



Sierran

To Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet

On the March for Climate Justice



Sierrans in the Atlanta MLK Day Parade, January 21



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Let's Bet on Clean Energy

By Colleen Kiernan

Earlier this year, Georgia Power announced what we have been expecting for some time: they will retire the smallest, oldest, dirtiest coal-fired units in their fleet, amounting to about 25% of their current coal capacity in Georgia. For years, parent Southern Company has been hanging on tight to coal, in spite of growing evidence of the consequences to public health, water supplies and warming of our planet. You may have seen Southern's book marking their 100-year anniversary "Big Bets," which is also their strategy for the future, as they are undertaking two of the most expensive power plants ever in the history of the US - the expansion of Plant Vogtle here in Georgia and the coal-gasification Plant Kemper in Mississippi. These "big bets" are pressuring them to slash costs quickly. Dumping old and increasingly expensive coal is one way to do it, and allows Southern to blame EPA and make ratepayers foot the costs.

The other really "big bet" Southern is making is on natural gas, despite the fact that other utilities- including in gas-friendly states like Texas and Oklahoma- are hedging their bets on gas by increasing clean energy production. Oklahoma is at 15 percent of their power from wind, Texas has installed more than anyone else, 10 GW, and both states are building more wind, even as they are also burning less coal and more gas. Alabama Power recently signed contracts to bring in 404 MW of wind power from Oklahoma, but it doesn't appear the Georgia Power generation planners are seriously looking at that as an option.

Georgia doesn't have much in the way of natural gas reserves, so we are not having to grapple with the problems our neighbors in other states are with fracking and impacts to our water, nor are we having to worry that our coast will be marred by drilling rigs. Our biggest oil and gas threat in Georgia is the



Colleen Kiernan, Chapter Director

proposal to turn the Elba Island Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal into an export facility. So why should we be concerned? For starters, natural gas is still a fossil fuel, which emits methane (also a greenhouse gas) and contributes to our overall climate change problem - more droughts, more hurricanes, more floods. Studies have been done which suggest that natural gas emits anywhere from 4- 9 percent of toxic emissions directly into the atmosphere, which makes it just as dirty, as coal in the near-term.

Reliance on natural gas is also not a long-term solution, and Southern should chart a new, less risky course for the future. If Southern wants to make a "big bet" to grow the South's

21st century energy economy, those bets should be on big offshore wind, distributed and utility scale solar, and energy efficiency, which combined have the potential to create hundreds of thousands of quality lasting jobs while powering generations to come.

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Forward on Climate!

100 Days of Action for Climate Justice and Clean Energy Jobs

In January, the Sierra Club launched a new campaign demanding that President Obama make the fight against climate disruption a priority in his second term. The “Obama Climate and Clean Energy Legacy Campaign” will bring the organization’s 2.1 million members and supporters together to push the Obama administration to tackle the most serious environmental crisis of our age.

“President Obama’s second term will be a pivotal four years in the fight against climate disruption,” said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club. “In his victory speech, the President invited a national climate conversation, but we also need swift, decisive action to prevent more erratic weather, superstorms, and wildfires.”

2012 has been proclaimed the hottest year on record for the United States since records first began. 100 + year old heat records have already begun to break around Georgia in the winter months of 2013. As the mercury continues to rise on our thermometers and drought conditions in the State continue to worsen or are prolonged, Georgia will be forced to face difficult questions not only about how to reduce climate-change causing greenhouse gas emissions but also about how to mitigate the worst impacts of climate chaos toward our economy, our health, and the well-being of working Georgia families

Georgia is a fossil fuel dependent state, importing over \$2 billion in coal in 2010 alone. Our state is home to the nation’s first and second largest single sources of greenhouse gas pollution- two Georgia Power owned coal-fired power

plants near Macon and Cartersville. Unlike any other business in history, electricity generation from dirty fossil fuels like coal and natural gas are allowed to emit unlimited amounts of greenhouse gas pollution, regardless of their impact on local or global communities, without any cost to the companies operating those facilities.

Fortunately, embracing the solutions to the climate crisis also have the power to create hundreds of thousands

To demonstrate the urgency of its demands, the Sierra Club launched “100 Days of Action on Climate,” a series of local and national actions focused on bringing climate disruption to the forefront of the national conversation and pressing the President to be a leader in the climate fight. During this period -- spanning the President’s Inauguration through Earth Day -- allies and activists from around the country will host events ranging from inauguration watch

parties in New Mexico, to town hall meetings across the nation, highlighting the broad support from Americans for fighting the climate crisis.

On January 21st, Georgia Sierra Club Activists with the Beyond Coal Campaign and Smart Energy Solutions Committee will kick-off the “100 Days of Action” by marching and rallying for Climate Justice and Clean Energy Jobs alongside economic justice and civil rights leaders at Atlanta’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day March.

The Georgia Chapter is also planning to attend

the largest ever Climate Rally in United States history, to be held on Presidents Day weekend in Washington DC, and is working to organize transportation for any of our Georgia supporters who are interested in attending the rally and calling on President Obama to fight for climate solutions and clean energy, now! Both the Sierra Club and 350.org are supporting the event on February 17th, which has over 12,000 supporters already registered to create a symbolic human pipeline from the White House to congress, to call on President Obama to



The second inauguration of President Obama, January 21, 2013. Will action on climate be a second-term priority?

of quality, lasting, 21st century energy jobs in wind, solar, energy efficiency, and green transportation that can lift whole communities out of poverty.

“As we make critical decisions about how we power our nation and what kind of place we’ll leave for our children and grandchildren, the Sierra Club will push President Obama to define his legacy with bold climate solutions and clean energy innovation,” said Brune. “Climate disruption is the singular issue of our time for anyone who cares about clean air, clean water and a safe future for our families.”

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Georgia Power To Phase Out Old, Expensive Coal Plants

Move Clears Way for Clean Energy to Power Georgia Homes and Businesses

In a victory for clean air and public health, Georgia Power announced on January 7 its plans to phase out 15 total aging coal and oil-burning units at Plant Branch, Plant Yates, and Plant Kraft as the utility prepares to begin its multi-year planning process at the Georgia Public Service Commission later this month. Nationwide, coal use is at its lowest levels in decades as cleaner sources of energy are declining in price and coal is becoming more expensive, and with today's announcement, 129 coal plants nationwide have been slated for retirement. Although Georgia Power has been slow to invest in clean energy generation to meet Georgia's energy needs, today's announcement demonstrates that coal-fired power plants are no longer able to provide competitively priced electricity in the Peach State.

"Georgia families will be breathing easier now that some of the state's oldest and largest polluters will be phased out," said Seth Gunning, Beyond Coal Organizer with the Georgia Sierra Club. "Georgia Power's decision to phase out nearly one quarter of their dirty, eighteenth century technology is good for families and good for their customers. If the company chooses to replace this capacity with home-grown, twenty-first century energy technology like solar and wind, their decision will also be good for Georgia jobs. Moving beyond coal and oil is the right decision for Georgia Power."

In March of 2012, the Georgia Public Service Commission approved Georgia Power's request to retire two coal-burning units at Plant Branch in Putnam County. Georgia Power announced today that it will retire the two remaining coal-burning units at Plant Branch, and will phase out use of the plant over several years. Plant Branch has loomed above Lake Oconee and the surrounding communities for decades; phasing out the plant will significantly reduce air pollution in Putnam County and the surrounding communities.

"As a shareholder, I'm pleased that Georgia Power is phasing out a quarter of their aging, increasingly expensive to operate, coal-fired plants. Georgia Power's own analysis showed that there was no future for the plants. Shareholders will benefit from a less risky, less water-intensive portfolio that emphasizes energy efficiency, solar, and wind. Customers will benefit too," said Sam Booher, Chair of the Savannah River Sierra Club group.

Georgia Power, the state's largest utility and the largest arm of Southern Company, has been analyzing the economics of its coal plants across the state for years in preparation for the company's next ten-year energy planning process, which starts in January of 2013. Georgia Power's own analysis showed that the Branch, Kraft, and Yates coal plants are all too expensive to operate in comparison to cleaner, less water-intensive forms of energy such as solar and geothermal power. Plant Yates, in Coweta County, GA, was found to be the most expensive coal

2012 BEYOND COAL CAMPAIGN VICTORIES

BY THE NUMBERS

- 0 new coal plants broke ground
- 13 new coal plants abandoned or defeated
- 54 coal plants retired or announced to retire — bringing the grand total to 126 coal plants retired since 2010
- 18,789 megawatts coal retired or announced to retire in 2012
- 1,992 MW solar power installed as of Sept. 2012
- 4,728 MW wind power installed through Sept. 2012—a growth of 40% from Sept. 2011
- 13,872 workers added to solar industry in 2012
- 8% decrease in carbon pollution emissions, a two-decade low
- 38% of electric generation from coal, a historic low for the coal industry.

