



Sierran

To Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet

Is Natural Gas a Climate Solution?

Special Feature: Pages 6 - 14



2016 Legislative Preview *Pages 3, 4*



Chapter Retreat Recap *Page 16*

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Happy New Year!

By Colleen Kiernan

When I reflect on the ebb and flow of the Georgia Chapter's work, I notice that 2015 was a building year. We added two new fabulous staff members, Ian Karra and Yeou-Rong Jih, to fill the big shoes of Seth Gunning and Maria Adams, who left to pursue other dreams and opportunities. We strengthened our conservation program work by hosting a Fellow through The Mission Continues program. He did a fabulous job amping up our outreach efforts around our forest protection work. We took steps toward being a more diverse and inclusive Georgia Chapter by hosting our National President, Aaron Mair, to talk openly about diversity, and we added several new, younger elected chapter and group leaders. We took delivery on the final EPA Clean Power Plan.

As we begin 2016, we're going to need to flex the muscles we've been working to build. The Cooper Creek Environmental Assessment (EA) has been published; Georgia Power will file its triennial Integrated Resource Plan; and we have an election year. The legislature, after passing an "asphalt" bill to address transportation last year, seems poised to address public transit, and the



Colleen Kiernan, Chapter Director

conversation in Gwinnett County about expanding transit and joining MARTA can only be stifled by elected officials for so long before new leaders step up.

The Georgia Chapter views our role in our environmental community as the group on the leading edge of emerging issues, connecting the dots and communities as those issues play out more locally. In this edition of Georgia Sierran, we explore possibly the biggest question that will define our climate future: What is the role of natural gas on our path toward clean energy? There are many who say gas must be a part of the solution.

The Georgia Chapter takes very seriously our responsibility to dig into these issues and understand whether or not we can do better. If we feel that we can do better, we want you to know about it and collectively we will demand that we do better. Please join us as we set a new vision for Georgia: 100 percent clean energy, with no fossil fuels, by 2030. 🌱

About Georgia Sierran

Articles: Send materials to: 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

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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.

Georgia Water Coalition Sets Priorities for 2016 Legislative Session

By Neill Herring

Two issues confront the Sierra Club as a member of the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) in the 2016 General Assembly. Both are attempts to recover protections for state waters that have been lost in recent years as the current state Environmental Protection Division (EPD) leadership has actively worked to reduce those protections.

Some of this misguided policy seems to spring from anti-regulation ideology: the simple, if mistaken, idea that environmental protection threatens jobs, and jobs are more important than clean air and water. There is little evidence to support this piece of political folklore, but it persists.

Another motive may be that the current Director of the EPD is a lawyer who has decided that closely reading laws before enforcing them is more important than their protections warrant. This certainly seems to be the case in the matter of buffers on state waters.

“The Case of the Vanishing Stream Buffer”

The EPD announced on Earth Day 2014 that it would no longer enforce any naturally vegetated stream buffer on any state water that did not have “wrested vegetation,” where the water has torn plants loose from the bank, from which the waterside boundary of the buffer could be measured. The State Supreme Court upheld that position in July 2015, despite many years of widespread acceptance of naturally vegetated stream buffers on all state waters, whether there is any wrested vegetation or not.



In response to the 2014 EPD policy change, the 2015 legislature wisely passed Senate Bill (SB) 101 which required a vegetated buffer for the state’s coastal salt marsh which has no wrested vegetation. The State Supreme Court case affecting other state waters without wrested vegetation was still in litigation during the 2015 session which prevented a more comprehensive legislative fix.

Now the legislature needs to make another correction in the law, to protect those waters that don’t wrest vegetation, so the EPD has another way to measure the beginning of the vegetated buffer. The Army Corps of Engineers, which regulates the “waters of the United States,” uses a line called the “ordinary high water mark,” which now needs to be incorporated into Georgia’s stream buffer law so that the EPD can return to enforcing vegetated buffers on state waters. Ordinary high water marks can be found in various ways, including “wet” versus “dry” plant communities, and earth “shelving,” layers of dirt defined by waterlines.

