



# Sierran

To Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet

## Our National Parks at 100

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# Our Next Chapter

**By Ted Terry**

When I reflect on the bold, trail-blazing legacy of the Sierra Club, I can't help but think back to when I was 15, sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office, seeing the Sierra Magazine for the first time. It was full of these vivid photos of places I had never been but wanted to see. Even at 15, I was filled with an overwhelming recognition of nature's beauty, and a sense of the importance of protecting these places.

Of course, I asked my mom to subscribe me to the magazine that day, and the great narrative of exploring, enjoying and protecting stayed with me from the time I worked as a Field Manager for the Club in 2006, in support of the nascent BeltLine idea and lobbying then President George W. Bush to preserve the roadless areas rule in our national forests, all the way to the 2013 Public Service Commission advocacy campaign, where we successfully garnered support for more solar power in Georgia. And of course, the fundamental essence of this John Muir vision, to seek the highest places and fight for the preservation of the wilderness, is with me now as your newly hired Chapter Director.

Every preceding Chapter Director has layered a mighty contribution to our



*Ted Terry, Chapter Director*

story, right up through my predecessor Colleen Kiernan who gave us five years of diligent service. Now it is my honor and privilege to pick up where Colleen left off. We have a long history of strength and success as the nation's oldest and largest environmental organization, but as we look to the challenges ahead, it is clear that we are facing greater forces than we ever have before. The Citizens United ruling opened the floodgates for dark money to drive our political system, leaving us with a national and state legislature full of climate-change-denying politicians bent on derailing our progress towards an energy efficient

future. Pipeline corporations continue to resist the transition to a clean energy economy, and, most worrisome, we have one presidential nominee who aggressively ridicules climate change.

This tumultuous time reminds me of a favorite John Muir saying: "God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools."

Nonetheless, I am committed to the battles we have ahead, and encouraged by our history of bold messaging and resilient ideas, and the sheer strength we can deploy when our 45,000+ members and supporters put their backs into protecting the beauty of our state. It is because of that history, and because of all of you that I am excited about our part in writing this next chapter. The roots of our state chapter are deep and spread throughout every watershed in Georgia. Our branches reach out and link up with coalition partners in LGBT, Civil Rights, Women's Rights, and Labor movements, amplifying our call for progressive change.

Together, we can achieve great victories that will have lasting effects for the next generation. Join us in writing this next chapter, our chapter, for all of Georgia. 🌲

## Be Green, Save Green – Become an E-Subscriber Today!



Did you know that the Georgia Chapter spends roughly six percent of its annual budget printing and mailing the Sierran? Looking for an easy way to help the Chapter – and the environment? Remember that at any time you may opt out of receiving the printed Sierran. Members who do so will continue to receive every issue in its entirety (in full, brilliant color, no less) – only it will arrive in their inboxes, not their mailboxes.

If you prefer to continue receiving the printed newsletter, there is no need to do anything. But if you'd like to switch to the electronic edition please contact the Chapter office at **404-607-1262 x221** or **georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org**. Our budget – and our trees! – will thank you.

*Note: in accordance with Chapter bylaws, all members will receive the annual election issue by mail.*

# Our National Parks: “America’s Best Idea” Turns 100

*“National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.”*

- Wallace Stegner, Author and Sierra Club Board Member, 1964-66

**By Brionté McCorkle**

This year marks the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service (NPS). Before NPS, parks were managed individually by the Department of the Interior. As more and more land gained park status, it became clear that the conservation movement would continue to grow, and that a new federal bureau was needed whose sole focus was on preserving these protected green spaces and national heritage areas. By the time the National Park Service Organic Act was signed on Aug. 25, 1916, thirty-five national parks and monuments had been established. Today, there are over 59 national parks, and over 400 NPS “units” in the U.S. and its territories.

Though he did not live to see its creation, our founder John Muir helped to build public support for this model of wilderness preservation. His tireless advocacy for protecting America’s wild places eventually led to the establishment of Yosemite National Park within California’s Sierra Nevada mountains just 18 years after Yellowstone National Park was founded as the nation’s first official national park. When NPS was founded, the Sierra Club had fewer than 2,000 members and was firmly rooted in California. Now, we have expanded nationwide to over 60 chapters and have grown to well over 700,000 members.

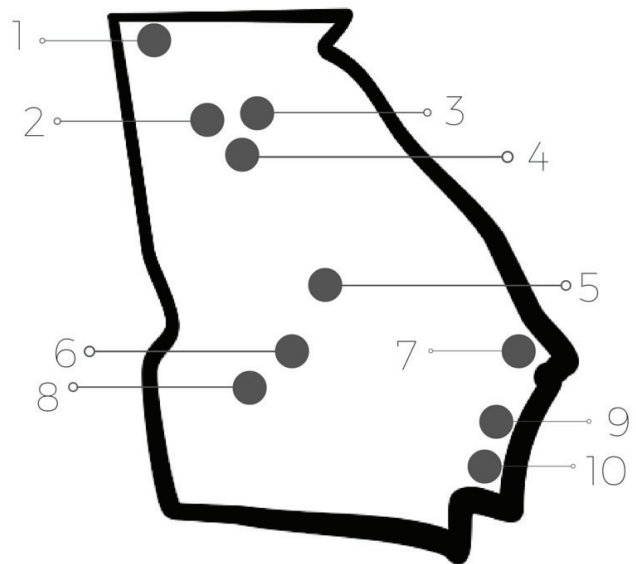
Our parks still need protecting, as they are threatened by the consequences of climate change; obscured by haze from air-polluting coal plants; and inaccessible to many Americans who lack transportation choices. The Georgia Chapter will continue working on our three issue priorities (energy, transportation and wildlands) with your support. As this work continues to unfold, take some time to visit one, two or ten of Georgia’s NPS units (see list at right).

There are several other NPS sites in Georgia not listed here, including Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area where we will convene on Thursday, Aug. 25 for a NPS100 Sunset Birthday Celebration. You are invited! We will walk the boardwalk over to the south parking lot, and then walk to the top of the mountain to relax, eat some dinner and tell tales of our visits to national parks. Contact our Outings Chair, Sammy Padgett, at [sammypadgett@comcast.net](mailto:sammypadgett@comcast.net) for more details. 🌲



**On the Cover:** Sierrans explore Ocmulgee National Monument near Macon, one of 10 NPS units in Georgia. For more information on Ocmulgee, including its potential to become Georgia’s first national park, see page 4.

## 100 YEARS OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN GEORGIA



[WWW.NPS.GOV/STATE/GA](http://WWW.NPS.GOV/STATE/GA)

1. Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park, Fort Oglethorpe
2. Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Kennesaw
3. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Sandy Springs
4. Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, Atlanta
5. Ocmulgee National Monument, Macon
6. Andersonville National Historic Site, Andersonville
7. Fort Pulaski National Monument, Savannah
8. Jimmy Carter National Historic Site, Plains
9. Fort Frederica National Monument, St. Simons Island
10. Cumberland Island National Seashore, Saint Marys

To see all NPS units in Georgia, visit  
[www.nps.gov/state/ga](http://www.nps.gov/state/ga)

# Ocmulgee: From National Monument to National Park

By **Bettye Harris and David Eisner**

Every year the Georgia Chapter puts on its John Muir Outings Series during the month of April to celebrate our founder's birthday and legacy. These outings highlight conservation issues around the state, and few have been as well-attended and as fascinating as the trip we took to Ocmulgee National Monument this year. Our group had a blast and learned a lot during our visit to this special treasure in Georgia, which was recently voted the country's best archaeological site in a nationwide USA Today poll.

We began our visit with a ranger-led presentation and tour. Ocmulgee National Monument is a prehistoric American Indian site most famously known for the earthen mounds and ceremonial center built by Mississippian peoples. Not only is the area significant due to its Native American history, it also served as a stage for many key events, such as the War of 1812, in our nation's early years. Overall, the monument represents nearly 17,000 years of human history. The area, known by the indigenous Muscogee Creek people as the "Old Fields," was largely unexplored by archaeologists until the 1930s. Congress finally authorized the park in 1934, and it took another two years to secure the necessary land donations before the park was formally established on Dec. 23, 1936.

For decades Ocmulgee National Monument has appealed to hikers, bird watchers and anglers. Its 702 acres include nearly six miles of walking trails. Looking beyond its boundaries, the monument sits in the ecologically significant Ocmulgee River corridor. The corridor contains over 85,000 acres of contiguous bottomland hardwood swamp, the largest remaining such habitat in the Upper Coastal Plain. It is home to and visited by over 200 species of birds, 50 species of mammals, 80 species of rep-



*Participants on a recent John Muir Outing to Ocmulgee National Monument*

tiles and amphibians, and 100 species of fish. Rare plants and animal species, like the middle Georgia black bear and endangered wood storks, can be found in the area.

Yet, despite its status as a national monument, much of the adjacent cultural landscape has not been preserved and many ecological treasures remain unprotected. After hearing from the park ranger, several members of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative (ONPPI), a community-based group of Middle Georgia citizens, joined us to share the evolving efforts to enlarge this historic site and to close the gaps in the area's conservation by protecting a connected corridor along the Ocmulgee River, including the Bond Swamp. To learn more about the ONPPI, visit <http://www.ocmulgeepark.org>.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has long recognized the area as a high priority landscape feature for land conservation efforts in the State Wildlife Action Plan. Further, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Resolution 1256 and Senate Resolution 755 in 2004 to urge Congress to create "a national preserve or other similar federal property to protect land and other natural resources and promote hunting and fishing in a continuous corridor of

the Ocmulgee and Altamaha Rivers in central and south Georgia."