HIGHLIGHTS

FEBRUARY

- Sierra Club marks 100th coal-fired power plant retired since 2010.
- Fisk and Crawford plants retired in Chicago

JUNE

- Successfully defended EPA mercury standards from congressional attacks

NOVEMBER

- Patriot Coal agrees to end mountaintop removal mining

DECEMBER

- LA agrees to purchase solar power from Moapa Band of Paiutes
- Thousands turn out against coal exports at public hearing in Pacific Northwest

54 COAL PLANTS RETIRED IN 2012



beyondcoal.org

plant for unchecked social costs in a 2012 report from the Environmental Integrity Project. The report found that the social cost of premature mortality caused by pollution from Plant Yates was between \$450 million and \$1.4 billion greater than the value of the electricity it generated.

"While these retirements are an important step toward a twenty-first century energy economy for Georgia, we are disappointed that Georgia Power is asking coastal Georgians to bear additional years of coal pollution. Delaying the phase out of Plant Kraft a year will mean more mercury in coastal blackwater rivers, where contamination problems are already the most severe. The switch to Western coal at Plant McIntosh

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Climate Change, Power Generation, and Water

By *Diane Shearer and Seth Gunning*

More than any recent event, Hurricane Sandy in late 2012 shifted the discussion of climate change into high gear. The topic is getting more political and media coverage, most of it grounded in science and reality rather than fossil fuel-backed propaganda. Few weeks have since passed without major articles relating climate change to drought, intense storms, retreating glaciers, our heating planet, melting sea ice, rising insurance costs, or health impacts on low-income communities.

Humans haven't made a great deal of progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions since scientists first began insisting that we must make huge cuts in order to hold earth's temperature rise below two degrees Celsius (3.6 F). A two-degree rise in temperature is the only target which every world government has agreed upon, though many scientists already admit this is a "recipe for long-term disaster." In fact, as Bill McKibben notes in his Rolling Stone article "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," we have already raised the planet's average temperature about 0.8 Celsius and that has caused global damage on par with worst case predications. What is perhaps most scary: computer modeling shows that even if we stop CO₂ emissions from coal, oil, and gas from increasing today,



we would still see a rise in temperature of another 0.8 degrees.

So what does all this mean for us in Georgia and what can we do?

According to Dr. Ron Carroll, ecology professor at UGA and one of the directors of the River Basin Center, the problems in the Southeast that intersect with climate change are 1) our population is increasing, 2) we use the most energy, and 3) we are subject to recurring droughts.

Perhaps our State's most visible and concerning sign of climate change is drought. Droughts affect municipal water supplies, agriculture, water quality, recreation, and power generation. Our first line of defense should be conservation in our homes and businesses, but

how we generate our energy is important as well. In fact, power generation withdraws more water than agriculture in the Southeast, an average of 40 billion gallons of freshwater daily. Georgia's two nuclear power plants Vogtle and Hatch, for example, evaporate approximately 77 million gallons of water every day—approximately the same amount of water used by Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah combined.

According to calculations done by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Georgia Power's Plant Bowen and Plant Scherer—two of the three largest sources of greenhouse gas pollution in the country—withdraw approximately 47 billion gallons of water from Georgia waterways every year.

Of those 47 billion gallons withdrawn for Plant Bowen and Plant Scherer, only about 15 billion gallons is returned to Georgia's water bodies.

As we know, power generation is also one of the biggest culprits in causing the dirty air linked to climate change. We must work even harder to change the current paradigm that supports the business-as-usual model of energy generation. Read *Freshwater Use by U.S. Power Plants: Electricity's Thirst for a Precious Resource*, the Union of Concerned Scientists' 2011 report from the Energy and Water in a Warming World Initiative. The fact that Southern Company is currently building two new nuclear generators at Plant Vogtle is a good example of why citizens as well as our power companies need to adopt a new energy paradigm. That Southern Company would even opt to build more nuclear is a testament to its lack of forward thinking on energy and climate issues. The project is already beset by cost overruns and lawsuits—and thanks to our Public Service Commission, we are already paying for this bad project before it generates a watt of electricity. When and if this new water-sucking addition to Vogtle ever gets up and running, what if southeast Georgia is expe-

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Georgia Power, continued from previous page

may mean the plant runs far more than it does now, creating far more pollution impacting local communities," said Colleen Kiernan, Sierra Club's Georgia Chapter Director. "Coastal Georgians deserve cleaner air and water, too."

The United States Environmental Protection Agency recently updated key public health protections under the landmark Clean Air Act, which has saved thousands of lives and generated \$2 trillion in health and economic benefits since it was passed in 1970. The coal-fired power plants announced for retirement today all lack modern pollu-

tion controls, including technology to reduce sulfur dioxide pollution, which forms smog, and contribute to premature deaths, asthma attacks, and other serious illness. Georgia Power will seek approval to phase out these coal plants from the Georgia Public Service Commission.

The Beyond Coal campaign was launched in 2002, and in partnership with allied groups across the country, the Sierra Club has prevented 174 new coal plants from being built and has secured the planned retirement of 129 plants. Learn more at beyondcoal.org.



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Conservation

Climate, Power & Water; continued from previous page

riencing a drought? Have we stopped to realize that there simply must be millions of gallons of excess water to cool nuclear and coal generators? How will we react when power plants get the water and people go without?

The Southeast has already seen the dangerous impact of drought on our power supply. In 2008 between August 5th and 12th, the Tennessee Valley Authority lost a third of their nuclear capacity due to emergency shutdowns caused by drought conditions, and all three Browns Ferry reactors in Alabama had to be idled to prevent overheating of the Tennessee River. Then again in 2010, as the Coosa River experienced lower than usual water levels, Georgia Power was forced to spend millions of rate-payer dollars to install emergency cooling towers which used less water to keep Plant Hamond in Rome, GA online.

Although Georgia Power has recently announced it will add 210 MW of solar to its energy mix, and remove 2,750 MW of some of the company's oldest and dirtiest coal facilities, it still remains dependent on water-intensive generations and lags far behind on development of renewable energy technology. The fact is, as warm weather and droughts increase, Georgia Power risks the reliability of our power supply if they do not make large and rapid investment in clean energy and energy efficiency in order to transition our power supply away from water-intensive coal and nuclear.

On November 20, 2012, McKibben and 350.org brought their sold out "Do the Math" tour to Atlanta. To hear McKibben and to see the enthusiasm in an audience of all ages is to feel hope that we can shift the paradigm for thinking about water, energy, and climate. McKibben argues if we are to save the planet we must leave some of the fossil fuels in the ground. This means fighting the fossil fuel companies who already have 2,795 gigatons of carbon-based fuels in their reserves, ready to burn.

On Presidents Day Weekend, the Sierra Club and 350.org are hosting the "Forward on Climate" Rally in Washington DC to call on President Obama to prioritize climate justice, deny the keystone pipeline, and create millions of clean energy jobs during his second-term. With over 12,000 concerned citizen already registered to attend, the action will be the largest Climate Rally in America's history. You can join the Sierra Club by visiting: <http://tinyurl.com/ForwardonClimate>

It's easy to sigh and turn away and do nothing, but do we really have that option? According to Carroll these will be the big effects of climate change in Georgia: (1) sea level rise; (2) deterioration of salt marshes; and (3) significant ecological and economic damage.

Along with those, we have already seen the near complete drying of some rivers in summer as well as the emergence of new diseases. Carroll has stated that nearly every approach to mitigate or reverse climate change also improves water quality and quantity. Isn't that a battle worth waging for Georgia and our future?

100 Days of Action, continued from page 3

reject the Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline and fire up the clean energy economy. To sign-up, or to receive updates about the largest climate rally in United States' history, visit www.tinyurl.com/forwardonclimate.

The Sierra Club outlined five key actions that the Obama administration must take to curb the country's carbon emissions and address climate disruption. The actions include:

1. Hold fossil fuel corporations accountable for their pollution

- Adopt and enforce coal pollution protections for carbon, soot, smog, sulfur, water toxics and coal ash, and set water pollution standards that will end mountaintop removal mining.
- Enact standards and close loopholes to protect water, air, and climate from fracking and other forms of oil and gas production.
- Finalize Tier 3 clean fuel standards, finalize emissions standards for refineries, and establish strong mileage standard for medium and heavy-duty vehicles.

2. Reject proposals to import dirty fuels and stop the rush of fossil fuel exports

- Stop Keystone XL and other tar sands infrastructure.
- Halt expansion of fossil fuel exports, including liquefied natural gas export facilities, new coal export terminals, and increased oil exports.
- Increase US-backed international finance of renewable energy and energy efficiency, and phase out fossil fuel lending.