A bill to restore the protections afforded by naturally vegetated stream buffers needs to pass in 2016 to protect water quality and downstream landowners in Georgia.

ASR, a “Tool in the Toolbox”

The cause of another diminished protection is plainer than that in the “Case of the Vanishing Stream Buffers”: the expiration of the 15-year moratorium on aquifer storage and recovery (ASR), the idea of injecting surface water into the Floridan aquifer during periods of high stream flow, then withdrawing

Continued on next page

Join Us for Capitol Conservation Day!

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Meet at 7:30 a.m., Central Presbyterian Church
201 Washington St. SW, Atlanta, GA 30303
(Five Points or Georgia State MARTA)

Sign up at www.georgiawater.org



Transportation Still a Top Concern

By **Brionté McCorkle**

Transportation was the major issue during the 2015 legislative session, as state lawmakers sought to fill a billion dollar funding gap to meet road maintenance needs, as well as cover construction costs for new road projects. After much negotiation, House Bill (HB) 170 was passed. State lawmakers applauded themselves as the bill raised nearly \$1 billion for roads each year, while providing only a one-time allocation of \$75 million for transit throughout the state. Unfortunately, this move only continues the status quo for transportation funding. Instead of funding transit, our leaders have instead focused on investing heavily in roads. This overemphasis on road building has led to disconnected, sprawling communities that perpetuate a dependence on cars.

In metro Atlanta, for the second-straight year, residents have named transportation as their top concern, and over 91 percent of respondents said that improving public transit is important to metro Atlanta's future, according to a poll conducted by the Atlanta Regional Commission. With such a strong show of support for transit, it is evident that Georgians are ready for a substantive investment in a truly regional transit system that gives people a real alternative to sitting in their cars on congested roads. And MARTA believes it has the answer. The transit system has unveiled a vision that would expand the system northward to Alpharetta, eastward to Stonecrest, and to Emory University. Using the transportation special-purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST) included in HB 170, MARTA intends to fund their \$8 billion proposal using a half-penny. However, their plan requires legislative approval before a referendum can be held. Matters are further complicated by the fact that Fulton



County and the cities within all have conflicting ideas for the use of the potential sales tax.

While not much is certain at this point, one thing is clear: building more roads is not the way forward. As the legislative session begins, it is critical that our senators and representatives hear from us. Please reach out to tell them that you support funding for transit, and support MARTA's vision! 📌

Water, continued from previous page

it for use during droughts. This proposed meddling with a vital resource brings with it a number of physical dangers and property rights problems, which is why there was a moratorium imposed in the first place. It was repeatedly renewed until it was allowed to expire on the orders of the Deal administration.

The EPD has made it plain that it wants to have ASR as a "tool in the toolbox" for fighting the tri-state water wars, among other water problems for which they may seek engineered "solutions." A recent proposal was to change the Flint River Drought Protection Act to allow the use of ASR to pump and hold water in southwest Georgia aquifers until there was a drought, and then use that volume to meet flow targets into Florida's Apalachicola River.

An EPD experiment to test that concept failed during 2015, but the idea is not dead yet for the agency, which claims to have "learned a lot" from that million and a half dollar mis-

take. Meanwhile, efforts to revive the protective moratorium on Floridan aquifer ASR have failed, and the EPD has said that even if a bill passes it will be vetoed.

Led by Sen. William Ligon (R-Brunswick), legislators who are committed to protecting the groundwater resource passed an alternative aquifer protection bill through the Senate in 2015. SB 36 states that Georgia landowners have a property right in the quality of the groundwater under their land and requires the Board of Natural Resources to promulgate rules that protect that water quality. That measure is now pending before the House Natural Resources Committee for passage in 2016.