Congressional legislation, Senate Bill 1696 and House Bill 482 is currently pending that will expand the boundary of the Ocmulgee National Monument by about 2,000 acres, change its designation to a National Historical Park, and authorize the National Park Service to study the river corridor to see if additional areas should be added to the park.

Ultimately, the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative seeks the creation of a national park and preserve stretching from Macon to Hawkinsville to preserve both the region's cultural and wildlife resources. Their work is complemented and supported by the efforts of other groups, such as the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), an independent advocacy organization founded in 1919 focused solely on the national park system. In addition to its quest to enlarge the monument, NPCA is also working to promote development of the regional trail system, including a fully functional Ocmulgee River Water Trail. To learn more about their efforts, visit <https://www.npca.org/parks/ocmulgee-national-monument>.

*Continued on next page*

# A Visit to Cumberland Island National Seashore

By Jerome Walker

In February, the weather is usually perfect on Georgia's coastal islands. That's one of the reasons why 100 of America's wealthiest families formed the exclusive Jekyll Island Club during the late 1800s and turned that island into a Gilded Age playground for a tiny fraction of the richest one percent. Then in 1884 the self-made millionaire Thomas Carnegie purchased most of Cumberland Island, just south of Jekyll, where he and his wife Lucy proceeded to build a complex of lavish mansions. Today 17-mile-long Cumberland Island is a national seashore, administered by the National Park Service. Roughly the northern half of the island is a federally designated wilderness area.

Since most of Cumberland was purchased by the Park Service and now belongs to the American public, my wife and I decided to check on our property by making a three-day backpacking trip one recent February. We especially wanted to see the wilderness area and also visit Carol Ruckdeschel, a renowned biologist who lives on the island. For decades, Carol has fiercely protected both the island and the endangered sea turtles who nest on its beaches. Carol is part of the island's fascinating history and has been written about by a number of authors, including John McPhee. The most recent and probably best account of her efforts to keep Cumberland wild is Will Harlan's book "Untamed: The Wildest Woman in America and the Fight for Cumberland Island."

After spending the night in St. Marys, we boarded the early morning Park Service ferry for the 45-minute ride to the island. Pelicans and gulls flew overhead and dolphins played in the ferry's bow wave. After a brief orientation at Sea Camp Ranger Station - which used to be developer Charles Fraser's headquarters when he had plans to turn the island into another Hilton Head - we started walking north towards the wilderness. Along the way we passed near Greyfield, one of the mansions built as wedding gifts for Thomas and Lucy Carnegie's children. Now it's a private inn run by some of the Carnegie



descendants, who refused to sell to the Park Service.

Later that day, we passed another luxurious Carnegie mansion, Plum Orchard, which the Park Service owns and has renovated for public tours. At over 20,000 square feet with countless bedrooms, an indoor pool and squash court, a huge formal dining room, a gun room "for the men," and an enormous staff of servants, it was a wedding gift to Thomas and Lucy's son, George, who enjoyed it only for a few months each winter. Finally, we reached the wilderness boundary and spent our first night in Yankee Paradise, one of three designated wilderness camping areas. The next day we hiked under huge live-oak trees dripping Spanish moss to our next campsite at Brickhill Bluff, which overlooks the marshes between the island and the mainland. After setting up our tent, we continued hiking to the north end of the island. This is a small area called "The Settlement." It's beyond the wilderness boundary and is shared by Carol Ruckdeschel's modest cabin, the historic one room First African Baptist Church, established in 1893, and a small private complex owned by the Candler, the Coca-Cola heirs. Eventually, this area will also be added to the wilderness when "retained rights" expire. We spent a very pleasant afternoon sitting on Carol's porch, marveling at her pet animals (including several buzzards), and talking about the challenges of keeping the island's wilderness protected. These challenges are explained in an excellent website that Carol writes, [www.wildcumberland.org](http://www.wildcumberland.org).

The next day we had a long hike back to the ranger station to catch the afternoon ferry. We mainly walked on the beach, which is so long you can't see from one end of it to the other due to the earth's curvature. We didn't spot a single person until we reached the south end. This place, in my view, is one of the most beautiful and interesting wild places in Georgia. Cumberland Island gets into your blood, and it's my hope to continue to visit at least once a year. For me personally, one of the strongest reasons to join the fight against climate change is my fear that one day much of this special place could be submerged by rising seas. 🌳

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*Ocmulgee, continued from previous page*

After the guided park tour, our group shared a picnic lunch and visited the site's museum. Some viewed a film about the rich and long history of this area, while others explored the park on their own. Following lunch, Outings Leader Bettye Harris led a hike on nearby trails, while our LaGrange Group Chair Laura Breyfogle led a two-hour float on the nearby Ocmulgee River.

We think we helped generate some enthusiastic new fans of the Ocmulgee National Monument and the National Park Service. More than 55 were in our contingent, many of whom are eager to return for another visit, perhaps in the fall. 🌳

## 5 Ways to Encourage Your County to Save Land for Parks, Trails and Green Space

By Jennifer Burke

Every county should have a long-range plan for acquiring parkland, trails and green space. You can research your county's plan online or ask your local representative what the current green space goals are. In our area, Cobb County adopted green space goals in its 2030 Comprehensive Plan drafted in 2005.

In the 2030 Plan, we found out that Cobb County's goal is to save 10.5 percent of county land as green space, but it currently has less than 7 percent preserved. Achieving this preservation goal would mean adding 8,000 more acres of parks, trails or green space around the county!

The Georgia Sierra Club Centennial Group partnered with the Cobb Parks Coalition to encourage the Cobb County Board of Commissioners to actively take steps to achieve their green space goals. Part of this process includes pushing for the \$40 million park bonds referendum voters overwhelmingly approved in 2008 to be fully funded so that a few hundred acres

can be preserved as parkland. Visit [CobbParksCoalition.org](http://CobbParksCoalition.org) or [Facebook.com/CobbParksCoalition](https://Facebook.com/CobbParksCoalition) for updates on the effort.

We also discovered that in 2000 Cobb County became a partner to the state-wide Georgia Greenspace Program to preserve 20 percent of all county land. The Georgia Greenspace Program became the Georgia Land Conservation Program, which offers financial incentives to counties and landowners preserving land. Visit [glcp.georgia.gov](http://glcp.georgia.gov) for more information.

You can spark change and positively impact the amount of land saved as parks, trails or green space in your area by taking these five steps:

- Research your county's green space acquisition plan online and connect with your local Sierra Club chapter to encourage your county to save land.
- Attend meetings to consult on opportunities to acquire more green space in your area.
- Draft a mission statement with clear goals for your group to present to friends, colleagues, like-minded groups and even to your local representatives.
- Start an email list to keep everyone up to date on the issues, events and news on park, trail and green space acquisition.
- Create a website, Facebook page or other social media presence to share your message with others interested in your efforts.

Here are a few ideas to present to county representatives or others to show the economic benefits of greenspace, trails and park creation:

- **Water:** Environmental resources, such as the water table, are saved for improved countywide sustainability. Also, with less impervious surfaces, flooding from runoff is less problematic.
- **Roads:** People need to drive less to get to nearby recreation areas, so there is less traffic and the roads need fewer upgrades and repairs.
- **More Funding:** Counties that protect their natural resources are the places people enjoy and want to visit. This directly benefits tourism and home values, both of which add dollars to the county digest.

Overall, preserving green space has triple bottom line benefits: for the economy, for the environment and for individuals. By saving land from development, home values increase, the watershed is protected, quality of life remains strong and tourists visit places where people enjoy living. 🌲



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# Connect the Comet! Extend the Beltline!

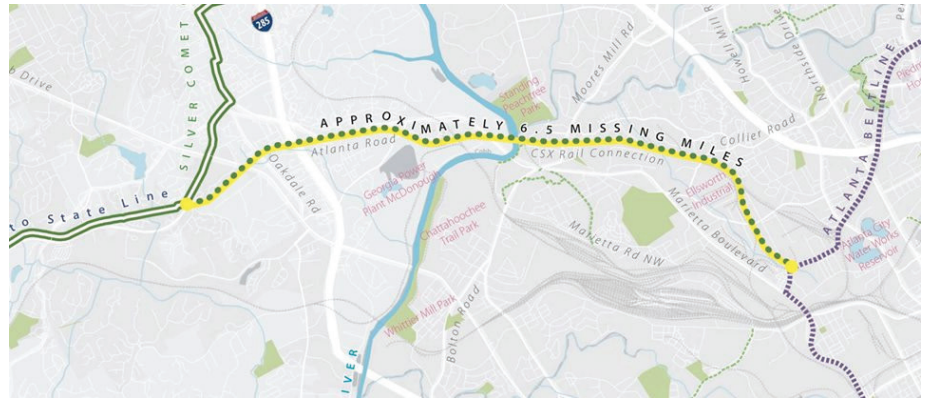
**By Larry Felton Johnson and Roberta Cook**

Imagine that you live in East Atlanta, and it's a cool, bright, sunny morning. You're in the mood for an all day bike ride, so you pack a picnic lunch, and load it into your panniers along with other supplies for a long day trip. You then take the short hop down Glenwood Avenue to the BeltLine, northward through Reynoldstown, onto the popular Eastside trail. You continue around the Beltline's loop until you reach the Silver Comet Trail, where you cross the Chattahoochee River near Atlanta's Bolton neighborhood and travel westward through Cobb County, and onward as far as Alabama.