3. Double down on clean energy

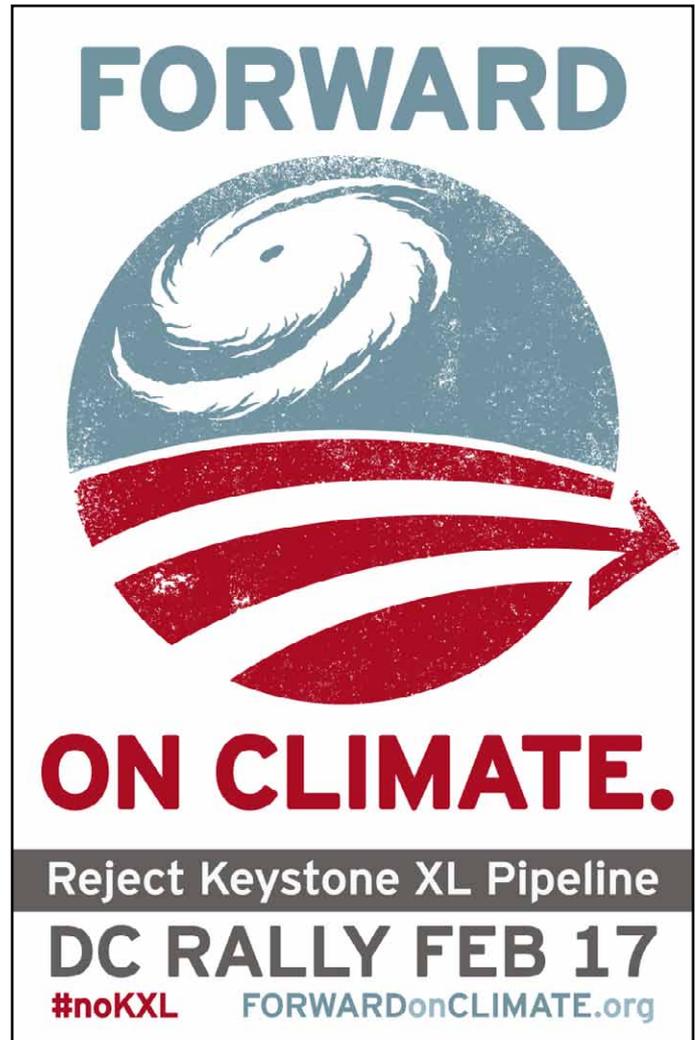
- Open innovative financing and investment avenues for energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- Facilitate environmentally responsible leasing and deployment of clean energy generation and technologies on public lands and waters and within federal agencies.

4. Protect communities from future climate disasters and readying a robust and just response

- Release equal and just national climate resilience plans that help create strong and sustainable communities, infrastructure and ecosystems.
- Hold EPA and FEMA accountable for ensuring equal, appropriate and just federal emergency and disaster response, including better equipping state and local officials to develop and support climate resilient communities.

5. Protect America's lands, air, water and wildlife from fossil fuel development

- Stop the rush to expand oil and gas drilling, coal mining, and dirty fuels development on our public lands and the Outer Continental Shelf, reform the Department of Interior coal leasing program, and protect the Arctic Refuge and national parks from fossil fuel development.



- Ensure that lands and wildlife can adapt to climate disruption by protecting large scale landscapes that connect wildlife habitat, and ensure that every national forest addresses the impacts of climate disruption and protects carbon-storing old growth forests as part of their management plan.

“When our children and grandchildren look back at the climate crisis, what will President Obama’s legacy be?” asked Brune. “The American people recognize the impact of extreme weather on their communities and the ever-greater threat climate disruption poses to their children’s future. President Obama deserves credit for improving vehicle efficiency standards, creating incentives for clean energy, and passing historic clean air protections. We are, as a nation, slowly beginning to succeed against climate disruption, and we must do everything we can to ensure that President Obama and the federal agencies he leads roll up their sleeves and increase the momentum. We cannot afford to lose a minute in this fight. It’s time that we finally establish our American climate legacy.”

Visit www.sierraclub.org/climatelegacy to learn more about the national campaign. Or visit www.beyondcoal.org/georgia for more updates about the work in Georgia.

Land Conversion: The Climate Connection

By Rudi Kiefer

People think in different ways about “land”. A farmer sees land as the nurturing ground which produces food. A wilderness enthusiast considers it a treasury of wonders - wild animals that can't survive in an environment heavily modified by humans, plants producing beauty and medicine that can cure illnesses, and enchanting streams of water. A real estate developer views land as an investment that can provide spaces for humans to live, or avenues of transportation. What they all have in common is the knowledge that there won't ever be more of it. Only 1/3 of this planet is solid land, the rest is covered with water. Conversion of land from one condition to another is therefore bound to have consequences.

Highway construction is one of the most obvious acts of land conversion. Every 145 feet of interstate highway consumes one acre of land which could be in its natural state, or used for food production. The completed Interstate system is comprised of “41,000 miles of superhighway, equivalent to 1.5 million acres, an area larger than the State of Delaware” (U.S. Dept. of Commerce).

In the Greater Atlanta area, another phenomenon is strikingly visible: suburban sprawl. Counties such as Gwinnett, Forsyth, Henry, Paulding, Newton, Barrow and Cherokee have consistently ranked in the top 25 of the Census Bureau's fastest-growing county list.

Covering the surface with roadways, buildings and parking lots largely eliminates the tree cover that is native to the area. Trees provide shade, but their main climatic function is to cool the air through transpiration, which is a process similar to evaporation. It absorbs heat energy as liquid water is turned into gaseous water vapor. That's why forests feel so much cooler than open fields. The result of rampant development is what geographers have termed the “urban heat island”. Residences and businesses try to counteract the heat with air conditioning. But you cannot produce “cold”. You can only put heat elsewhere. So the exhaust from millions of air conditioners is pushed into the atmosphere. This consumes great amounts

of electricity, necessitating the building of power plants. This, in turn, means more carbon emissions (increasing the global warming trend), or the generation of radioactive waste by nuclear plants that will remain dangerous for thousands of years. Their cooling towers put extra heat directly into the atmosphere (Plant Vogtle, Ga.) or into an estuary (Brunswick Nuclear Plant, N.C.).

The most noticeable impact of land conversion is found at the ocean. Coastal locations are ever-popular for what geographer Merle Prunty termed the “4 R's - residential, recreation, retirement, resort.” In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, the question cannot be avoided: are sandy beach fronts the appropriate place to build “permanent” housing? Should there be an amusement park with roller coasters, shopping centers, parking lots next to a basin of water that's 3,000 miles wide and up to 2 miles deep? Data collected at Mauna Loa (Hawaii) by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration show a steady increase in the CO₂ content of the atmosphere (currently 0.0391%). While this looks like a small amount, CO₂ is the principal greenhouse gas, along with nitrous oxide and methane. Causing a general warming trend, higher CO₂ levels make the ocean water expand, resulting



Suburban sprawl is a major driver of land conversion, which in turn affects our climate. (Photo by David Shankbone / Wikipedia)

in rising sea levels. This, in turn, will have us seeing more news about disastrous storm floods, the likes of which we've already witnessed with Sandy, and in 2005, Katrina.

The overall effect of atmospheric warming doesn't mean warm weather throughout, though. Continental storms travel on a track (the jet stream) which behaves like a garden hose laying in the driveway. Pumping more energy into it (opening the faucet wide, in the hose example) makes it swing wildly back and forth. So we'll see more winter storms and deep freezes in the South, along with periods of unseasonably warm weather that come with their own problems, like the 1988 tornadic storm that destroyed portions of Raleigh, N.C.

Rudi Kiefer, Ph.D., is a professor of physical science and director of sustainability at Brenau University.

Ga. Farmers Feeling the Effects of Climate Change

Reprinted Courtesy of Georgia Organics

It's very tempting to look at the historic number of tornadoes and thunderstorms that came crushing through the South in April and May and declare that climate change is here.

Same goes for the days of 100 degree highs so early in the year, and the droughts and floods that have ravaged farms and everybody else across the state, causing \$75 million in insured property losses.

Veteran farmers have noticed that it's not just that the climate is getting warmer, it's getting weirder.

"We had three snowfalls this past winter. I lived in Georgia most of my whole life and I don't ever recall having that many. The one we had in January stayed out here [on the fields] for three weeks," says Jonathan Szcsey, of A&J Farms in Winston, Ga. "The weather runs in cycles but I have never seen it like this. I'm not saying it has anything to do with global warming, but it's strange that all this has occurred."

And that's the trouble with climate change. No one can say whether or not the strange weather we've experienced can be directly linked to the effect greenhouse gas emissions have had on the atmosphere.

The science of climatology just doesn't work that way. As any climate scientists will admit, computer modeling forecasts for the earth's future climate is not an exact science. The simulations look at general trends of the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. They can forecast that we'll see more storms and droughts, but not where or when.

Nor can we predict with absolute certainty how climate change will impact Georgia and its No.1 industry, agriculture. But few dispute that agriculture will be one of the earliest and most impacted industries.

