



WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the Western North Carolina Sierra Club
May - July 2019

Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet

Upcoming Events:

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

Thursday, May 2nd

Restoring the American Chestnut with Eron Thiele, and Ben Jarrett

Thursday, June 6th

Governor Cooper's Order for Carbon Reduction
by Cassie Gavin

Saturday, July 13th

10th Annual Summer Picnic, noon - 4pm,
Blue Ridge Parkway sheltered picnic grounds

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

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

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

Restoring the American Chestnut, Thursday, May 2, 7 pm

Mayland Community College in Spruce Pine is preparing to become a test site for American chestnut trees that have been genetically modified to resist the fungal blight that nearly wiped out the species early in the last century. Eron Thiele, Coordinator of the Mayland Earth to Sky Park, will discuss the partnership that has been formed with the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), in New York, where William Powell directs the American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project. The goal of the partnership is to create an orchard of trees that are adapted to our own southern Appalachian region. The work in New York is undertaken in cooperation with the USDA and is different from earlier efforts to cross-breed the American species with the blight-resistant Chinese species. Since the 1980s many hybrid trees have been planted throughout the eastern U.S.

Eron is a graduate of Davidson College and East Carolina University. He has worked for 10 years in silviculture and forestry, is currently employed at Mayland Community College and the MAY Coalition, and continues to enjoy a variety of tree-based activities.



Eron Thiele

Ben Jarret of the American Chestnut Foundation will be discussing the status of The Foundation's backcross breeding program, which utilizes traditional breeding methods to incorporate tolerance to the Chestnut blight fungus into a large population of American/Chinese chestnut hybrids. He will discuss a secondary pathogen affecting American chestnut, Phytophthora Root Rot which is a soil-borne pathogen that kills the roots of American chestnut trees that are also being bred for tolerance. Lastly, Ben will discuss germplasm conservation and the work being done to conserve trees from the edges of the range that are very unique genetically and endangered from being lost due to climate change.

Ben Jarrett is the Southern Regional Science Coordinator for The American Chestnut Foundation. Ben's primary role is to assist and guide the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama chapters in their science endeavors working towards the restoration of American Chestnut. Ben was a Virginia resident and received his undergraduate degree in Environmental Science from University of Virginia, where he interned for The American Chestnut Foundation for over a year working in Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia. In 2015, he left Virginia to work across the country as a project manager for medical software company, Epic Systems. In July 2017, Ben re-joined The American Chestnut Foundation at the National Headquarters in Asheville, NC.



Ben Jarrett

"Governor Cooper's Order to Reduce Carbon Emissions" June 6, 7 pm

Sierra Club will present Cassie Gavins, lobbyist for our North Carolina state Sierra Club chapter in the North Carolina state legislature to talk about the Governor's order, what it means, and how we can help.

Governor Cooper has issued an executive order to reduce NC's Carbon Emissions by 40% from 2005 levels by 2025.

The Governor has taken a major step with the executive order to address climate change, which is adversely impacting North Carolina's communities. The latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underscores the need for immediate action to slow climate change. Communities across North Carolina are ready to be part of a cleaner, more environmentally friendly economy that does not involve fossil fuels. In fact, some cities and counties in the state have already adopted 100 percent clean energy goals of their own.

Cassie will talk about the Executive Order and its impact on clean energy and climate change, and how we can weigh in to influence the state's clean energy plan to ensure we meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.



Cassie Gavin

Cassie Gavin has been the Director of Government Relations for the NC Chapter of the Sierra Club based in Raleigh for 6 years. She is an attorney and previously worked in land conservation in Wilmington. Cassie represents the Sierra Club at the NC General Assembly and in working with our agencies and the executive branch. In her free time, Cassie enjoys kayaking and hiking.

Pisgah/Nantahala Draft Plan Update

Ready, get set.....wait. That's the story of the timeline for the release of the draft Pisgah/Nantahala Forest Plan, now pushed sometime this summer. While the agency has not released a specific timeline, the government shutdown at the start of the year has impacted the release date. By way of review, the Plan sets the direction and guidance for the two National Forests in Western NC comprising some 1.1 million acres of public lands. At stake is protection of unique southern Appalachian ecosystems, old growth, threatened and endangered species, and the potential to add a significant amount of rare roadless backcountry to the National Wilderness Preservation System.