On the other hand, if you live in the suburbs west of Atlanta, you could follow a similar path in reverse. From west Georgia, Mableton or Smyrna you could enter the Silver Comet Trail and make a day trip to the park, now in the planning stages, built around spectacular Bellwood Quarry, lunch at one of the nearby restaurants on Atlanta's westside, continue through dozens of Atlanta neighborhoods, loop back, and return home.

These trips will be possible once the Silver Comet Trail and the BeltLine are connected. A citizen effort called Connect the Comet has been underway for the past few years to make this dream a reality, supported by a number of organizations, including the PATH Foundation, River Line Historic Area, Bike Cobb and the Sierra Club Centennial Group.

The popular Silver Comet Trail was built in the 1990s, on the right-of-way of the historic rail line which hosted a passenger train of the same name. The train ran from New York City to Birmingham via Atlanta. Construction of



*The missing link of trails between the Silver Comet Trail (left) and Atlanta BeltLine (right)*

the SCT began in the 1990s, after CSX, the owner of the tracks, abandoned the line. The trail is owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation, and maintained by the counties and the PATH foundation. But the Silver Comet Trail was never completed. CSX continued to hold a 5.5-mile section from the East West Connector in Cobb County to Collier Road in Atlanta. That section is now in disuse, and CSX has removed the track from the crossings at Oakdale and Plant Atkinson Roads, but they haven't indicated any plans for the right-of-way.

Extending the Silver Comet Trail across the Chattahoochee and into the City of Atlanta has been in the Cobb DOT's planning document since 2009. Connect the Comet's proposal is to complete the path along the remaining portion of the Silver Comet tracks, from the current beginning at the East West Connector, across the river to Collier Road, and then to extend the path along Ellsworth Industrial Boulevard to the BeltLine.

The immediate obstacle for the project is that CSX has not yet begun negotiating over their right-of-way. The current disuse of the tracks, and the removal of track at key crossings, are reasons for optimism that they might

be willing to come to the table at some point.

The mission of Connect the Comet is to raise awareness about this exciting project, and to lobby CSX to sell the right-of-way. To get involved visit **ConnecttheComet.org**. There you to join the mailing list, sign the petition and join the Connect the Comet Facebook group. 🌲

*Larry Felton Johnson is a former board member of the River Line Historic Area (RLHA), a nonprofit preserving historic and natural resources bordering the west side of the Chattahoochee River joining parts of Vinings, Smyrna and Mableton, Georgia. The 5.5-mile section of disused CSX track referenced in the article bisects the RLHA geographically. Because connecting the Silver Comet to Atlanta's BeltLine has intrinsic value to the Historic Area, but is beyond the nonprofit's mission, Larry organized the first "Connect the Silver Comet" advocacy meeting in 2013, which evolved into the current dynamic "Connect the Comet" citizen organization. Larry is retired and has become a student of journalism.*

*For more information about the River Line Historic Area, contact Roberta Cook, Centennial Group member and president of River Line Historic Area, Inc. ([www.riverline.org](http://www.riverline.org)).*

# Meet Your Georgia Outings Leaders

*As we celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service, one of the best ways to explore our great public spaces in Georgia and beyond is through Sierra Club's outings program. On the following pages we take a closer look at this vital part of the Club's history, including profiles of Georgia outings leaders, previews of upcoming outings, and an update from the Atlanta Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program.*

## Terri Holcomb

### ***What is your connection to the outdoors?***

While growing up on a small farm in northwest Georgia, I didn't realize that not everyone could step out into their own backyards and see fields, forests and wildlife. Later I understood how important public lands were for me, and also for people who didn't have easy access to the outdoors.



### ***How long have been an outings leader? Why did you train to become a leader?***

I've been a leader for three months. By becoming a Sierra Club outings leader, I hope to get more people into the woods safely while creating a love of nature and physical movement and also to foster their desire to protect our forests, parks and wilderness areas.

### ***What is your favorite outdoor space or trail?***

The Cohutta Wilderness Area, specifically the Jacks River Trail and Jacks River Falls area, is very special to me because this was my first official backpacking trip. My first year of college, I belonged to a hiking club with a very good leader. He took our group into the Cohutta Mountains for our first hiking trip which also happened to be the first year it was designated as a wilderness area. We backpacked in, camped at the beautiful Jacks River Falls, then finished Jacks River trail with its many river crossings the next day. It impressed me that so many acres of land could be set aside by our government to be preserved and protected, letting nature take its course, and that they would always be there for us to visit. Since then I have hiked in and rafted through many wilderness areas, scenic rivers, state parks and national parks throughout the United States and Canada.

Many wonderful places in the United States are protected, and there are many more that should be. Now that northwest Georgia has become of interest to the oil drilling and fracking industry, it's time for those of us in Georgia to start working together to protect our own backyards.

## Cathie Neel

### ***Tell us about yourself.***

I am a Program Manager at an IT Company and have been a Sierra Club Member for over 30 years.

### ***What is your connection to the outdoors?***

I have always been an outdoor person. I'd much rather be doing something outside than be shopping or at the gym! My family spent a lot of time outdoors. For many years we would go to Colorado and New Mexico and stay in cabins to fish, hike and ride horses. I always hiked as I was growing up, sometimes more, sometimes less, but it has always been something I enjoy. I like biking too and have three bikes (two road and one mountain). When I used to travel, I would rent bikes in different cities and go on local bike trails on the weekends. While on assignment in Seattle, I rode so much that I bought a bike and shipped it home a year later. My love of nature is not limited to land either. I have been an avid scuba diver for over 25 years. Sometimes I like to just hover over coral and watch the micro life happen.



### ***How long have you been an outings leader and why?***

I became an outings leader in 2009. After a two-year hiatus, I started leading hikes again in April 2016. I love being outdoors and enjoy sharing my love of nature with people. That is when it is really great to be an outings leader! I think a lot of people like to hike, but are afraid to go on a new trail. Going with someone who knows the trail, who can take care of all of the planning, and is trained by a national organization, enables them to do something they really want to do. I am glad to have people hiking with me too! Getting people outside to see the beauty of a wilderness area makes them more likely to join a group like the Sierra Club to help keep wilderness areas safe.

### ***What is your favorite outdoor space or trail?***

Yonah Mountain is my favorite hike. The view from the top is wonderful – you can see for miles, and it is a rugged nature hike with steep terrain, granite outcroppings and high overhangs.

## Lynn Walston

### *Tell us about yourself.*

I'm a semi-retired teacher, having taught high school English and English as a Second Language to kindergarten and adult students. I also worked in social services for about fifteen years. Now I tutor part time and volunteer as the chair of the Centennial Group. I also work with a local nonprofit, Cobb Parks Coalition, to try to get the 2008 Park Bond issued to purchase more park and green space in Cobb. I feel it's important to try to protect our natural resources, so I try to help champion local and national campaigns to preserve them. I'm more of a moderate than a strenuous hiker, and I love to work in my yard.



### *What is your connection to the outdoors?*

I have always loved the outdoors. My father was an avid fisherman and small animal hunter (rabbits and squirrels: yes, we ate squirrel dumplings, as well as fried rabbit OFTEN). Although I was sad for the rabbits and squirrels my father killed, I realized that they did help supplement our modest meals. Since I was the oldest and had no brothers, I frequently went hunting with him as well as fishing and camping with our whole family.

I earned several nature-related Girl Scout badges as a youth, in bird-watching and other areas. I also enjoyed going on outings and campfire trips with other Scouts, as well as summer camp. I've hiked on many trails in the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area and in over fifteen U.S. National Parks. I've also hiked in eastern and western Canada, Germany and Ireland. Many others have enjoyed similar experiences, I know.

### *What is your favorite outdoor space or trail?*

I love the national parks I've visited, especially Bryce, Zion and Yosemite, but I also love the north Georgia mountains and the hiking trails I grew up with, like Amicalola Falls and Anna Ruby Falls.

### *When did you become an outings leader?*

I became an outings leader in 2014 and led my first outing at Red Top Mountain State Park, where I remember going to swim with my family as a child.

### *What do you enjoy about being an outings leader?*

I continue to enjoy helping others enjoy the outdoors through family-friendly outings. Last year I led a trip to the horse rescue center near Cumming. More recently in March, I led a tour of the Berry College Old Mill, Chestnut and Longleaf Pine Plantations, and dairy barn. After 30 years in the Sierra Club, my appreciation and enjoyment of our precious heritage in nature's bounty and the outdoors has only grown stronger.

## Karl Whitlock

### *How long have you been an outings leader?*

I am a recently trained outings leader. I joined the Sierra Club about six months ago looking for a group of like-minded folks who enjoy local hiking trails. I was pleasantly surprised by the warm welcome and opportunity to explore some trails.

I recently led my first hike to Jacks River Falls in the Co-hutta Wilderness in northwest Georgia. My mentor, Lee Graham, helped advise me about the logistics of outing leadership and the outing was successful. I am planning future outings to the Silver Comet Trail and Chestatee River to incorporate my interests in cycling and paddling.