Some of the more grim prognostications include droughts, floods, decreased crop yields due to higher temperatures, higher rates of soil evaporation, and increases in fungal and bacterial diseases and insect pests.

The good news, however, is that several key Georgia officials now acknowledge that climate change is happening, and is caused by human activities.

"We will see change? Yes. Are we to a large extent responsible for that change? Yes," says State Climatologist David Stooksbury.

Until recently, it was a no-no to admit that climate change was happening, let alone that it's caused by mankind, and many Georgia Sierran 🌱 January/February/March 2013

elected officials in the state still believe that climate change science is a hoax.

Stooksbury, a professor of engineering and atmospheric sciences in the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, has the perfect background to keep the state's agriculture industry abreast of our changing climate.

He has two undergraduate degrees, one in agriculture and plant genetics, the other in physics. His Master's degree specialized in disease resistance and small grain crops, and his Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences concentrated on atmospheric sciences.

Much of his research has been on climate impacts on crop yields in the Southeastern United States. Stooksbury says there are more questions than answers when you're talking about the long-term possibilities of climate change.

Short-term forecasting isn't as vexing. For instance, last July Stooksbury correctly predicted that the state would experience a drought this year.

Stooksbury says that predicting what climate change will mean for Georgia is made even more difficult because the state is close to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, which exacerbate moisture and rainfall forecasting.

On a global level, however, climatologists are witnessing more and more of the type of weather events climate change is likely to cause. Weather disasters, such U.S. floods, Australian droughts, and European heat waves decreased crop yields, and many scientists believe that human-induced climate change was partially responsible.

"Now, the latest scientific research suggests that a previously discounted factor is helping to destabilize the food system: climate change," says a June 4 New York Times article.

Scientists have since acknowledged this error and are scrambling to catch up. The media, to their credit, have made this recent revelation a front-page issue.

But even as the issue of climate change gets more attention and is better understood, consumers continue to pay the price with every meal.

This article is excerpted from the Georgia Organics report "The Impact of Climate Change on Georgia Food and Farms." To read the entire report, visit <http://bit.ly/GAorganics>

Transportation Advocates Push “Complete Streets”

By David Emory

Sierra Club activists from around the country, including your author representing the Georgia Chapter, gathered in Minneapolis in December for a three-day training retreat on “complete streets,” a topic of increasing emphasis within transportation advocacy circles, and an important priority for the Club’s Green Transportation campaign.

Simply defined, a complete street is one that provides safe, comfortable accommodations for all users: not just motorists but also bicyclists, pedestrians, and users of mass transit, regardless of age or ability. This represents a marked departure from the approach that has dominated roadway design in many parts of the country for decades, in which top priority was given to moving large volumes of cars as quickly as possible, with accommodations for other users relegated to the margins (if they are provided at all).

The retreat was held in Minnesota, a state that has emerged as a national leader in sustainable transportation policy. The local North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, which has a full-time staff member dedicated to transportation and smart growth policy, has been at the forefront of local advocacy efforts around transit and complete streets. These efforts are indeed paying off; despite the harsh winters, a thriving year-round cycling culture has developed in the Twin Cities, and attendees of the training could observe a steady stream of cyclists outside the North Star Chapter office even during heavy snowfall.

Georgia may not be known as a pioneer in the green transportation arena, but even here we are seeing some progress. Last fall the Georgia Department of Transportation adopted a “complete streets policy” that helps codify the principle of routine accommodations for all users, a important step forward for the agency (though enforcement and effective implementation of the policy will require ongoing engagement by advocates). At the local level, we are seeing specific projects that adhere to complete streets principles; “road diet” projects that convert excess roadway capacity to multimodal accommodations are becoming more common in jurisdictions such as Atlanta and Decatur.



Scenes from the Minnesota complete streets training, December 2012

Despite these promising signs, challenges remain. Many streets in Georgia remain overbuilt for cars while failing to adequately accommodate other users. And even positive projects can be compromised during the implementation phase. In Atlanta’s Sweet Auburn district, for instance, plans to provide a continuous, dedicated bicycle facility along Auburn Avenue as part of the Atlanta Streetcar project were recently scaled back. The primary reason for the change? An unwillingness to give up a handful of on-street parking spaces, despite a preponderance of surface parking lots in the area. Such episodes speak to the need for increased engagement by complete streets advocates in all phases of project development.

Going forward, we are likely to see increasing activity around complete streets and related Green Transportation issues. If you would like to become involved, the Chapter’s Regional Action to Improve Livability (RAIL) Committee meets monthly; details are available on p. 22 of the *Sierran*.

TransportationCamp to Explore Intersection of Transportation, Innovation



Saturday, February 9th
Clough Commons, Georgia Tech

Register online at:
<http://transportationcamp.org/south>

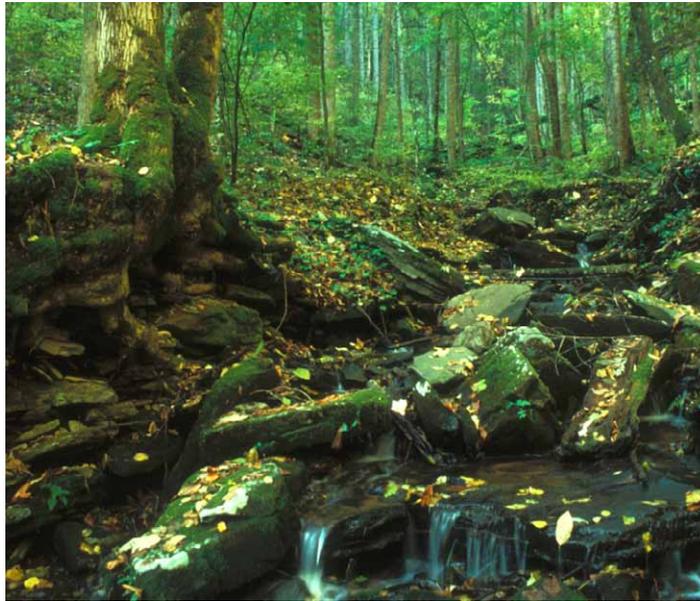
TransportationCamp South is coming to Atlanta on Saturday, February 9th. This day-long “unconference” – where sessions are proposed and led by attendees – brings together thinkers and doers in the fields of transportation and technology for a day of learning, debating, connecting, and creating.

TransportationCamps have been held in 4 different cities since 2011 – New York, San Francisco, Washington DC, and Montreal – and this is the first to be held in the Southern US. For more information or to register, please visit <http://transportationcamp.org/south>.

Push Is On to Expand Wilderness Areas in Georgia

By Philip Zinsmeister

The Wilderness Committee of the Georgia Sierra Club has initiated a push to have Congress approve the expansion of existing wilderness areas in the Chattahoochee National Forest (CNF) of North Georgia. This effort is motivated in part by the approaching 50th anniversary of the passage of the Wilderness Act. This legislation allowed for federal protection of land without disruption of motorized equipment or mechanized transportation. Wilderness designation is to ensure that land will remain relatively untouched in order to protect watersheds, provide ecologic stability for wildlife, and provide meaningful experiences for those looking to retreat into nature. Wilderness areas are not meant to eliminate human intrusion but remain open for activities like hunting, hiking, kayaking, rafting, fishing, rock climbing, and bird watching.



Currently, there are 10 wilderness areas in the CNF comprising some 117,378 acres which are managed by the US Forest Service. In addition, the Forest Service has recommended an additional 8,448 acres of public land, i.e. already part of the National Forest and not involving and property currently in private hands, in 11 parcels which bor-

der existing wilderness be designated as wilderness. Given the ongoing population expansion of the metropolitan Atlanta area and the increased usage this implies for forest lands in North Georgia, the Wilderness Committee strongly believes this is the time to act to make sure at least a few wild places survive relatively untouched for future generations.

Only an act of Congress can set aside public lands as wilderness; the Forest Service lacks such power. Absent wilderness designation, these otherwise unmolested forests and waterways are open to logging and all the environmental downsides that practice brings with it: clear-cutting of old growth trees; destruction of wildlife habitat; erosion and pollution of adjacent waterways. At the moment no one in Georgia's Congressional delegation is sponsoring legislation to create these new wilderness areas, while delegations of other states like Tennessee have presented appropriate sponsored legislation relative to their own potential wilderness areas.

Thus, the Wilderness Committee has initiated a campaign that aims to find Congressional sponsorship for such legislation and its ultimate adoption, and a key part of the campaign will be mobilizing Sierra Club (SC) members and concerned people from the wider population to register their (we hope enthusiastic) support for the project. The Committee has made plans for contacting the public through SC Action Alerts, presentations to potentially interested organizations, letters to editors, etc. We therefore hope this article will create an initial awareness on your part, and that you will stand ready to add your voice to the important campaign when the opportunity presents itself. The Wilderness Committee will need your support!