Rules to protect groundwater quality would require safe procedures for any ASR projects, and also limit a variety of other harmful activities, including industrial stormwater discharges and toxic chemical releases in aquifer recharge areas that may harm groundwater quality. SB 36 needs to pass in 2016. 📌

New Legislation Could Limit Public Involvement on National Forests



Proposed legislation could limit efforts to protect areas such as the Cooper Creek watershed from clearcutting

By William Tomlin

Congress has been debating – and the U.S. House has passed – legislation that could limit the ability of groups like the Sierra Club to comment on U.S. Forest Service projects. The legislation was ultimately not included in the omnibus spending bill, but Sierrans need to remain vigilant to prevent this language from being added to other bills.

By way of background, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies assess the environmental consequences of their proposed actions and creates opportunities for public comment. Essentially all of the Wildlands and Wildlife Committee’s work advocating for sustainable forest management in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests occurs as part of this analysis. The new legislation could change this.

The proposed legislation, based on House Resolution 2647, the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015 (RFFA), which the U.S. House of Representatives passed in July, would create categorical exclusions (CEs) exempting early successional habitat (ESH) projects and others from the analysis and public involvement required by NEPA. CEs are typically reserved for small, routine projects that agencies carry out on a daily basis.

Under this proposal the Forest Service would be required to evaluate just two options during its NEPA review of many projects developed through a collaborative process: the project as proposed and a no-action alternative, meaning other alternatives made by environmental groups during public commenting periods might be ignored.

The Cooper Creek project, which the Wildlands Committee has been advocating against, was originally proposed to cover over 3,700 acres. Much of those 3,700 acres would be ESH creation. Under the new proposal, this project could have been categorically excluded, and the clearcuts could have proceeded as proposed. 🌲

Georgia Sierra Joins Fight to Protect Cumberland



By Joshua Hanthorn

Fearless naturalist Carol Ruckdeschel and Will Harlan, author of her biography, led over 90 Sierra Club members on a tour of Cumberland Island for the Club’s biennial retreat this past October. Ruckdeschel shared the many pressing environmental issues (including feral horses, tourists, fire and the urgent need for a wilderness management plan) on the country’s largest and most biologically diverse barrier island.

The feral horses on Cumberland are suffering, as they are not a native species. Horses were brought to the island in the 1920s by private landowners and were left to run wild. They become tangled and stuck in vines until they dehydrate or starve. When they forage in the saltmarsh, they wade in mud to reach grass, causing injuries.

Some tourists get around on Cumberland by bicycle, a reasonable way to travel around the island. Unfortunately, they are starting to enter the designated wilderness area, which is prohibited by law. Ruckdeschel mentioned she has seen many cyclists in the designated wilderness area, but the National Park Service does not have the manpower to enforce the bicycle restriction.

Furthermore, a new fire management plan proposal prescribes forced forest burns. Fire is an essential component of the island’s ecosystem, but it should be left as a natural occurrence. Human interference can lead to excessive fire, destroying natural habitat.

These Cumberland Island issues and many more can be addressed in a comprehensive wilderness management plan. The Georgia Sierra Club’s Wildlands and Wildlife Committee and the Georgia Sierra Club’s Coastal Group plan to encourage the Park Service to draft such a plan, and we would love your input. For more information or to get involved in the process, please contact William Tomlin at wmltom@gmail.com. To learn more about the wildest woman in America check out Ruckdeschel’s biography, titled “Untamed.” 🌲

Natural Gas: Do We Need It on the Way to Clean?

By Fenly Foxen and Colleen Kiernan

The U.S. is getting serious, and so is the rest of the world, about climate change. After 20 years of trying to reach a deal, in December world leaders at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Paris adopted a legally binding agreement to reduce carbon emissions and limit warming to 2 degrees. The U.S. was finally able to make such a commitment in Paris because we are finally headed in the right direction. Our own carbon emissions are the lowest they've been in two decades and cleaner sources of power are competing on an economic basis.