### *Why are you an outings leader?*

My special interest is educating others about the psychological benefits of being outdoors. Spending time outside away from the rush and pressures of everyday life is one of the best stress relievers. Fortunately, I live close to Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park and hiking those trails has been healing for me over the past 25 years. Hope to meet you out there soon!

### *What is one of your most memorable outdoor experiences?*

I began exploring the forest as a child and have not stopped. My most memorable hike was a climb on Mount Washington in New Hampshire in May of the early 1980s. My friend and I began the hike in shorts, and at the summit we were greeted by a sign warning "winds have been clocked at 250 miles per hour." Fortunately, we were prepared with winter gear to deal with snow on the ground and wind pushing us backward. This was my first experience of the extreme changes in climate on a mountain that can occur when hiking only five to six hours. It was exhilarating and a great learning experience.

## Sierrans Take to Conasauga for Paddle Georgia



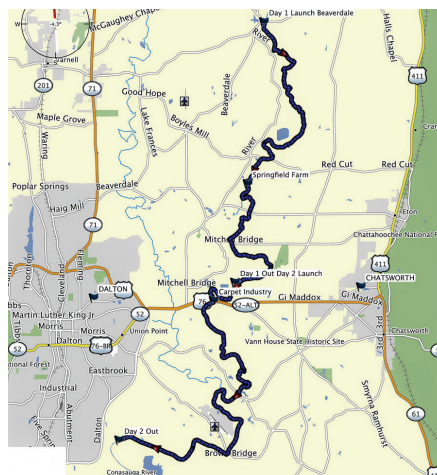
**By Bob and Jane Springfield**

We participated in Paddle Georgia Lite, the first two days of the weeklong, annual Paddle Georgia event. Conducted by the Georgia River Network, Paddle Georgia follows different rivers every year. Joe Cook with the Coosa River Basin Initiative is the lead organizer, and many other organizations and volunteers pitch in to make a grand family event with about 400 paddlers.

We paddled the 32-mile Conasauga River starting from north of Chatsworth, and concluding southeast of Dalton. This section of river forms the boundary between Whitfield and Murray Counties. For me, this was a trip down memory lane as I grew up in Dalton in the 50s and 60s. Back then, waste from the budding carpet industry was starting to be a problem. Our swimming hole on the Conasauga near my uncle's Murray County farm was polluted with agricultural runoff and by cows near or in the river. Presently, the water quality is reported to be improving but still has problems with fecal matter, metal, toxic chemicals, sediment and nutrients. Among the chemicals is one used to make stain-resistant carpet. Also, Dalton Utilities pumps out large quantities of water from the carpet industry.

Paddling along any river for several hours observing and thinking about what's happened to it is a very enlight-

ening experience. The scenery was beautiful. The upper section of the river was narrow with large trees on the riverside buffer providing shade. The water level was low this year, giving us a chance to hop out of our kayaks and splash around and cool off. Some of Bob's family members met us riverside at their farm for a lunchtime visit. We experienced the fun and chaos of 300 plus paddlers camping out at Murray County High School, eating in the school cafeteria and riding school buses to and from the river. We had mixed feelings when we departed, leaving the hearty souls paddling on for the rest of the week to Rome and bagging more than 100 miles of river time. For more information, visit the Paddle Georgia website ([http://www.garivers.org/paddle\\_georgia](http://www.garivers.org/paddle_georgia)) and the Wikipedia page for the Conasauga River. 🌲



## Atlanta ICO: Helping Kids Enjoy Green Space in Georgia



*Atlanta ICO participants on a recent outing to Red Top Mountain State Park*

**By Al Merrill**

Throughout the spring, Sierra Club Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) volunteers partnered with local youth organizations to take kids to fun and interesting places where they could experience the outdoors and learn about nature. The outings included hiking along the river and hills of the Island Ford Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (funded by a mini-grant from the National Park Service) and Sweetwater Creek State Park. Kids also enjoyed stand-up paddle boarding and hiking at Red Top Mountain State Park, and visits to the Chattahoochee Nature Center to learn how the Chattahoochee River affects our local communities. And finally, there were lots of games—volleyball, American football and international football (soccer).

Participating kids were from the International Rescue Committee, the Global Village Project and the Warren/Holyfield and A. Worley Brown Boys & Girls Clubs. During the outings, Sierra Club volunteers pointed out interesting geologic features, flora and fauna, and discussed energy conservation, sustainability and the rivers as a source of water, renewable energy and recreation. Anyone interested in learning more, and possibly helping, should visit the web site: <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta-ico>. 🌲

## Outings

*Sierra Club Outings provide a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors. To find out more about what outings are being offered, please visit our website at:*

<http://sierraclub.org/georgia/outings>

**Thursday, Aug. 25, 2016**

### **Sunset Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Leader:** Sammy Padgett - 770-786-3100, [sammypadgett@comcast.net](mailto:sammypadgett@comcast.net)

**Presented by:** Georgia Chapter

**Rated:** Moderate

**Location:** 3787 Klondike Road, Lithonia, GA

**Description:** This is the day President Woodrow Wilson signed the legislation to create the National Park Service. So come help me celebrate the 100-year birth day of our NPS. What better way to celebrate than to watch an awesome sunset from the top of Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area? We will meet in the newer gravel lot, walk the board walk over to south parking lot then walk to the top of the mountain to relax, eat some dinner and tell tales of what national parks we have been to. This will be an easy, casual hike/walk that is about 3 miles. Bring what ever you want to eat and drink. My plan is to spend about 45 minutes or so on top of the mountain so bring your camera, sketch pad, kite, book, or whatever to enjoy a relaxing sunset. Then we will walk the same way back to our cars. You may want to bring a flashlight since the sun will be down on the way back.



**Find Your Local Chapter Outings @**  
<http://sierraclub.org/georgia/outings>



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

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For more info and confidential assistance, contact:

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# Sierrans Work to Impact Georgia's Energy Plan

By Erin Glynn

One of the biggest threats facing our national parks is climate change. Still, our nation's energy utilities continue to rely on expensive, polluting fossil fuels to power homes and businesses. Here in Georgia, our Beyond Coal campaign is working on our state's transition to a clean energy future.

Every three years since 1991, the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) reviews an application from Georgia Power for approval of its 20-year energy plan, also known as the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). The specifics of this year's plan and process are included below.

## The Nuclear Option

Georgia Power's original plan included the "option" to consider nuclear power plant construction in West Georgia on 7,000 acres of land abutting the Chattahoochee River in Stewart County. Business writer Kristi Swartz initially broke the story of this "nuclear option" and it became the subject of much scrutiny by the PSC and the public throughout the course of this year's planning process. Although a number of commissioners "praise nuclear power," none of the five members of the PSC appeared to support this nuclear proposal packaged in this year's plan.

The commissioners appeared to take greatest offense to the proposal because of its timing. First, this new option would run concurrent with Vogtle, a project replete with budgetary and completion failures. Second, the inclusion of Stewart County came to the PSC's attention after the company had already purchased the land. Stewart County deeds show that Georgia Power paid St. Joe Timberland over \$11,500,000 for roughly 3,000 acres, and paid Timberlands II \$9 million for 2,337 acres. This amounts to a cost of roughly \$3,850



Chapter Director Ted Terry moderates a recent Energy Justice Town Hall event in Savannah

per acre. This sort of "land speculation" is exactly what the PSC is intended to oversee and regulate; the purchasing of 7,000 acres is a huge capital expenditure.

Last-minute invitations to the nuclear power party aside, the main concern with the Stewart County proposal is its potential burden on ratepayers, through capital and additional cost recoupment. Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, drafted a motion to separate the Stewart County nuclear proposal from the current plan stating that 2019 will be a better time to discuss the proposal. Sierra Club endorsed Commissioner McDonald's motion in a June opinion-editorial in the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer and will continue to stay engaged in defeating the project. "Put solar on those 7,000 acres," we stated, "and let the Company pay for it themselves." While we recognize the sensitive wildlife habitat issues that will arise in any large-scale development, we are committed to making sure those concerns are properly addressed.

For the latest from the ground (er, river) on the Stewart County project, readers are encouraged to support the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper by visiting <https://chattahoochee.org/>.

## Testimony, Hearings and Progress

During the three rounds of public hearings, negotiations and document review, Sierra Club was well represented by Attorney Zachary Fabish of Sierra Club in D.C. and Attorney Robert Jackson of GreenLaw in Atlanta. Sierra Club presented testimony from energy experts Tim Woolf and Jeremy Fisher on the topics of coal retirement, the expansion of renewables, and the value of demand-side management. In favor of our position to expand renewables and phase out dirty coal, we also submitted 1,039 public comments in hard copy form and hosted three community forums attended by more than 150 clean energy supporters.

In addition to the retirements at Plants Kraft and Mitchell, the Georgia Power's initial plan only contained 525 megawatts (MW) of solar energy. While this was a recognizable nod in the proper direction, based on the amount of solar generation already installed by Georgia Power, 525 MW was regressive. So, we pushed for more. Our goal for the 2016 plan was to achieve a commitment for

*Continued on next page*

## Concerns Remain About Cooper Creek Project



**By Fenly Foxen**

In late March 2016, Georgia ForestWatch, the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, and the Southern Environmental Law Center teamed up to meet with the Blue Ridge Ranger District to discuss the Cooper Creek project. The District proposed a few tweaks to the project that the team felt would improve the project, but did not make any suggestions that would address the major concerns with the project. The team is now waiting for the draft decision notice to hear what changes, if any, will be made.