2013 WILDERNESS GEORGIA PHOTO CONTEST

Sponsored by the Georgia Sierra Club's Wildlands and Wildlife Committee to celebrate Georgia's Wilderness Areas and Experiences. email winfog@windstream.net for full details.

SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Four Categories:
 Large Landscapes/Scenics
 Nature's Details (Close-ups)
 People enjoying the Wild
 Animals in the Wild
 (photos should be from one of Georgia's 14 Wilderness Areas.)

All photos copyright
 Larry Winslett 2012

Solar Energy Freedom Bill Still Needed

In the 2012 session of the legislature, Savannah State Senator Buddy Carter and others introduced a bill that would change Georgia's Territorial Electric Service Area law to allow what is called third party financing for residential and small commercial solar power arrays. The Territorial Act divides the state into monopoly service areas for Georgia Power, municipal and electric membership cooperative (EMC) utilities except for the very largest class of customers who get to choose their provider.

While the cost of solar energy has been dropping like a rock, most homeowners do not have an extra \$20,000 to write a check for their own rooftop solar array. So the most popular option for installing solar energy is a solar lease in which a third party installs the solar array on your roof and then sells the solar power which reduces your lease payment. In Georgia, any excess power must be sold to the monopoly utility at a rate controlled by that entity. No one else is permitted to enter into a "power purchase agreement" with a utility's customer, including anyone who installs, owns and operates a solar photovoltaic system on the customer's property. The inability of most property owners to finance and build their own solar system has stymied such development in Georgia. The Solar Energy Freedom Power proposal of 2012 sought to specifically allow such arrangements.

Senator Carter's 2012 bill was killed by Electric Membership Coop lobbying as well as lobbying and testimony by Georgia Power. Under considerable public pressure, Georgia Power has now proposed an increase in its solar programs from almost nothing to a decent start of some 210 megawatts. However, Georgia's enormous solar potential cannot be realized unless homeowners are free to use their private property as others across the United States are doing.

Sierra Club expects to support a renewed effort to allow third party financing of solar systems in Georgia so that all electric customers can take advantage of cheap, clean renew-

able power. Urge your state legislators to support Solar Energy Freedom. More info can be found at the website of the Georgia Solar Energy Association (www.gasolar.org). Updates by Michael Brune and Paul Rauber on solar options are in the Jan./Feb. *Sierra* magazine. The Sierra Club is actively part of the clean energy future by partnering with Sungevity and other providers to install solar. (See www.sierraclub.org/gosolar.) Unfortunately, we are not able to proceed in Georgia without passage of Solar Energy Freedom.

Water Supply Projects Now Being Funded by GEFA

Gov. Deal's Water Supply Program, a joint effort of his administration and the Metro Chamber of Commerce, plus a host of legal, engineering, real estate and lobbying outfits, is now underway. The Program, operated by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, was touted to be funded at an overall level of \$300 million, and about \$200 million of that has been appropriated to date in the form of GA General Obligation (GO) Bonds.

Of the total sum, about \$88 million was projected to be revenue bonds, which depend on the identification of a revenue stream to support their repayment, which can be delayed until construction on the revenue generating facilities is completed. A problem for these revenue bonds, which have not yet been authorized by the legislature, is that population and growth projections on which the Water Supply Program has relied for its scope of need have been superseded by the facts imposed by the 2008-2010 credit collapse. Growth is running well behind projected levels, and need for new water supplies is also lagging.

The lack of need for new water supplies has left one completed reservoir, Hickory Log Creek in Cherokee Co., a joint project of Cobb, Cherokee and the City of Canton, unused. Canton has been struggling to pay its share of the project's cost while needing, and selling, no water from it. Another multi-county project, construction of the Hard Labor Creek reservoir in Walton Co., has been halted because population growth projections were incorrect, and sufficient funds were not available.

During the Summer and Fall of 2012 the GEFA announced \$100 million in the first round of Water Supply funding. About \$90 million of that was offered to various localities in the form of low, and extremely low interest loans. Another \$10 million or so was in the form of what was called "direct state investment," what might have been called "grants" in another time. The two "direct state investment" projects had in common the same "engineering" firm working on them, the large campaign donor Joe Tanner and Associates.

Join Environmental Allies at Capitol on February 28th

Georgia Conservation Voters' annual Environmental Legislative Breakfast and our collective Capitol Conservation Day will be held on Thursday, February 28th at 7:30 am at the Floyd Room on top of the Sloppy Floyd Building. Individual tickets are \$30, and tables can be purchased for \$250.

To register, visit <http://bit.ly/GCVbreakfast>

One was to create a well-water supply for a water park at the Lake Lanier Islands Resort, owned by big donor Virgil Williams. The second project was an “experiment” in which water from a well on state land in southwest Georgia would be pumped out then piped to a stream in the Flint River basin that suffers from low flow during droughts (a condition made more serious by heavy agricultural water use in its drainage), to “augment” the flow to protect endangered species.

It is not known if Gov. Deal will seek authorization for addition bonds, GO, or revenue, for the Water Supply Program in 2013. It will not be surprising if he does, particularly authorization for the revenue bonds, which are unlikely to be issued any time soon, and will not have an immediate fiscal effect. The Governor has announced that he plans to ask for another \$50 million in GO Bonds for the Savannah Harbor dredging, the ultimate boondoggle.

Georgia EPD Budget Cut, New Director has New Goals

Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division, EPD, has experienced a steady reduction in its budget for years, starting with the Miller Administration in the 1990s. The present budget is a bit over half of what it was when Gov. Perdue took office. Staff cuts and program cuts have followed the money out the door. Whether the agency is even meeting the requirements it has shouldered in its agreements to enforce federal environmental laws like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act is in doubt.

The previous Director of the EPD, Allen Barnes, expressed serious reservations about Georgia’s ability to enforce federal environmental laws if budget cuts continued, then he resigned. His successor, Jud Turner, a lawyer from Albany, is not so troubled by the budget cuts to his agency. He agrees with Gov. Deal that regulations are not good for business development in the state. Mr. Turner has said that he thinks his job is promoting economic development as much as it is protecting natural resources.

One activity that EPD performed for years, but which was lost in Perdue Administration budget cuts, was emergency response. A \$1 million annual appropriation staffed a full time office to receive and respond to environmental emergencies, often chemical and fuel spills, but also sewage overflows and fires that presented chemical threats to air and water quality and public health and safety.

That function, which was always popular with both the public and the regulated industries (which could be exposed to liability in emergencies) has been slashed to a few part-time employees. In cases in Athens, in two kaolin producing regions, and the notorious Ogeechee River fish kill, no timely Georgia Sierran 🌲 January/February/March 2013

emergency response was made. Had the old emergency unit remained intact, those episodes could have been much less harmful than they were.

A goal of the Georgia Water Coalition, in which Sierra Club plays a leading role, is to get the emergency response program restored by making it a requirement of law, and not merely a matter of divisional policy.

Sierrans should let their legislators know that protection of natural resources from harm is an important duty of the state, and that budget cuts have reduced that protection. Particularly needed is an emergency response team to act quickly in the event of disasters.

MARTA Revenue Distribution Cannot Be Delayed

Last session a bill that would extend the ability of MARTA to control all of its 1 percent sales tax revenue, collected in Fulton and DeKalb Counties and the City of Atlanta, for an additional three years was rejected at the eleventh hour of the legislative session. This was because the bill included provisions that shifted membership of the MARTA Board to mayors of new municipalities in Fulton and DeKalb.

The current law expires at the end of 2013, and if it is not extended, or made permanent (a position Sierra Club prefers), MARTA will be forced to park 50 percent of its sales tax funds into capital accounts, and cannot use them for meeting ordinary operating expenses. Since the MARTA system is largely complete, and capital expenditures are currently used mostly for maintenance and not new construction, revival of the “50-50” rule would effectively sequester half of the MARTA sales tax revenue.

This decision is left to the General Assembly, despite the fact that the sales tax is paid by the two counties and one major city that collect it from citizens and shoppers. Rep. Mike Jacobs of the new City of Brookhaven is the legislator most directly involved in this renewal, acting in his role as Chairman of the joint MARTA Oversight Committee (MARTOC). Rep.



Jacobs has been accused of misusing his power in regard to MARTA revenue to leverage political goals such as the creation of Brookhaven.

Sierrans should contact their legislators with a simple message: let MARTA and the governments that collect the MARTA sales tax determine its use, and get the legislature out of the process. Unless the state is willing to support MARTA financially, it needs to keep out of MARTA's internal affairs. Urge your legislator to free MARTA from these onerous restrictions.

Ethics Legislation Looks Likely

Exactly what such ethics legislation will look like is anyone's guess. The opportunities to make Georgia's ethics laws stronger are many, but the legislature has shown very little enthusiasm for such improvements in the past.