The Sierra Club has been working to keep these issues as priorities for the new Plan through collaborative efforts involving a diversity of stakeholders. When the draft Plan is released, the public will have a chance to officially weigh in during the 90-day comment period. We will be encouraging your comments in support of

these values. This opportunity comes but once every 5-20 years, so stay tuned.

Join us for our annual picnic - July 13th

On Saturday, July 13th, the Sierra Club will enjoy its 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 1/2 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!



Hikes May-July 2019

SATURDAY, MAY 11th – PANTHERTOWN VALLEY LOOP – Current trail conditions will determine the exact route, but expect a 6-8 mile loop with waterfalls and possibly wildflowers. We will start our hike at the western trailhead (Saltock Gap) and take in Wilderness, Frolicktown and Granny Burrell falls. Come prepared for wet stream crossings. We'll learn about the history of Panthertown, and how it came into public ownership. Good hiking shoes/boots required. Stream crossing shoes and Hiking poles encouraged. Call trip leader for details. Leader – David Reid, 828-713-1607. daviddbreid@charter.net.

SATURDAY, MAY 18 — BLACK BALSAM RD TO DEVIL'S COURTHOUSE HIKE - via Mountains to Sea trail. One of my VERY FAVORITE Hikes. Meet in Asheville at 10:00 (location TBA) and return around 5:45. Distance is approx 6 miles round trip, rated as mostly Moderate with some Easy. This hike offers an unusually beautiful section of firs & spruce, as well as some Spectacular Views of surrounding mountains. When we reach our high point on Devil's Courthouse, we'll view mountains in 3 other states if we have a clear day. Along the way, there will be opportunities for wildflower & tree ID, and perhaps some bird song ID as well. We will talk about the well being of these evergreens. There is around a 500ft elevation change, and the trail is rather rugged, with intermittent tree roots & occasional 12 to 18" steps/rocks. Experienced hikers only. Please contact hike leader to sign up, or for any questions/concerns; Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SUNDAY, JUNE 9th — FLAT LAUREL CREEK HIKE - (which is in vicinity of Black Balsam). Meet in Asheville at 10 a.m. and return around 5:45 p.m. Mostly Easy w/ some moderate; 5 to 5.5 miles R.T. on this there & back hike. We'll hike along the beautiful Flat Laurel creek, which includes creek crossings. We'll have lunch along a stream. Will include some beautiful Fir, Spruce & Yellow Birch trees. There will be learning opportunities related to wildflower & birdsong ID, as well tree ID. Will also discuss the welfare of our local evergreens (hemlock & fir). All hikers please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15th – BLACK MOUNTAIN CREST TRAIL - This high altitude hike begins at the Mt. Mitchell State Park summit parking area, and proceeds North along the crest of the Black Mountains. We will hike out to Potato Hill and back for a round trip of approximately 6 miles. The terrain is varied with plenty of ups and downs along the ridge. We'll learn about the US Forest Service lands (outside the State Park), which are under consideration for Wilderness Designation. Good hiking shoes/boots required. Hiking poles encouraged. Call trip leader for details. Leader – David Reid, 828-713-1607. daviddbreid@charter.net.

SATURDAY, JULY 13 - OLD DAM, BULL MOUNTAIN & RIVER TRAILS - at Warren Wilson College. Distance approx 5 miles Round Trip. Meet in Asheville at 10:00, return around 4:00. Hike to a nice overlook of an Old Dam site, then along Bull Creek, then along the Swannanoa River. Includes some wildflower & tree ID (including American hornbeam (Muscle wood) & River birch). Perhaps some bird song ID if we are lucky. This hike has a few up/down stretches but also has level terrain; is considered Easy for a hike. All hikers please RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SATURDAY, JULY 20th – SNOOK'S NOSE TRAIL – This trail begins at the Green Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway (.75 mi past milepost 351) and proceeds along several peaks, including Laurel Knob and Snook's Knob, ending up at the USFS Curtis Creek Campground. We will hike out from the Parkway as far as Snook's Knob and return for a round trip hike of around 6 miles. The ridge forms the western boundary of the Mackey Mountain roadless area, currently under consideration for wilderness designation. Come learn about the area's remote characteristics. Good hiking shoes/boots required. Hiking poles encouraged. Call trip leader for details. Leader – David Reid, 828-713-1607. daviddbreid@charter.net.