The Wildlands and Wildlife Committee is also waiting to hear an outcome, after sending comments from environmentalists to the Forest Service in response to an updated proposal released by the District in early 2016.

The Forest Service proposes 2,500 acres of cutting in Cooper Creek and surrounding watersheds in Union County. Initially, the plan was to cut 3,500 acres of trees in Cooper Creek,

Coosa Creek, Youngcane Creek and Bryant Creek watersheds in North Georgia; all of these watersheds make up one of the most spectacular landscapes of the Chattahoochee National Forest. The Forest Service has proposed a number of treatments but in most cases half the trees would be cut.

Environmental groups are calling it the worst project seen in years. The Georgia Water Coalition selected the Cooper Creek Watershed Project for inclusion on its 2015 Dirty Dozen list as one of the 12 worst offenses to Georgia's waters.

Concerns regarding the Cooper Creek project include:

- Cutting the stands in the watershed of Bryant Creek will threaten trout streams in Georgia.
- The Forest Service is proposing to cut oak forests and towering white pines. Acorns are an important food source for a wide variety of species.
- Timber harvesting will increase soil erosion and raise water temperatures.
- Over 300 acres of commercial logging are proposed in an area that the Forest Service previously designated for dispersed recreation and as being "unsuitable for timber production."
- The Cooper Creek Watershed Project would use chemical herbicides to control plant growth after cutting. Some herbicides used by the Forest Service in the past have been linked to cancer in humans and can destroy critical habitat for native pollinators.
- The Forest Service needs to consider how this project will affect climate change and how it can better protect and maintain ecosystems in their natural, undeveloped state. 🌲

*IRP, continued from previous page*

2,000 MW of solar power and 1,000 MW of wind-generated power. We also wanted to see a 1.5 percent energy efficiency goal over the next three years. At the time of this article's writing, the PSC and Georgia Power have agreed to tripling the amount of solar initially proposed by the utility, amounting to 1.6 gigawatts of solar energy — enough to power more than 250,000 homes.

On coal, the PSC and Georgia Power agreed in a stipulation to "minimize all capital expenditures" at old coal plants Hammond in Rome and McIntosh near Savannah, and to "work together to address retirement study" within six months of the final order of this year's plan. This study is to conclude at least 12 months prior to the next IRP filing in 2019. These compromises that increase solar and address the sunk costs of propping up dinosaur fossil fuel plants are major victories and set the stage for a deeper discussion on responsible transition away from coal.

Unfortunately, wind and energy efficiency did not see similar victories. On wind, Clean Line Energy Partners filed as

an intervenor in the case, but a recent stipulation between the PSC and Georgia Power places a 300 MW cap on wind. On efficiency, Georgia Power and the PSC have been reticent to set a numeric goal on energy efficiency, and instead are burying actual energy savings behind small-scale projects that are unlikely to achieve major gains. Perhaps this reflects a failure of the public advocacy world to properly "sell" efficiency, or perhaps it reflects a greater misguided conviction that consumption is the key to wealth creation. Whatever the root of the problem to increase efficiency is, it is a problem that needs to be identified and fixed.

### What's Next?

The plan was approved on July 28. The newly authorized responsible transition planning docket is required to begin by February 2017, in which rural and coastal residents, businesses and stakeholders are encouraged to participate. The Smart Energy Committee meets on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. To find out more, contact Beyond Coal Organizer Ian Karra at [ian.karra@sierraclub.org](mailto:ian.karra@sierraclub.org). 🌲

# Support Transit, Expand MARTA!

## Atlanta Residents Have Historic Opportunity in November Referendum

By Brionté McCorkle

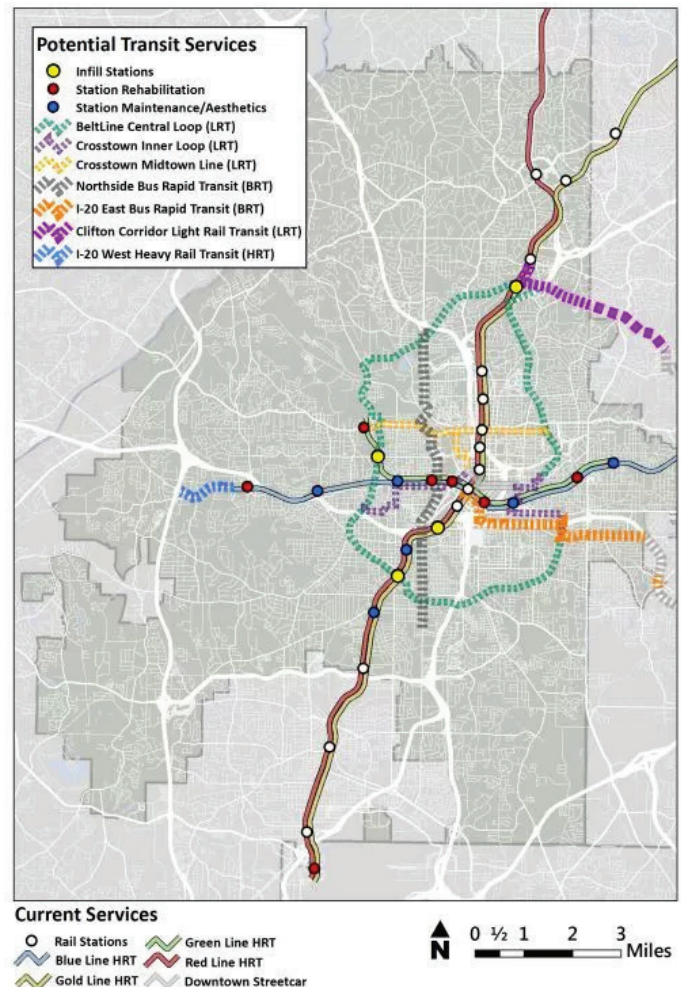
In 2015, Americans drove enough to travel to Pluto and back again 337 times. Our cars, trucks and airplanes emit more carbon dioxide than power plants, making transportation the biggest threat to the environment. This trend shows no signs of slowing down: Emissions from the sector increased nearly 17 percent from 1990 to 2014, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), reflecting a 37 percent rise in miles driven. While electric vehicles can help reduce emissions and oil consumption, as long as we continue to build our towns and cities around cars, the demand for driving will keep growing.

There is another way, and that is building walkable communities that reduce how far someone must travel to access jobs, food and recreation. In some cases, trips by car can be eliminated altogether. Achieving this means increasing our investment in transportation choices like trains and buses, and building more bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Atlanta is positioned to make great strides towards this end later this year.

The metro Atlanta region has long been the litmus test for whether the state should invest in expansion of transit and other means of alternative transportation. After years of refusing to aid MARTA and consequently worsening congestion in the region, Georgia legislators have given the transit system the opportunity to ask voters in the City of Atlanta to raise their sales tax by 0.5 percent to fund its expansion in the region's core. Projects that MARTA will pursue include completion of the 22-mile BeltLine loop and expansion of the Atlanta Streetcar. These projects have the potential to complement existing MARTA service and connect people to jobs, as well as to parks and green spaces throughout the city.

This is a great opportunity, not just for Atlanta but the whole state, as it creates a strong transit network for the rest of Georgia to connect to in the future through passenger rail service. Imagine being able to walk or ride your bike to the nearest transit station and relaxing while you sail past people sitting in their cars in air-polluting traffic jams on your way to work, school or one of Georgia's many outdoor recreation areas. To fulfill this vision, substantial investment in transit must begin right away.

Now that the Atlanta City Council has voted to allow the referendum to take place, its voters can expect a question on



*A map of potential extensions to the existing MARTA rail and streetcar networks that could be funded by the proposed half-penny sales tax in the City of Atlanta. Other potential projects include new bus rapid transit corridors and improved frequency on existing bus routes.*

this November's ballot. Additionally, voters in Atlanta will also see an additional 0.4 percent transportation special purpose local option sales tax (TSPLOST) that would fund projects to complement MARTA's efforts. Voters in Fulton County will also consider their own 0.75 percent TSPLOST; however, it involves minimal investment in transit or other transportation choices.

To learn more about our transportation work, visit us online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/rail>. 🌲

# Veteran Finds Hope and Peace in the Outdoors

**By Lornett Vestal**

*It was a warm June day in the Talamanca Mountains of Costa Rica; my new friend Christine Cruise had spent the last several days at our host family's home trying to convince me to go white water rafting. I'd never done anything like this before. Yet, here I stood with several other volunteers from Habitat for Humanity on the Pacuare River. It was a hot, muggy and humid day. These bright yellow rafts would take me on an adventure of a lifetime...*

Before I joined the Navy in June 2001, my experience in the outdoors was no more than my boyhood adventures playing in the woods, digging up worms out of the dirt, and catching grasshoppers during the hot Midwest summers. By the time I joined the Navy, though, I was a city kid from Chicago, Illinois. During my time in the service, I learned to work with people from various racial, social and religious backgrounds. We were men and women working together to achieve a common goal.