There is a proposal to limit lobbyist's gifts to legislators to \$100. That could be a limit of \$100 per lobbyist per legislator per session of the General Assembly. If that were adopted, it would be a meaningful limit on these gifts.

However, it could be simply a limit of that amount for each gift, meaning that legislators could presumably receive a hundred-dollar gift each day of a session, from more than one lobbyist, which could run into serious money pretty quickly for chairs of important committees. A ban like that has been called a "gimmick," an apt characterization.

After opposing any limits on giving, Speaker David Ralston has now endorsed a total ban on all gifts by lobbyists to legislators. This proposal came after the July primaries, in which large majorities of voters from both parties endorsed gift limits on lobbyist gifts to legislators.

There is some fear that imposition of total limits, "not even a cup of coffee," would lead to additional abuses, such as gifts by unregistered lobbyists, or even various "employment" arrangements in which legislators receive "legitimate" compensation from firms that happen to be represented by lobbyists who need the employed legislator's support.

Another issue that could be addressed is the so-called "10 percent" rule. This is the nickname for a law passed two years ago to correct what was viewed as an urgent problem for a particular class of lobbyists called "vendor lobbyists," a name for people selling goods and services to the state. The precise nature of the urgent problem was never entirely clear, but the result was a blanket exemption from lobbyist registration for a potentially large class of lobbyists.

Anyone, such as a corporation officer, or organizational official, who claims to spend less than 10% of his or her time lobbying, is exempt from registration, hence "the 10% rule." This is obviously a giant doorway to evasion of regulation, and is a law that is bitterly resented among the professional lobbyists who are required to register to work. There is already a lot of

unregistered lobbying, making a loophole for more will mean there is even more of it.

Call or write your state senator and state representative and ask them to support outlawing all gifts from lobbyists to legislators. Our elected officials should be listening to the people, not the big-money lobbyists. Go to www.legis.state.ga.us to find your legislator's contact info.

Small Town Fights Power Monopoly to Protect Parkland

Mansfield, Ga. is a community of 600 people at the northern end of Newton County. It has been locked in struggle for over a year with the Georgia Transmission Corporation, a firm which provides transmission services to municipal and cooperative electricity suppliers all over the state. Georgia Transmission has an existing transmission line through Mansfield, but wants to add more capacity in the area. Instead of building the new line next to the old line, Georgia Transmission wants to build on a new right of way on the other side of town, spoiling two corridors instead of one with their ugly wires and cleared right of way.

Mansfield has a plan for community growth, and where Georgia Transmission wants to build the new power line they plan to have a park. Last year at the legislature, Mansfield's Representative, Doug Holt, introduced a bill that would require the PSC to approve new transmission line routes when they are controversial, as in Mansfield. The PSC, generally the tool of utilities, was resistant to assuming such a duty. Rep. Holt responded with a substitute bill that would simply require the utility to prove to a judge that its chosen route was the best available, but the utility rejected that proposal, claiming that their own procedure, which is to do what they wish, is preferable.

Rep. Holt, and the community of Mansfield, intend to return to the legislature in 2013 with a bill to protect their parkland from Georgia Transmission. The Sierra Club has been an enthusiastic supporter of this measure, and we are looking forward to making progress on it in 2013.

- Neill Herring and Mark Woodall

Legislative Roadshow coming to a group meeting near you!

Sierra Club lobbyist Neill Herring and Legislative Chair Mark Woodall will present the inside scoop on the Georgia General Assembly at the your local group meeting.

Centennial Group: **Feb. 7**
Atlanta Group: **Feb. 12**

LaGrange Group: **Feb. 19**
Gwinnett Group: **Feb. 21**

Membership

Scenes from Recent Membership Events



Ga. Conservation Voters Director Rob Teilhet with Colleen at the Election Night Sierra Club & Beer



Mission Outdoors bike tour of the Atlanta Beltline, November 11, 2012

Welcome New Chapter ExCom Members

Many thanks to everyone who voted in the annual Chapter and Group Executive Committee (ExCom) elections last fall, and please help us welcome two new at-large elected members to the Chapter ExCom: **Thomas Jackson** of Decatur and **Midge Sweet** of Atlanta. In addition, current at-large ExCom member **Todd Daniel** was elected to serve an additional two-year term. Congratulations to all!

The Chapter would also like to recognize **Kelly Jordan** and **J. Michael Walls**, who chose not to seek reelection as at-large members and have transitioned off the Committee. Thank you Kelly and J. Mike for your years of dedicated service!

Free Book Signing to Kick Off 2013 John Muir Outings Series

By Sybil Cypress

In 1867-1868, long before John Muir effectively manifested his desire to protect our wildlands into the Sierra Club, he embarked upon a 1,000 mile walk from Jeffersonville, Kentucky through the North Georgia Mountains, down to Cedar Key, Florida. It is on this adventure that John Muir discovers the beauty of the south and forms lasting perspectives about humans, nature, and the balance between us. Here is one of my favorite quotes from his memoirs about that journey in the book *Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*:

"The scenery is far grander than any I ever before beheld. The view extends from the Cumberland Mountains on the north far into Georgia and North Carolina to the south, an area of five thousand square miles. Such an ocean of wooded, waving, swelling mountain beauty and grandeur is not to be described."

Author James Hunt chronicles Muir's walking journey in the new book, *Restless Fires*. Hunt examines the development of our founder's environmental thoughts and perspectives as a young adult and artfully processes our current understanding of John Muir's life.

To kick off our 2013 John Muir Outing series this April, the Georgia Chapter is sponsoring a FREE James Hunt lecture and book signing of *Restless Fires* at The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum on **Tuesday, March 26th**. Join us as we journey back to a time so critical to the environmental maturity of John Muir. Then on all Saturdays in April (6th, 13th, 20th, & 27th), let's fast forward together for the 2013 John Muir Outings Series, where we, along with some special guests, will share our environmental visions of how to enable a grand and sustainable Georgia, one of which our founder would be proud.

For more information and to register, visit:
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/johnmuiroutings>

Sierra Club 101



Are you new to the Sierra Club and want to get involved but not sure how? Do you know what issues the Georgia Chapter is working on and how to get involved? Do you want to know who we are and what we're doing?

Join us on **Saturday, February 9th** from 10:30 AM to noon for Sierra Club 101, your crash course on the Club, the Georgia Chapter, and our issues. Meet with volunteer leaders and staff at the Sierra Club office at 743B East College Ave., Decatur as we introduce you to our Sierra Club.

Go to georgia.sierraclub.org/sc101 to RSVP or contact Sybil Cypress at gasierraclub101@gmail.com if you have questions.

Georgia Giving Society 2012

The Georgia Chapter of Sierra Club established its Georgia Giving Society to honor individuals making significant gifts to the Georgia Chapter. Their partnership and commitment to our work leaves a lasting legacy.

Contributions from the Georgia Giving Society are integral to the hard work from volunteers and staff all around Georgia including promoting renewable energy, monitoring and protecting Georgia's pristine coastal marsh, and protecting

our public forests in the North Georgia mountains. Please join us in thanking current members.

Listed below are the supporters who donated at the Live Oak Champion, Longleaf Pine Protector, Southern Magnolia Society, and Evergreen Partner levels in 2012. If you would like to join or renew into the Giving Society for 2013 please contact Colleen Kiernan at 404-607-1262 x.224. Your support is much appreciated.

Live Oak Champions

\$5000+

Charles and Mary Bosserman
Carroll Smith Walraven
William and Gertrude Wardlaw
Anonymous

Longleaf Pine Protectors

\$2500-4999

Kendall Newman

Southern Magnolia Society

\$500-2499

Lee Adrean
Stephanie and Robert Benfield
Martha and Tom Black
Sam and Laurie Booher
Thomas and Betsy Boyle
Carol and Aubrey Bush
David and Mindy Egan - Initiative to
Protect Jekyll Island
David Emory
Gurdon Hornor

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Evergreen Partners

(continued from previous page)

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Joel and Sybrina Wooten
Philip and Dorothy Zinsmeister

Thank You to Georgia Giving Society of 2012!



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SIERRA CLUB

We send out an appeal in March to each of our members, asking for contributions directly to our Chapter. These contributions really do make a difference to us, and are an important part of our Chapter's budget.

When you make a donation to the Chapter, you support the Sierra Club's work in your own backyard. You allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness and wildlife, to improve the quality of life in our cities, and to promote the enjoyment of nature.

Please be as generous as you are able - and remember, these funds directly affect your way of life in your neighborhood.

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.

Mail your contribution to:

Sierra Club, Georgia Chapter, 743 East College Avenue, Suite B, Decatur, Georgia 30030

Carbon Monoxide Risks Plus the EPA on Soot

By D. Gordon Draves

Carbon monoxide (CO) at Finch Elementary School in sw Atlanta sent 42 students and 7 adults to hospitals; sparking interest in CO monitors for all schools in the district with a CO detector company offering detectors for some schools and a proposal for a state law to require detectors. "Fire-fighters found unsafe levels of carbon monoxide near a furnace at the school with a reading at 1,700 parts per million" (AJC, 12-3-2012).

