regulations and allow more streams to be destroyed without mitigation. Many of our rivers and lakes are classified as "impaired" under the Clean Water Act – mostly due to too much stormwater running into the waters from development. The changes proposed in S 131 could make impaired waters worse. Other regulatory reform bills filed include provisions that would roll back riparian buffers, and repeal the Outer Banks' plastic bag ban that protects sea turtles.

Anti-clean energy proposals

The Sierra Club supports appropriately-sited wind and solar as part of our clean energy future. But there have been a handful of anti-clean energy bills proposed this year including anti-wind bills, anti-solar bills and several Senate bills that would tinker with North Carolina's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (which requires utilities to source a percentage of energy from renewable sources). Of the wind bills - one would create a three-year moratorium on wind energy. Another would create lots of new, unnecessary red tape in the state permitting process for wind development.

The anti-solar bills would discourage solar development by raising taxes on solar farms, creating statewide permitting for solar development on private property, and requiring substantial decommissioning bonding. These proposals would put NC out of line with other states. This is occurring against a backdrop of clean energy growth and success in North Carolina. Our state is second in the country in installed solar. We just saw the first utility-scale wind farm in the Southeast come online in northeastern North Carolina. And clean energy is benefitting rural areas and farmers by increasing the tax base, providing leasing income and jobs.

It's important to keep contacting our legislators to remind them that the environment is important to constituents. There is broad public support for protecting water quality and for clean energy – but that support is evidently not as strong in the General Assembly – yet.

The NC Sierra Club is always in need of funds for lobbying! **To donate to the NC Chapter please go to: nc.sierraclub.org and click on "Donate Now".**

And if you'd like to sign up for weekly legislative updates or sign up to join the NC Sierra Club volunteer lobby corps please email cassie.gavin@sierraclub.org. We particularly need volunteers from outside of Buncombe County. Being a member of the lobby corps is easy. We send you the talking points and ask you to call your legislator's office and ask them to vote against the bad bill. It only takes a few minutes and can make a big difference.

Join us for the 8th Annual Summer Picnic - July 22

On Saturday, July 22, the Sierra Club will enjoy its 8th 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 past VA Hospital, turn left 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 and horseshoes will add to the festivities. We hope to see you there!

Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan Update

by Josh Kelly, Public Lands Biologist of MountainTrue

The Forest Plan Revision for the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest has been quiet since the fall. Last year and through the winter, the Forest Service has been releasing draft Forest Plan components, which can be found here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=fseprd491137>. Most recently, a construct for managing in the Nantahala-Pisgah in 12 Large Geographic Areas was released.

There have been no real fireworks with the draft releases, but that doesn't mean that the special places on Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest will get the protection and management they deserve. Our next indication of that will come in June. At that time, the Forest Service will release its Management Area Construct. How lands are allocated in management areas at that time will tell us a lot about the fate of special places like Santeetlah Creek, Tusquitee Bald, Tellico Bald, Terrapin Mountain, Cedar Rock Mountain, Daniel Ridge, Big Ivy, Bluff Mountain, and other biodiversity hot spots.

Plan components should also be near completion at that time. Sorely missing up to this point, are plan components that would identify and protect the remaining old-growth forests on the Nantahala-Pisgah. When I say old growth I'm not talking about 100 year-old trees. I'm talking about the last vestiges

of ancient forests that have never been logged, or if logged, only very lightly in the distant past. Such places have trees 150-400 years old, multiple age and size classes of trees, and complex structure like snags and large woody debris. Those of us that appreciate primeval forests need to speak up for these irreplaceable treasures. Additionally, old growth patches from the 1994 Plan Amendment should be rolled forward into the new plan to move the forest towards the Natural Range of Variation that the Planning Rule requires.

Finally, it is still not clear if or how the Forest Service will protect Natural Areas identified by the NC Natural Heritage Program. These are the cream of the crop for rare plants, wildlife, and pristine ecosystems and deserve special management. Without a focus on the needs of rare species and rare habitats, some special elements of the forest could be lost.

My take home point is that citizens should be ready to provide input on the draft management areas that will be released in June. The outcome for the crown-jewels of conservation in Western North Carolina is still uncertain. Be ready to support the Forest Service in making good decisions where they have good plan content and management areas for special places and to ask for better management areas and plan components where they fall short. Stay tuned!

Hiking Schedule

SAT, MAY 13, PINK BEDS/BARNETT BRANCH WATERFALL HIKE –

Meet at 10:00 a.m. in Asheville, back around 5:00 pm. This hike is approx 5 miles, rated Easy/Moderate (due to occasional rugged terrain w/ tree roots & occasional rocks, requiring good foot wear). Part of the hike will be on the Pink Beds Loop trail, but we will also take Barnett Branch to a lovely waterfall. There should be some nice wildflowers (with I.D. Opportunities), & also some tunnels of rhododendrons & laurels. We will also have opportunity for some tree ID. There will be a variety of habitats, including a small wetland with a board walk. All hikers please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lismcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994, or contact her if any questions.

Wed, May 17 – LOOKING GLASS ROCK HIKE – Located in the Pisgah District of the Pisgah National Forest. This 6.4 round trip hike goes up, then comes down. Hikers should be in good condition for the uphill climb. Great views and lunch on the rock. RSVP to hike leader, David Reid, at daviddbreid@charter.net or 828-713-1607.

WED, MAY 24 – GRAYBEARD FALLS – in Montreat. A breathtaking, moderate to difficult 5 mile in and out hike along a rocky stream with 10 dry-foot water crossings in Montreat. We will examine the abundant and diverse wildflowers on this trail and enjoy lunch by the waterfall. Wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots, bring water and a lunch or snack. Meet in Asheville at 9:30 am and return by 3:00. RSVP to leader at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or 828-772-0379.