SEPTEMBER 27th - 29th – ANNUAL TED SNYDER CAMPOREE – Mark your calendars for a weekend of camping, fun, and hiking. This annual event, organized by the NC Chapter's Outings Committee will be held at Briar Bottom Group Camp at the eastern base of Mt. Mitchell. Last year this event was named after Ted Snyder, past president of the Sierra Club and tireless advocate for wilderness. Details and how to register will be announced the next newsletter and on Meetup and the WENOCA Web site.

Clean Energy Transportation

Transportation is the single largest source and fastest growing source of climate emissions in the U.S. With little to no tailpipe pollution, electric vehicles are a key component of combating climate change. Even factoring in the emissions from the electricity used to charge them, electric vehicles are significantly lower in emissions than conventional vehicles.

The Volkswagen pollution monetary settlement is spurring electrification of the transportation sector. Across the country, funding from this settlement is being used to build electric vehicle charging stations and to electrify public transit with the purchase of zero-emission buses.

To date, states have allocated more than \$600 million in draft or final plans for charging stations, and for electric transit and electric school buses. States are prioritizing disadvantaged communities in use of these settlement funds.

Funniest Ever River Clean up Day on May 11

Our annual spring river clean up this year should be even more fun than usual. And why is that you might ask? It's because we will not be lost in the crowd of the National Streams Cleanup day which will happen a week later than our scheduled day of May 11. By ourselves we can more easily socialize during and after the clean up. There should be more juicy junk to pick up. We most certainly will adjourn afterwards to a nearby brew pub for beer (or wine) and snacks. We wanted to do this last year but were unable to pull it together because of the size of the crowd and the chaos at the take out. Most of us will use Green Works canoes, paddles and personal flotation devices on the river, so there will be no need to bring those items. Kayakers with their own boats are also welcome. Whether there will be a shore cleanup crew has not yet been determined, but let me know if you would like to be on that tentative list. Details such as meeting time and even which local stream will clean up have not yet been determined. Typically, though, we begin mid day and spend about 3 hours cleaning up. Call or email me with questions and whether you would like to be on the sign up list which will also include updates. Richard Kark 828 253-2650. karkra@uwec.edu



WENOCA GROUP
SIERRA CLUB
PO Box 469
Asheville, NC 28802-0469

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“Great news on Coal Ash”

Gov Cooper's Department of Environmental Quality listened to scientists, health professionals, environmentalists and impacted communities and directed Duke Energy to fully excavate and remove coal ash to safe storage away from waterways at the six remaining sites that lack clean up plans.

From DEQ:

DEQ Orders Duke Energy to Excavate Coal Ash at Six Remaining Sites

MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2019

N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) ordered Duke Energy Progress, LLC to excavate all remaining coal ash impoundments in North Carolina. After conducting a rigorous scientific review of Duke Energy's proposals for Allen, Belews, Cliffside/Rogers, Marshall, Mayo and Roxboro facilities, and conducting public listening sessions in impacted communities, DEQ has determined excavation of all six sites is the only closure option that meets the requirements of Coal Ash Management Act to best protect public health. The coal ash must be disposed of in a lined landfill.

Sierra Club 's media response, with quotes from Dave Rogers (Beyond Coal) and Ken Brame (Chapter Chair): <https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2019/04/cooper-administration-orders-duke-energy-dig-toxic-coal-ash-and-move-it-lined>
Please thank the Governor on social media, with a LTE, or by sending his office a personal email.



WENOCA Volunteers Needed: contact judymatttox@sbcglobal.net, 828-683-2176