I had never seen the ocean growing up and, despite its beauty, Lake Michigan can never compare to the majestic power of the world's ocean. I witnessed a lunar eclipse while on the Indian Ocean on my first deployment to Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom. It was the first time in many years that I stood in awe of nature's beauty - even in the midst of modern warfare. I've now been lucky to sail the waters of the Pacific, the Southern and Indian Oceans, the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. On stressful days at sea on the USS Cleveland LPD-7, I would come out to the flight deck when operations were down. I would stand at the bow of the ship and watch the dolphins swim alongside the forecastle. I saw the beauty of bioluminescence through thousands of jellyfish lighting up the night sea in the Persian Gulf; it was only matched by the beauty of the night's sky.

I developed a taste for travel, and



Lornett Vestal and Pete Johnson at a recent Sierra Club Military Outdoors event

wanted to see more of the world. Six months before getting out I volunteered to spend a summer in beautiful Costa Rica building homes for those less fortunate. Just one month after receiving my honorable discharge from the United States Navy, I stood on that riverbed in Costa Rica preparing to have my first white water adventure. We hit a Class 5 rapid on the last section of the river, and our raft capsized. We were all dumped into the river, and I hit my head on a rock. The helmet saved my life that day, and I still proudly wear a scar from that eventful day on the Pacuare River.

Fast forward 11 years later and now I have a new mission to accomplish, which is building the Sierra Club Military Outdoors program in the Southeast. My time in nature didn't end after my trip in Costa Rica; back home in the Midwest I found personal redemption via sweat lodges in the woods of northern Illinois, and the backyards of Chicago. I dealt with many years of insomnia, and depression which manifested itself as early as during my first deployment. Upon entering graduate school for social work, I learned that many men and women that served in the Armed Forces suffer invisible wounds from depression,

insomnia and PTSD born in the seven seas or the deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan. I owe my life to a vet who helped me in a time of need and a good friend who brought me to the sacred space that is the sweat lodge. I now hope that my fellow veteran and military brethren can find redemption in the beauty of nature.

The goal of Sierra Club Military Outdoors is to ensure that service members, veterans and their families have the skills, exposure, knowledge and confidence to access the great outdoors. They can enjoy the lands they once swore to protect. A University of California Berkeley long-term study (<http://news.berkeley.edu/2016/05/31/awevs-war/>) in partnership with Sierra Club Outdoors has found that time spent outdoors in nature can positively impact the ill effects of PTSD. Many veterans experience difficulty adjusting to civilian life after leaving the service, or have trouble with invisible wounds through PTSD. By providing service members, veterans and their families with quality outdoor experiences we hope to foster the development of a new generation of Sierra Club leaders. I hope my brothers and sisters in arms can find peace through nature just like I did.

Please stop by the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter office, or reach me at [lornett.vestal@sierraclub.org](mailto:lornett.vestal@sierraclub.org) or 404-607-1262 ext. 222, especially if you are interested in leading outings within this program. 🌲



A Sierra Club Military Outdoors outing to Lake Lanier

### Meet Our New Staff While Supporting Sierra Club's PAC



Political season is upon us and many pro-environment candidates will be up for election this November. Please join us at our Decatur office for a special Sierra Club Political Action Committee Fundraiser on the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 14 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Meet our newest staff members, Chapter Director Ted Terry, Chapter Coordinator Jessica Morehead, and Sierra Club Military Outdoors Coordinator Lornett Vestal. We will be joined by several elected officials and candidates for office. Refreshments will be served. RSVP at [bit.ly/MeetGAStaff](http://bit.ly/MeetGAStaff).

Suggested contribution is \$100, but any amount is welcome! You can give online with your RSVP, or you can give in person at the event. We will accept cash, cards and checks. If writing a check, please make it payable to the Georgia Sierra Club PAC.

If you are interested in serving on the host committee please contact Ted at [ted.terry@sierraclub.org](mailto:ted.terry@sierraclub.org).

Contributions to the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter PAC are not tax-deductible.

### Call for Chapter ExCom Nominations

The Chapter Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for the Executive Committee (ExCom). The Chapter ExCom has oversight responsibility for the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club to ensure that it is carrying out our mission productively. If you know of someone who would be a good ExCom member, or if you are interested in serving yourself, contact Jeffrey Schoenberg at [schoenbergjhe@gmail.com](mailto:schoenbergjhe@gmail.com). Chapter and Group candidate statements and any nomination petitions for petition candidates must be submitted by Sept. 1, 2016. You may refer to the Chapter website (<http://www.georgia.sierraclub.org>) to review the responsibilities of ExCom.

Complete rules for the election are posted on the Sierra Club website. Ballots with candidate statements will be mailed by Oct. 15. Ballots must be received by 5 p.m., Nov. 17 in the Chapter office in Decatur. Details for returning ballots and ballot counting will be published in the next Sierran.

### Jessica Morehead Joins Georgia Chapter Staff



Jessica Morehead, Chapter Coordinator

I'm a Georgia native and have lived most of my adult life in Atlanta. Lucky for me, my grandparents moved up into the north Georgia mountains when I was little. Some of my fondest memories are from playing in the woods in Peaceful Valley. But as I got older my grandparents did too, and eventually they sold their land and I no longer went to the mountains. It would not be until years later that a pivotal desert road trip would spark my return to the forest and the mountains.

The excitement of hiking into the Grand Canyon, splashing through The Narrows at Zion, and travelling this beautiful country of ours awakened a passion in me. Soon I was preparing for my first solo backpacking trip back home in Georgia. At the time, I was working at a school and spending every holiday break outside. I remember asking a good friend of mine, "Am I going to get tired of this? Should I really spend my money on all this gear?" A few years later, there is no dust on my gear.

While my love for the outdoors grew, so did my desire to help protect and preserve the natural world around me. I made the jump to follow my passion and get involved! I started coordinating and leading stewardship hikes around north Georgia. I also volunteered with the Georgia Conservancy's Stewardship Trips Program. A driving force for me has been my conviction that taking people outside, especially while emphasizing exploration and stewardship, helps foster an appreciation and fondness for the outdoors, resulting in a desire to protect and conserve our resources, wildlife and land.

An environment and conservation enthusiast, I come to the Sierra Club after managing a grants program at Park Pride. I could not be more thrilled to find myself working for an environment-focused organization like the Sierra Club! I'm looking forward to becoming an outings leader and developing our volunteer program into an exceptional program where everyone feels welcome to join, get involved and grow with us as we continue to lead Georgia to environmental victories!

## Volunteers Wanted!

The Sierra Club is made possible by our many dedicated volunteers who contribute their time and skills to helping us fulfill our mission to explore, enjoy and protect the environment.

After five and a half fun-filled years, we bid farewell to our amazing bookkeeper, **Lynn Beach**, who has kept the Georgia Chapter running through her hard work in so many areas beyond keeping the books straight! Her contributions behind the scenes served as a solid foundation for the vital work we have done for Georgia's environment. We thank you, Lynn, and wish you luck on your new endeavors as a full-time schoolteacher. Those kids are lucky to have you!

We also say bon voyage to **William Tomlin**, our Wildlands and Wildlife Committee Chair. William has been an excellent committee chair for the past two years, and our wildlands work has been focused, well-communicated and well-executed un-



Lynn Beach



William Tomlin

der his leadership. William will be spending more time on the West Coast as he continues to pursue opportunities for personal and professional growth. We greatly appreciate your service. Have fun in this new chapter of your life, William (and if you're ever in John Muir Woods, send us a postcard)!

Looking for fun ways to give back and make a difference? Sign up to be a volunteer for the Sierra Club! There are many ways that you can volunteer your time. Whether you are an expert on your local trail system or you want to support your local Chapter as a webmaster, help out Atlanta ICO by becoming their treasurer, or contribute your expertise or talents to an issue committee, the Sierra Club wants you! To find out about the various volunteer opportunities and to apply, visit us online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/get-involved>.



Juliette Beck

## Cut Clear Cutting

Americans deserve clean air and water, healthy forests and a sustainable economy. In California alone, over a million acres of forested land are scheduled for clear-cut type logging. Clearcutting and loss of natural forests is harming water quality, air quality, wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism throughout the nation. Help the Sierra Club fight to replace clear cutting with sustainable logging.

## Make the Cut & JOIN Sierra Club

Georgia Sierran 🌲 July/August/September 2016

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 15	N/A
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35

Contributions, gifts & dues to Sierra Club are tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$ 7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine and \$ 1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Enclose a check and mail to: Sierra Club,  
PO Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041  
or visit our website: [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

# Centennial Group

## Outings and Events

The Centennial Group has had over 22 outings so far in 2016 with hundreds of people involved. Thanks to all outings leaders and volunteers! In April, we were happy to host the most recent Outings Leader Training (OLT) and Basic First Aid at REI Kennesaw; since then, five Centennial trainees have led initial hikes and become certified leaders.



**Recent Outings:** Kennesaw Mountain, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Emery Falls in the Cohutta Wilderness, Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina, Benton MacKaye Trail on the Appalachian Trail, and more.



**Recent Events:** We had a terrific turnout and response at two recent tabling events: Back to the Chattahoochee River Race & Festival in Roswell (June 11), and the Cobb NAACP Juneteenth Festival in Marietta (June 18).

**Upcoming Event:** We look forward to participating again in the EAST COBBER Parade & Festival on Saturday, Sept. 17. Please walk with us or help us with tabling. Contact Lynn at [lynnwalston22@yahoo.com](mailto:lynnwalston22@yahoo.com).