But what about children and the 40,000 parts per million (ppm) that some are exposed to daily? Cigarette smoke has 40,000 parts per million of carbon monoxide, or 4% of each puff of smoke is CO.

Everyday 3,000 US children take their first puff of cigarette smoke. They willingly inhale carbon monoxide like every

other person who lights a cigarette. Also, adults expose their children to CO every time they light up in home or car.

But by far, the worst exposure of children by parents is when mothers smoke during pregnancy. The level of CO is not just at the same level as in the mother's blood but can be double or triple that level in the blood of the baby in the womb. Even adults smoking around a pregnant woman increases her carboxyhemoglobin levels and those of the child.

What other factors does CO produce? While the carbon dioxide from burning tobacco is a strong greenhouse gas, "Carbon monoxide (CO) is not considered a direct greenhouse gas, mostly because it does not absorb terrestrial thermal IR [infrared] energy strongly enough. However, CO is able to modulate the production of methane and tropospheric ozone." (Greenhouse Gases, NOAA)

continued on next page

Upcoming Meetings & Programs

We meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Doors open at 7:00 p.m., program begins at 7:30.

February 12: Regular Meeting

News from under the Gold Dome: Chapter leaders, Neill Herring the chapter lobbyist and Mark Woodall our Legislative Committee Chair, will discuss issues before the Georgia General Assembly. Why certain bills should be passed compared to others that don't do much for the environment or actually are bad for our state's land, water, air and wildlife.

March 13: Regular Meeting

Solar energy in Georgia: Shane Owl-Greason will discuss his company's role in attempting to get solar energy implemented in Georgia on a larger scale. He is a Co-Founding Partner of Georgia Solar Utilities, Inc. (GaSU) and Entegrity Solar, LLC. The rapidly decreasing cost of solar panels is making solar power much more competitive to other sources of energy.

Meeting Location: Meeting Location: Unless otherwise indicated, Metro Atlanta Group General Membership meetings are held at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, 2089 Ponce de Leon Ave. at the intersection of with East Lake Drive; the entrance to the church is off East Lake Dr. From MARTA's East Lake station, it's a 15 minute walk northeast along East Lake Dr. MARTA Bus 2 runs on Ponce de Leon between North Avenue Station and Decatur Station.

Adopt-A-Stream Program events:

- Saturday, February 23 (Chemical)
- Saturday, March 9 (Biological & Chemical)

We meet 10 AM to noon. For biologic monitoring, we need many eyes to find the critters found in the creek.

Location: The site is on the South Fork of Peachtree Creek in Medlock Park north of Decatur.

From Clairmont Rd. (between N. Decatur and N. Druid Hill roads.) take Desmond Dr. (third street north of N. Decatur Rd.) until it intersects with Willivee Dr. Turn left and follow Willivee around to Scott Circle where you turn right. Parking is on your left when you reach the park.

Alternatively, from the intersection of Scott Blvd, Medlock Drive, and North Decatur Rd, turn north on Medlock (that is to the right if you are driving towards Atlanta from I-285). Drive half a mile and turn left on Lancelot, which dead-ends onto Scott Circle. Turn right. In the second block, the park and parking lot are on your right.

Park as close to the middle as you can, and walk into the park along a dirt road with the 2-story building on your left and ball fields on either side, back into the woods behind ball field #5. Bear left and you will see us at a picnic table by the stream.

For information about chemical monitoring and dates, call Larry Kloet at 404 636-7226. For more details about biological monitoring, call Nancy Wylie at 404-256-1172.

For more information please see <http://georgia.sierraclub.org/atlanta/>

Metro Atlanta Group

Greater Gwinnett Group

Carbon Monoxide, continued from previous page

To reduce exposure to CO and other air pollutants, Smoke-Free Coalition of Fulton County and HEART Coalition of Fulton County will be approaching Fulton County Board of Commissioners early next year to advocate for an ordinance to make restaurants and bars smokefree for the health of patrons and workers, especially those of child-bearing age. Live Healthy DeKalb group will also be addressing these issues before the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners to ban smoking in bars.

Another air issue was the proposed Environmental Protection Agency rule to control soot that would reduce soot from diesels and coal-fired power plants. The Sierra Club and the American Lung Association both had campaigns urging the White House to support strong actions by EPA.

While the school exposure to CO was serious and could have had a tragic outcome, CO has serious life threatening affects on babies. Please join in the effort to get women to quit smoking during pregnancy and contact your county commissioners to act to ban smoking from the areas exempted by current state law. Please watch our website for more details in the coming months on these and other issues before our legislature and county commissioners.

Over the holidays, I kept thinking about how much we have accomplished in 2012. In Gwinnett, our programs have included state and national parks in Georgia, nuclear, coal and alternative power sources such as solar, wind and tidal. We have learned about community gardens and the effect of population on the environment. We have participated in forums around the county. We have provided stream-monitoring data to the EPD. We shall begin 2013 with a discussion of Georgia Sierra Club priorities by our director, Colleen Kiernan. Our February program will be a legislature update of environmental measures being considered by the legislature. Later in the year, we will have presentations on the Chattahoochee River Recreation Area and solar energy. We will continue our stream monitoring programs and evaluate expanding to a second stream to measure the chemical and biological health of the streams. We will also intensify our efforts to include more groups in our activities and begin our political preparations for the 2014 elections. Our programs in Gwinnett are expanding and offer many programs to educate and inform our members and the public while enabling numerous alternative ways to improve the quality of life of our community and county. I hope your holidays have been joyful and look forward to an exciting 2013. Come and see what the excitement is all about.

- Dan Friedman



photo by Marco Scattari

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Sea turtles date back nearly 90 million years and are among the Earth's oldest surviving species. All 6 species of sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Sierra Club has mounted a major effort to defend and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever.

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 P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041
 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

Centennial Group

Volunteers Drive Medical Recycling Operation

The Centennial Group recently had a presentation from a group called Medshare. They are a nonprofit organization dedicated to recycling medical supplies and equipment. At their facility in Decatur they collect unused medical supplies and equipment to be redistributed where they are needed. Most of the supplies are collected from local hospitals and medical facilities here in the Atlanta area.

At their Decatur distribution center they sort and repackage the supplies for shipment. The beneficiaries are underserved healthcare institutions that request help from all around the world. They frequently supply teams of medical professionals going on missions to underdeveloped countries worldwide.

Medshare was founded in 1998 and has been growing very fast. They rely on the generosity of corporate and private donors as well as volunteer workers. Each month hundreds of volunteer workers sort through ton's of donated material to be repackaged for shipment. They have received many awards for their work in the efficient recovery and redistribution of surplus medical equipment and supplies.

Medshare's work has a huge humanitarian and environmental impact. For more information on Medshare go to www.medshare.org

- Mark Banks

Rivers Alive!



On October 20, Centennial Group hosted our annual Rivers Alive river cleanup at Life University. Although it was a chilly morning, we had about a dozen people show up to help out including an employee of Life University. We had a wonderful time cleaning up the section of Rottenwood Creek flowing through the campus. After all our hard work was done, we enjoyed a wonderful picnic.

LaGrange Group

The LaGrange Group continues to enjoy a variety of activities including outings, monthly meetings, and monthly Adopt a Stream monitoring.

Monthly meetings are held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church from 6:30 to 8:00pm. Upcoming topics include:

February 19: *Georgia Environmental Legislative Update presented by Mark Woodall and Neil Herring*

March 19: *Organic Gardening presented by Eric Simpson*

Please join us! For more information, contact Laura Breyfogle at breyfogle@charter.net



Savannah River Group

Elections in November added some new faces and position changes to our EXCOM for 2013. Barbara Wise will be helping Membership Chair April Wilson who has been working overtime to keep old and new members content and inspired. Treasurer Julia Crowley continues on EXCOM but after more than 20 years of keeping excellent track of our expenditures and fund raising, she is retiring. With Julia's help, Ann Sutherland, our new treasurer, will tackle budgets and the never ending search for new revenue. We are looking forward to a productive year and our usual Rummage Sale in April.

We celebrated the winding down of 2012 with our annual Christmas party hosted by Sam and Laurie Booher. The New Year was off to an exciting start with a January program featuring Bob Munger, President of the Augusta Greenway Alliance. This new organization hopes to generate support for a greenway for cyclists and mechanized carts to connect downtown Augusta with outlying areas, including the existing greenway along the Augusta Canal. Greg Sutherland is arranging our February program which will focus on Global Warming. Our speaker is Sam Collier, someone well known to many Georgia Sierrans. Sam is a trained presenter for the national Climate Reality Project and is a former Regional staffer for Sierra Club. Dare I say things in the Savannah River Group are getting hot and, unfortunately, so is our planet.