In 2015, broad consensus was reached that coal is a dead man walking. Since 2010, Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign has retired 225 coal-fired power plants – five in Georgia – which is one-third of the U.S. coal fleet. Divestments from coal have grown over 50-fold, and in December Arch Coal was notified by the New York Stock Exchange that it was no longer to be traded. The question about the end of coal is not “if,” but “when.”

However, there is not the same level of agreement about what the future of energy looks like. Sierra Club and our partners are putting forward a vision of 100 percent clean energy by 2030. And while from a technological perspective we can do it, many very powerful interests are fighting to hold on to our current paradigm of large, centralized power. Big bets are being made on natural gas and nuclear, because those sources fit into the traditional utility model, and utility engineers understand those sources well.

Never underestimate the power of disruptive technology, though. Solar and wind continue to penetrate the electricity market by competing and winning



because they cost less. The new utility paradigm will shift from one where the load is unpredictable and generation sources need to be there to meet it to a place where the generation resources are variable and the load needs to be adjustable to take power when it is generated.

So here we stand at a crossroads: will we build out another generation of fossil fuel infrastructure – a new generation of natural gas plants and pipelines to support them as well as export our dirty but plentiful natural gas to other places under the guise of solving climate change? Or will we leapfrog into an actual clean energy future, one where a high voltage line brings in clean wind power from the central states, where solar panels are on every unshaded roof, charging batteries during their peak output. A future where the transportation sector is electrified, refueling either when solar is generating the most or overnight, when

the commercial and residential load shrinks to nothing.

If we choose the former path, parts of Georgia that we know and love will never be the same. We could see fracking coming to northwest Georgia, where there are known resources of shale. We will be certain to see a crisscross of new pipelines, like Sabal Trail which seeks to deliver fracked gas to Florida from distant sources such as Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale, and our coast, while threatened by sea level rise, will also face an expansive new Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export facility at Elba Island.

In this issue we'll take a look at whether natural gas really has a role in solving our climate crisis, the business decisions that our own utilities are making to merge, as well as highlight some of the other choices that are being made which will help determine which energy future we will see. ♣

Volunteers Reflect on Keystone XL Victory

On November 6, 2015, President Obama finally rejected TransCanada's application to build the Keystone XL (KXL) Pipeline across the U.S.-Canada border. This came after about seven long years of campaigns by a broad array of activists.

Rejection has never felt so sweet.

Central to victory over KXL was the work of many local landowners, indigenous peoples' groups and other community groups, who raised awareness, brought lawsuits and literally put their bodies on the line of the proposed KXL route. Many national and international organizations also put pressure on the president's administration to reject the cross-border permit application. The Sierra Club Board of Directors made a one-time exception to our policy against civil disobedience and approved Executive Director Michael Brune and President Allison Chin to handcuff themselves to the White House fence. They were arrested with 46 others in protest against KXL.

That spirit and sense of justification extended to concerned volunteers here in Georgia as well. The following are volunteers' reflections on their involvement with the campaign.

Ken Winston, who led the on-the-ground effort on behalf of the Sierra Club Nebraska Chapter, summed up the meaning of the victory over Keystone XL: "It was truly a victory of love and life against the forces of death and darkness. Love of land, water and fertility, love of family and neighbor, love of children and generations yet to come. On the other side, the tar sands process kills everything in its path in the name of profit for a few, while pouring ever more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It was a triumph of underdogs, an example of what people can do when they come together."

Greg Sutherland, Savannah River Group vice chair: "I was very concerned about the effect climate change would have on my kids and grandkids, as well as everyone else, so my wife Ann and I went to D.C. in February 2013 for a rally against KXL.

"Then I got an email from CREDO about the NoKXL Pledge of Resistance and signed up to get follow-up emails. Next, I got an invitation to protest in Houston in September 2013. I drove out there for the protest at the TransCanada office. It was the first time and only time I've been arrested - a great experience in putting myself out that much for something I think is important.