## Monthly Meetings

**August** – NO MEETING. We are taking a break; August meeting canceled.

**September 1** – 7 p.m. at Life University: “Frozen Politics in a Warming World.” Dr. Augustus (Gus) B. Cochran III, Political Science Professor and Chair at Agnes Scott College, discusses the challenge of timely decision-making in today’s politics and its implications for the current election (as well as broader issues like climate change, overpopulation and pollution). Also ... latest updates on endorsements and key races for November.

## Parks and Green Space News

Centennial members continue to be active and involved with the Cobb Parks Coalition and efforts to have 2008 voter-approved referendum funds allocated and released for the purchase of more park land. Recently, this campaign has received local and national press coverage. Like many areas of metro Atlanta, we are overdeveloped and in dire need of more green space. The Cobb County Board of Commissioners (BOC) has tasked the Recreation Board to assess available land; their report is due in October. We are encouraging the BOC to begin purchase of previously approved parcels now. We still need help strategizing, planning, letter writing and speaking at commission meetings and other forums. For more information see [www.cobbparkscoalition.org](http://www.cobbparkscoalition.org).

**- Lynn Walston**

# Metro Atlanta Group

## Recent Meetings

■ **April:** Coinciding with Sierra Club's month of John Muir outings, Gordon Draves relayed his bicycling adventures on the Great Allegheny Passage trail.

■ **May:** Ahead of the May 24 local primary elections, several area political candidates who had earned endorsements from the Georgia Chapter spoke with us about stopping petroleum pipelines, MARTA expansion, and other state and local issues.

Our annual June picnic was postponed. The new date will be announced later. Meanwhile, here's an upcoming action opportunity to help improve how we get around and enjoy our city:

This summer, look out for a proposed percentage amount for a short-term TSPLOST tax to fund transportation/livability infrastructure, along with a proposed project list, to come from Atlanta's city council. Please check <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/rail/atltrnsit> for information on the TSPLOST and the long-term MARTA expansion measure, both coming to City of Atlanta ballots this November.

## Adopt-a-Stream at Medlock Park

The next monitoring date is **Saturday, Sept. 17**, from 10-11 a.m. for chemical monitoring and 10 a.m.-12 p.m. for biological monitoring. For information about chemical monitoring dates, call Larry Kloet at 404-636-7226. For more details about biological monitoring, call Nancy Wylie at 404-256-1172. If you are interested in helping with chemical monitoring in August, please contact Larry Kloet.

*For more information, directions, and updates please see*  
**[www.sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta](http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta)**

## Get Involved

■ Are you passionate about pollinators? A booster for bees? The Georgia Chapter Wildlands & Wildlife Committee needs you! Contact Jessica Morehead, chapter coordinator, at [jessica.morehead@sierraclub.org](mailto:jessica.morehead@sierraclub.org) or 404-607-1262.

■ We're looking for a treasurer and a webmaster! Interested? Contact executive committee member Nina at [nddutton@gmail.com](mailto:nddutton@gmail.com).

■ Want to talk up Sierra Club and put together fun activities at Atlanta festivals? Have ideas for outings or future featured speakers? What local environmental issues are on your mind? Contact Nina at the email address above.

■ Sign up for email updates in the short form on the right-hand side of our webpage at <http://sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta>.

■ Get the latest info on events and action opportunities at our webpage or on our Facebook page ([facebook.com/sierraclubATL](https://facebook.com/sierraclubATL)).

■ Find petitions and events for national and local Sierra Club campaigns at [AddUp.org](http://AddUp.org), which is searchable by zip code.

**- Nina Dutton**

*The Metro Atlanta Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month. Typically our meetings feature a speaker on a timely topic. Recently we have been meeting at the Georgia Chapter office, at 743 E. College Ave. Suite B, Decatur, Georgia 30030. Please join us.*

*Find us on Facebook at*  
**[www.facebook.com/SierraClubATL](https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubATL)**

# Greater Gwinnett Group

Being located in the northern wildlands of Gwinnett, our group has been defining ourselves to the local community. Whether it is through our programs on the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area (CNRA), Beyond Coal, or cleaning up a CNRA location, our members have been busy.

While summer is often the time to slow down and make the living easy, we are planning a forum for Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners candidates to express their views on public transportation and explore what the effects of improved public transportation would have on Gwinnettians' quality of life. The forum will give our members and other Gwinnett citizens the opportunity to ask questions and to become better informed as to how candidates view public

transportation.

Our stream monitoring gives members and the community the opportunity to see firsthand the health of one of Gwinnett's streams and to talk with our resident stream expert, Michael Hallen. There is the added benefit of being around cool water when the temperature is in the mid 90s.

We are also writing our Congressional representatives, legislators and Public Service Commission members to express the need to increase our clean energy sources and to end the use of coal as an energy source.

There is a lot going on. Take a look at our Facebook or Meetup page and join us for a program!

**- Dan Friedman**

## LaGrange Group

Spring is always quite busy with festivals such as Earth Day and others which offer opportunities for tabling and sharing the basics about Sierra Club with our community. The LaGrange Group participated in the annual Hillside Montessori Earth Day Celebration, LaGrange College Earth Day Banquet and the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's Chattahoochee Valley River Revival. A pair of us also shared a PowerPoint presentation with a class of environmental science students from Point University. Thank yous to Kathryn Adams, Sam Breyfogle, Andrea Richard and Joanna Baxter for your help!

Shortly after Ian Karra's Beyond Coal presentation at our March meeting, we were selected to host a Town Hall Meeting to educate the public about Georgia Power's three-year plan and to offer opportunities for folks to comment to the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC). Though we were disappointed that none of our PSC members attended, we were still able to submit comments to the PSC via ac-



tion cards and statements recorded by Ian Karra and Erin Glynn. Fortunately, one of our members, Andrea Richard, a LaGrange College student, was able to reserve a very nice venue at the college, and our excellent hospitality crew, headed by member Ellen Parkhurst, provided very ample refreshments (including homemade sushi!) for the 50 attendees.

A shout out to Ken Fiske for organizing and offering us the opportunity to "de-litter" a section of a state highway as part of the annual Great American Cleanup.

We offered several fun spring outings. Outings leader Joanna Baxter offered a tour of the Ferrell Gardens at Hills & Dales Estate. On another outing, a large group boarded the West

Point Lake Floating Classroom for a Guided Wildlife Tour coordinated by Laura Breyfogle through Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. An adventurous group of paddlers chose to view the rare shoal lilies on Flat Shoal Creek. We got wet but were graced by bald eagle flight as well as the sight of the lilies in full bloom. Others chose to visit member Stephen Johnson's cabin before hiking to view the lilies across his land. Lastly, this year's annual farm tour featured two family farms of members of the West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Thanks to member Eric Simpson for coordinating this outing and to Joanna Baxter for organizing it. We encourage everyone to get outside as much as possible!

**- Laura Breyfogle**



## Savannah River Group



One of our favorite outings is to see the endangered shoals spider-lily. One flower per plant opens per day and this prolongs the pollination period. Seeds drop into the water when mature and are carried by water currents and lodged in crevices among rocks. Our own botanist, Dr. Judy Gordon, led an outing to see these protected lilies in Stevens Creek at a mill near Plum Branch, South Carolina, and afterwards we all enjoyed a lunch by the creek.

Most people are aware of the giant sequoias in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in California, which are some of the largest trees in the world. But few people know about one of our greatest treasures on the East Coast - the Congaree National Park in South Carolina. The Congaree has the largest tract of old-growth bottomland hardwood forest left in the United States, and some of the trees are among the tallest in the eastern U.S., forming one of the highest temperate deciduous forest canopies remaining in the world. We do at least one outing every year to the Congaree, sometimes day trips and sometimes overnight. Watch for our next outing and plan to join us!



Our outings leaders organize bike trips just about every month that are designed to introduce the public to biking trails in both Georgia and South Carolina and are suitable for beginners or advanced cyclists. These outings always include time to replenish the calories expended by stopping at locally owned restaurants.

Interested in geology? A recent outing at the Martin Marietta (MM) stone quarry near the Augusta Canal was led by an MM employee. This is an enormous operation. Millions of tons of mylonite have been mined at this quarry and they expect to be able to mine for this stone for the next 500 years! Some of us talk about reducing our energy footprint, but three Savannah River Group leaders responded to the call.

They installed solar panels on their homes and, when it came time to replace their vehicles, two purchased an electric car and one purchased a hybrid. If you're considering buying a new vehicle, check out the article, "An Electric Vehicle Buyer's Guide: Low-cost options are hitting the road" on Sierra Club's national website.

**- Linda McBurney**



# Chapter Contacts

## Executive Committee

**Chair:** David Emory, 404-433-4914,  
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*At-Large Elected Member*

**Vice Chair - Conservation:** Mark Woodall,  
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*At-Large Elected Member*

Diane Shearer, 404-388-1217,  
djshearer@bellsouth.net  
*At-Large Elected Member*

## Chapter ExCom Meeting

The next Chapter Executive Committee meeting will be Saturday, Sept. 17. Meetings are open to the membership. For more information, call the Chapter office at 404-607-1262 x221.