- Judy Gordon, Co-Chair

Inner City Outings

ICO Kicks Off 2013 With Cumberland Island Trip

Atlanta Inner City Outings volunteers and 9 high school students from the Joseph B. Whitehead Boys & Girls Club kicked off 2013 with an adventurous backpacking trip to Cumberland Island, Georgia.

After an early morning start and a 5+ hour drive the group arrived at Crooked River State Park to split up the group gear/food and get some good rest before leaving early the next day to catch the ferry over to the Island. Unfortunately the poor weather (cold and rainy) that we became accustomed to began that evening and we had no choice but to pack up wet tents the next morning.

The kids enjoyed the ferry ride and some got to see several dolphins following in the boat's wake. After a brief orientation with the rangers we set out to hike to the Hickory Hill campsite in the northern wilderness area (map). Hiking for miles next to palmettos and underneath the live oaks covered in Spanish moss was a truly memorable experience. Not long after lunch it began to rain. And rain. And rain... Everyone was excited to arrive at the campsite, but not to set up camp and begin to cook dinner in the rain.

Despite the rain and cold weather, the kids' spirits remained high and they entertained themselves with games like who can balance on the log the longest as well as ninja. Half of the group also hiked another mile to get more water, which unfortunately even after being filtered still had a slight sulfur smell (referred to as "egg water" by the kids). As the temperature dropped and rain continued everyone decided it would be best to go to bed early (very early!).

The third day began a little cold, but without rain thankfully. We soon left the campsite and began backpacking to our next site at Stafford Beach. This hike led us through more live oaks, swamps, sandy trails where sharks teeth were found, pine forests, and open fields where we saw wild horses were grazing. Our beautiful campsite was located near the beach under several giant live oaks that you had to climb over or go under to get from one side to the other. Once camp was set up we set out to the beach where people relaxed, collected shells, and even got their feet wet in the ocean (barefoot AND with shoes unfortunately). Unfortunately because this campsite was more established, we had to be very careful with making sure no food, or really anything that had a strong scent (besides us!) was properly hung in a tree out of reach of the raccoons. We ended the night with a small campfire and night hike to see the stars out near the beach.

We concluded our trip the next day with a hike back to the dock where we left our packs and took a short day hike to explore the historic Dungeness ruins on the southern end of the Island. Thank you to all of the ICO and Boys & Girls Club volunteers and kids for making this such a wonderful experience!



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Savannah River Group Delegate

Laura Breyfogle, 706-845-7235,
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Conservation Campaigns

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*Meeting: 4th Mon., 7 p.m., chapter office.
Committee sometimes skips months. E-mail first.*

Smart Energy Solutions:

Vacant; contact Seth Gunning, 404-607-1262 x233
or seth.gunning@sierraclub.org
Meeting: 1st Monday, 7 p.m. chapter office

Wildlands and Wildlife:

Mike Murdock, murdock1@mindspring.com
*Meeting: 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m., Location TBA
Committee sometimes skips months. E-mail first.*

Issue Leaders & Contacts

The Conservation Committee is organized by issues. To get involved in Conservation issues, please contact the Issue Leader of your choice below.

Chattahoochee National Recreation Area:
Alan Toney, mudflat@comcast.com

Clean Air: Curt Smith, chsmith@speakeasy.net

Coastal: Judy Jennings,
judyjennings@comcast.net

Coastal Marsh: Mark Mosely, msmosely@aol.com

Cumberland: vacant

Factory Farms: Leah Garces,
leah.garces@ciwf.org

Federal Endangered Species: Larry Winslett,
winfog@windstream.net

Federal Public Lands: Shirl Parsons,
kparsons@mindspring.com

Historic Places/ Arch. Sites: Brian Thomas,
bthomas@trcsolutions.com

Marine Species/Habitat: Karen Grainey,
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National Forest Issues: vacant

Nuclear Waste: Stacey Kronquest,
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Waste/Recycling: Larry Winslett,
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Water Sentinels / Adopt-a-Stream:
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Beyond Coal Organizer:

Seth Gunning, 404-607-1262 x.233
seth.gunning@sierraclub.org

Standing Meetings

Inner City Outings

Fourth Tuesday of the month, 7:30 p.m., Chapter Office. Contact Naiomi Block (atlantaico@gmail.com) for more information.

Fundraising Committee

Third Wednesday of the month. Contact Sybil Cypress (sybil.cypress@sierraclub.org) for more information.

Local Group Directory

A great way to get involved in your Chapter is by joining and participating in a local group. Some groups take certain months off, so it's a good idea to email first. Each group has a website. For maps and additional information on each group, visit the website: <http://georgia.sierraclub.org/local/>

Centennial Group

Serving Cobb, Cherokee & North Fulton

Chair / Meetings Contact: Lynn Walston, lynnwalston22@yahoo.com

Outings Chair: Anderson Mycroft, awmycroft@yahoo.com

Meetings: 1st Thursday, welcome/refreshments 7:00 p.m., program 7:30 p.m.; Life College, 1269 Barclay Cir. SE, Marietta. For directions contact Carina O'Bara at carina_do@yahoo.com.

Coastal Group

Serving Savannah & surrounding counties

Chair: Steve Willis, snwillis@yahoo.com

Outings Chair: Steve Wagner, sjwgnr@hotmail.com

Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 7:00 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 520 E. Washington Ave, Savannah

Greater Gwinnett Group

Serving Gwinnett Co.

Chair: Dan Friedman, dan3688@aol.com

Conservation Chair: Art Sheldon, asheldon.cp81@gtalumni.org

Outings Chair: Jake Hardison, jake.hardison@ssa.gov

Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 7:00 p.m., Berkmar High School, 405 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lilburn 30047

LaGrange Group

Serving the LaGrange area

Chair: Laura Breyfogle, breyfogle@charter.net

Conservation Chair: vacant

Outings Chair: Joanna Baxter, joannabbaxter@yahoo.com

Meetings: 3rd Tuesdays; 6:30 pm welcome and refreshments / 7 pm program; St. Mark's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 207 N. Greenwood St., LaGrange (no meetings June-August)

Metro Atlanta Group

Serving Atlanta, Dekalb, & South Fulton

Chair: Gordon Draves, (404) 766-3456
nonsmoke4ga@hotmail.com

Outings Chair: Martin McConaughy
mcmarty@bellsouth.net

Meetings: 2nd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Episcopal Church of the Epiphany • 2089 Ponce de Leon Ave. (between Atlanta and Decatur).

Savannah River Group

Serving Augusta & surrounding areas

Co-Chair: Judy Gordon, Ph.D.,
gordonjudith@att.net

Co-Chair: Sam Booher, sbooher@aol.com

Conservation Chair: Frank Carl, frankcarl@knology.net

Outings Chair: Cathy Black,
sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., Unitarian Church on Walton Way, Augusta at 7:30 pm.

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Macon

Fletcher Winston, winston_f@mercer.edu

North Georgia

Larry Winslett, winfog@windstream.net

Valdosta

Brian Day, bjday@valdosta.edu

Looking for a Group near your home?

The Georgia Chapter website (<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/>) contains a map showing the locations of all Groups. Or, call the Chapter office at (404) 607-1262.



Georgia Chapter Office

743 East College Avenue, Suite B
Decatur, Georgia 30030
404-607-1262 • FAX: 404-876-5260
georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org>

Directions to take MARTA to the Sierra Club office:

Our office is an easy 3-4 minute walk from the MARTA Avondale station (E7). We encourage you to take MARTA when possible. Exit the MARTA station towards the SOUTH PARKING LOT, located on the East College Ave side. Once outside, proceed to the right towards Sams Street. Cross over Sams St. and the office is the building located right behind the convenience store. The office is the second door from Sams St. — Suite B.

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GA-RAIL-NEWS (RAIL/Transit Advocacy Committee)

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Visit the Ga. Chapter web page and click on "Local Groups" for info on local groups e-mail lists.

Chapter ExCom Meeting

The next meeting will be Saturday, March 16th at the Chapter office in Decatur. Meetings are open to the membership. For more information, call the Chapter office at 404-607-1262 x221.

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JOHN MUIR OUTINGS

Celebrate Earth Day – and Georgia’s spectacular beauty – all month long. Each Saturday in April, we’re hosting an outing where you can learn about our state’s threatened areas and how to protect them. To support the Georgia Chapter’s work, a donation of \$25 per person per outing is requested. What better way to honor Earth and our founder, John Muir?

Sat. Apr. 6 - Outing TBD

Sat. Apr. 20 - Outing TBD

Sat. Apr. 13 - Outing TBD

Sat. Apr. 27 - Ellicot Rock Wilderness Hike

For more info and to register: georgia.sierraclub.org/johnmuiroutings



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