WED, May 31 – GREEN KNOB HIKE – Leave Asheville at 9:00am, return around 4:00pm. This hike is designed as a car shuttle to facilitate an approximate 4 mile descending hike from the Blue Ridge Parkway, down the the Black Mountain Campground. Includes great views of the Blacks. Learn about the potential wilderness areas and the current Pisgah National Forest planning process which could result in the wilderness recommendation. RSVP to hike leader, David Reid, at daviddbreid@charter.net or 828-713-1607.

FRI, JUNE 16 – BUCK SPRINGS – Easy to moderate 6 mile one-way hike from Pisgah Inn on the Blue Ridge Parkway to NC 276. This hike is mostly downhill with several shallow water crossings. We will study the lush vegetation and many water features that makes this an interesting hike. Requires a shuttle. Wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots, bring water and a lunch or snack. Leave Asheville at 9:30 am and return by 4:00 - 5:00 pm. RSVP to leader at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or 828-772-0379.

SAT, JUNE 17 – SPLASHING WATERFALL HIKE! (Splashing is optional!). John Rock area. Meet in Asheville at 10:00 and return around 4:30. We take Cat Gap Trail to Butter Gap Trail (following Grogan Creek). Moderate/Easy, approx 4 miles R.T. on this there & back hike. Offers 2 nice waterfalls. There will be a splashing opportunity (self-splashing) on Butter Gap trail's waterfall. We'll have opportunities to learn some wildflowers, and also to gain understanding of protection of fragile stream side habitat. Kids who do hiking are welcome w/accompanying parent/guardian (with signed liability waiver). Check w/ hike leader if you wish to bring a well-behaved doggie. NOTE: There are optional trails (very short) to reach the base of the falls, but they are steep and possibly muddy, making good footwear essential, and maybe hiking poles as well. Please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lismcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

WED, JUNE 21 – MACKEY MOUNTAIN TRAIL – Meet at 9:00am, return 5:00pm. This is a rugged hike in a little traveled area of the Pisgah National Forest. Inventoried by the US Forest Service as a potential wilderness, the Mackey Mountain area of the Grandfather District is truly the trail less traveled. We'll learn about the history of the first National Forest Tract in the East purchased under the 1911 Weeks Act. Hiking experience required. RSVP to hike leader, David Reid, at daviddbreid@charter.net or 828-713-1607.

SAT, JULY 8 – EAST FORK OF PIGEON RIVER TRAIL – Meet in Asheville at 10:00 (location TBA) and return around 5:45. This hike is Easy/Moderate, with a distance approx 5-1/2 miles round trip. The hike follows the beautiful, rushing Pigeon River, but most it offers the cover of some beautiful & shady woods. Be prepared for a few muddy places, by wearing good footwear & considering hiking poles. Learn about how the river changes over time, as it changes its path, widens & creates sandy areas. Learn about areas that are designated "Wilderness", too. Speaking of which, this trail goes into the Shining Rock Wilderness, which means that only 10 folks are allowed in a group. Hence, please cancel ahead if your plans change, to make room for others. Sorry no doggies on this hike. Please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lismcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

WED, JULY 19 – CAMP ALICE/COMMISSARY RIDGE HIKE – Cool off with this high elevation hike in the Black Mountains in and around Mt. Mitchell State Park. Learn about the US Forest Service inventoried wilderness potential area in the Black Mountains. Leave around 9:00 am and return by 4:00 pm. RSVP to hike leader, David Reid, at daviddbreid@charter.net or 828-713-1607.

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Firewise from Before We Burn Again

On April 3 Joan Walker of MountainTrue presented these points for protecting your home and community

- WNC communities need to start NOW to embark on collaborative planning for wildfire risk reduction, engaging all the affected stakeholders
- Build and maintain homes to reduce fire risk. Noncombustible exterior siding, trim, roof, gutters, windows downspouts--NO VINYL!!!
- Clean gutters regularly, simple design that doesn't catch debris/sparks
- Firewise landscaping: keep fuels away from home, create easily defensible space for when fire comes close. Further away prune and keep clear of fallen debris. Plant choice: Don't accumulate fuel, open, loose branches, low sap/resin, high moisture content.

Best practices for reducing wildfire risk

- Fire adapted communities: <http://www.fireadapted.org/>
Firewise: www.firewise.org



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Hiking Schedule *continued from page 3*

FRIDAY, JULY 21 – BIG RIDGE OVERLOOK TO ELK PASTURE GAP on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Moderate, 4.4 mile in and out trail, 750 foot elevation gain. We will view and discuss why the very tall, bright red Turk's Cap Lilies bloom in this area. Meet at 9:30 am in Asheville. Back around 3:30-4:00 pm. RSVP to leader at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or 828-772-0379.

SEPT 22nd-24th – HOLD THE DATE! – the NC Chapter of the Sierra Club is planning another group "Camporee" to explore potential wilderness areas near Mt. Mitchell at the Briar Bottom Black Mountain Campground. Modest registration fee. Contact David Reid at daviddbreid@charter.net or 828-713-1607 for more details and how to register. Group camping, good food and fellowship as outings leaders from across the NC Sierra Club Chapter lead hikes.

WENOCA Volunteers Needed

Wenoca group of the Sierra Club is seeking volunteers to help with our newsletter, kitchen duty at monthly meetings, helping to transport folks with no cars, working our booths at festivals & events, conservation issues committee...and more. Contact: Judy Mattox, judymattox@sbcglobal.net, 828-683-2176



Help us save trees ... let us e-mail your newsletter!

WENOCA member emails are requested.

Send your email address to: judymattox@sbcglobal.net.