## Officers & Chairs

**Conservation Chair:** Larry Winslett,  
winfog@windstream.net

**Conservation Vice Chair:** Alan Toney,  
mudflat@comcast.net

**Secretary:** Eddie Ehler, edehler@bellsouth.net

**Treasurer:** Tom Neff, tsneff2003@yahoo.com

**Finance Chair:** Sam Booher, sbooher@aol.com

**Fundraising Chair:** *vacant*

**Human Resources Chair:** *vacant*

**Legislative Chair:** Mark Woodall,  
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**Litigation Chair:** Norman Slawsky,  
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lcrumpton1@gmail.com and Sharon Soucek,  
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**Newsletter Editors:** Diane Shearer and Tanya  
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**Outings Chair:** Sammy Padgett,  
sammypadgett@comcast.net

**Political Chair:** Eddie Ehler,  
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**Webmaster:** Charlotte Gardner,  
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## Issue Campaigns and Contacts

**Clean Air:** Dale Kemmerick,  
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- **Marine Species/Habitat:** Karen Grainey,  
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- **Okefenokee Swamp:** Sam Collier,  
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- **Savannah Port:** Steve Willis,  
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**Factory Farms:** Leah Garces,  
leah.garces@ciwf.org

**Organic and Locally Grown Foods:** Bryan  
Hager, bhager@mindspring.com

**Population:** Todd Daniel,  
todddan@mac.com

**Recycling:** Lori Blank, lblank@hotmail.com

**Regional Action to Improve Livability (RAIL):**  
*Meeting: 4th Monday, 7 p.m., Chapter office.*  
*Committee sometimes skips months. Email first.*

## Smart Energy Solutions:

Eleanor Hand, eghand@bellsouth.net and  
Cecilia Harris, ceciliaharris@gmail.com  
*Meeting: 1st Monday, 7 p.m., Chapter office*

- **Beyond Coal:** Ian Karra,  
ian.karra@sierraclub.org

- **Natural Gas:** *vacant*

- **Nuclear:** Glenn Carroll,  
atom.girl@nonukesyall.org

- **Solar:** Thomas Jackson, tj31975@gmail.com

- **Wind:** Eleanor Hand, eghand@bellsouth.net

## Water Sentinels/Adopt-a-Stream:

Sam Booher, sbooher@aol.com

## Wildlands and Wildlife:

*Meeting: 3rd Monday, 7 p.m., Chapter office.*  
*Committee sometimes skips months. Email first.*

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

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

- **Rivers and Wetlands:** Keith Parsons,  
kparsons@mindspring.com

- **State Lands/Georgia DNR:** Phil Zinsmeister,  
pzinsmeister@oglethorpe.edu

## Georgia Chapter Staff

### Chapter Director:

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ted.terry@sierraclub.org

### Assistant Chapter Director:

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brionte.mccorkle@sierraclub.org

### Chapter Coordinator:

Jessica Morehead, 404-607-1262 x221,  
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## National Staff

### Beyond Coal Organizing Representative:

Ian Karra, 404-607-1262 x233,  
ian.karra@sierraclub.org

### Southeast Military Veterans & Outdoors

**Coordinator:** Lornett Vestal, 404-607-1262 x222,  
lornett.vestal@sierraclub.org

## Sierra Club National Programs

### Inspiring Connections Outdoors

Contact Terri Lyde (lydeterri@bellsouth.net) for  
more information.

### Sierra Student Coalition

Contact Tyler Faby (tfaby@uga.com) 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://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/get-involved>.

## Centennial Group

*Serving Cobb, Cherokee & North Fulton*

**Chair/Meetings Contact:** Lynn Walston, [lynnwalston22@yahoo.com](mailto:lynnwalston22@yahoo.com)

**Outings Chair:** Lee Graham, [leegrah3@gmail.com](mailto:leegrah3@gmail.com), 404-202-9065

**Meetings:** 1st Thursday, welcome/refreshments 7 p.m., program 7:30 p.m.; Life College, 1269 Barclay Cir. SE, Marietta. For directions contact Lynn Walston, [lynnwalston22@yahoo.com](mailto:lynnwalston22@yahoo.com).

## Coastal Group

*Serving Savannah & surrounding counties*

**Chair:** Karen Grainey, [karengrainey@bellsouth.net](mailto:karengrainey@bellsouth.net)

**Outings Chair:** Steve Wagner, [sjwgnr@hotmail.com](mailto:sjwgnr@hotmail.com)

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

## Greater Gwinnett Group

*Serving Gwinnett County*

**Chair:** Dan Friedman, [dan3688@aol.com](mailto:dan3688@aol.com)

**Conservation Chair:** Art Sheldon, [asheldon.cp81@gtalumni.org](mailto:asheldon.cp81@gtalumni.org)

**Outings Chair:** Jake Hardison, [jake.hardison@ssa.gov](mailto:jake.hardison@ssa.gov)

**Meetings:** 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m., Berkmar High School, 405 Pleasant Hill Road, Lilburn.

## LaGrange Group

*Serving the LaGrange area*

**Chair:** Laura Breyfogle, [breyfogle@charter.net](mailto:breyfogle@charter.net)

**Conservation Chair:** Sim Blitch, [simblich@charter.net](mailto:simblich@charter.net)

**Outings Chair:** Joanna Baxter, [joannabbaxter@yahoo.com](mailto:joannabbaxter@yahoo.com)

**Meetings:** 3rd Tuesday; 6:30 p.m. welcome and refreshments, 7 p.m. 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*

**Co-Chair:** Konrad Hayashi, [rainingatl@gmail.com](mailto:rainingatl@gmail.com)

**Co-Chair:** Denise LaSonde, [deniselasonde@gmail.com](mailto:deniselasonde@gmail.com)

**Outings Chair:** Martin McConaughy, [mcmarty@bellsouth.net](mailto:mcmarty@bellsouth.net)

**Meetings:** 2nd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Decatur Public Library, 215 Sycamore St.

## Savannah River Group

*Serving Augusta & surrounding areas*

**Co-Chair:** Linda McBurney, [mmscb@outlook.com](mailto:mmscb@outlook.com)

**Co-Chair:** Sam Booher, [sbooher@aol.com](mailto:sbooher@aol.com)

**Conservation Chair:** Frank Carl, [frankcarl@knology.net](mailto:frankcarl@knology.net)

**Outings Chair:** Cathy Black, [sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com](mailto:sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com)

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

## Regional Contacts

### LeConte Group/Athens & Northeast Georgia

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### Forsyth County

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### Macon

Fletcher Winston, [winston\\_f@mercer.edu](mailto:winston_f@mercer.edu)

### North Georgia

Larry Winslett, [winfog@windstream.net](mailto:winfog@windstream.net)

### Valdosta

Brian Day, [bjday@valdosta.edu](mailto: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 Ave., Suite B  
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[georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto: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 Street and the office is the building located right behind the convenience store. The office is the second door from Sams Street – Suite B.

## Stay Informed!

### SIERRA CLUB WEB SITES

GA Chapter Web Site:  
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/>  
GA Chapter Outings:  
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/outings/>

### EMAIL LISTS

Subscribe to a Georgia Chapter email list. Just send an email to:

[LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG](mailto:LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG)

Your message should read:  
SUBSCRIBE LISTNAME FIRSTNAME LASTNAME

### LIST NAMES:

GA-OUTINGS (chapter outings list)  
GA-NEWSLETTER-ANNOUNCE (online newsletter updates)  
GA-RAIL-NEWS (RAIL/Transit Advocacy Committee)

Subscribe to the Smart Energy Solutions listserve at:  
[gasmartenergycommittee@googlegroups.com](mailto:gasmartenergycommittee@googlegroups.com)

Subscribe to Georgia Chapter Online E-Newsletter at:  
[http://action.sierraclub.org/CHP\\_GA\\_Signup](http://action.sierraclub.org/CHP_GA_Signup)

Visit the Georgia Chapter web page and click on "Local Groups" for info on local groups' email lists.





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## About Georgia Sierran

Articles: Send materials to: [gasierran@gmail.com](mailto:gasierran@gmail.com). Maximum word length: 750 words with one photo. Please include high-resolution digital photos (200 dpi) with your story.

Moving? Send address changes to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968. Send changes by email: [address.changes@sierraclub.org](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org)

The Georgia Sierran (ISSN 1044-831) is published quarterly by the Sierra Club, Georgia Chapter, 743B East College Ave., Decatur, GA 30030. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, CA and other mailing addresses. Subscription fees: \$1.00 annually for Chapter members (included with membership dues) or \$12.00 annually for nonmembers. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sierra Club, Georgia Chapter, 743B East College Ave., Decatur, GA 30030

The Sierra Club is working towards a just future--not just for the natural environment, but also for the people who live within it. Involving citizen activists in the political process has always been our strength -- a strength we cannot take for granted. We must make an effort to recruit people who reflect the full diversity of the communities in which we are working. This will be increasingly true as the demographics of the country continue to reflect a more racially and economically diverse population. We can only succeed through strong and collaborative relationships with diverse organizations and communities based on common goals and values. Join us to learn how to foster the inclusive and powerful movement necessary to win victories that benefit everyone.

Participants will leave ready to:

- Define the terms Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and understand why this work is important to the Club
- Develop a more intentional and inclusive outreach plan through thorough community mapping
- Identify practices for initiating and developing effective partnerships with new communities

For details, contact Ian Karra at [ian.karra@sierraclub.org](mailto:ian.karra@sierraclub.org) or (404) 607-1262 x233