"When I got back from Houston, I was looking for a NoKXL protest in Georgia and couldn't find one, so I contacted CREDO Action about what was happening. CREDO and Rainforest Action Network started sending me email as though I'd volunteered to lead the effort. I decided to do it until I could find someone to take over for me. We did trainings in Atlanta and Augusta and called hundreds of people. I met a lot of great new people in Atlanta and Athens and eventually found Nina Dutton, and she agreed to help."



Ken Winston at a rally protesting the Keystone XL pipeline

Nina Dutton, Metro Atlanta Group ExCom member: "At first, in early 2014, I was just going to help host a simple rally in Atlanta to show that there were people here who wanted President Obama to reject Keystone XL and who cared about environmental justice more broadly. Because the rally was part of the NoKXL campaign, the rally invitations were handled for us by large organizations (CREDO Action, Rainforest Action Network, and the Other 98%). Mari Gutierrez and I hustled that weekend to make signs and round up the media, but at least finding participants was not an issue. After hosting that rally, I agreed to support Greg with leading the Pledge of Resistance Action in Atlanta against KXL. We trained volunteers for a last-resort civil disobedience action across the country that would have been triggered by approval of KXL. It was meant to show deep public dissent and deter pipeline approval.

"My first reaction to the permit rejection on Nov. 6 was simply that it was so gratifying to have been able to take part in such a massive, diverse effort that ended in a victory both symbolic and real. That day I was giddy, but that feeling was tempered by an acknowledgement that Keystone XL was just one of a number of such fights to be had."

Marinangeles Gutierrez, Georgia Chapter ExCom member: "The 2014 urgent-action call came in late Friday, and by Sunday I was knocking on Nina's door meeting another eager and willing organizer. By afternoon we had created 15+ signs, wrangled media and coordinated with various organizations for support. As the pressure continued into early 2015, we joked at what we felt was our annual rapid response 'Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline' vigil. Although they were successful events, the KXL rejection didn't seem to be in sight.

Two years later, the Keystone XL campaign has not only paved the way for further participation in Sierra Club events, but also linked me to my now amazing friend Nina. This campaign was only the beginning, and the environmental justice movement continues." 🐾

Why Natural Gas Is Not a Climate Solution

By Joshua Hanthorn

Have you heard the radio ads that say “Georgia Power reduced emissions at its power plant by switching to natural gas. Think about it,” sponsored by America’s Natural Gas Alliance (ANGA)? Efforts to mitigate the effect of climate change have focused on the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions which are the primary (by volume) greenhouse gas. Coal-fired power plants are the biggest source of human-made carbon emissions, making them the biggest threat to our climate. Coal-fired power plants are, in many ways, the simplest source to tackle. We can fairly easily quantify their emissions, the carbon comes out of a known number of smokestacks, and there are other ways to generate electricity to which we can transition.

Fortunately, coal is in a consistent and steady decline due to a number of factors: internalization of pollution costs due to new regulations, the strain on water resources, the plummeting cost of renewables, and historically low natural gas prices. Natural gas has largely replaced our reduced reliance on coal, and many, especially Georgia Power and utility regulators, have touted the advantage of lower air pollution emissions. But what is the real climate impact of this switch?

Is natural gas a good bridge fuel until noncarbon sources of energy are fully developed?

Because gas-fired electricity plants emit only half as much carbon dioxide per kilowatt-hour generated as do coal-burning plants, it’s easy to assume that the switch to gas is good for our climate. However, the main component of natural gas is methane, which is 30 to 100 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. When you look at the full cycle of gas, drilling, fracking and moving gas around, new reports indicate climate benefits may be lost when methane leakage during gas extraction and transport are taken into account.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has estimated the amount of methane leakage, but recent studies have found that the agency underestimated those emissions dramatically, by as much as 90% at the Barnett Shale fracking site in Texas. In August, the agency proposed rules to limit the amount of methane for the first time. One study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the University of Colorado showed an average leakage rate of 4.1% in the natural gas fields of Colorado. These samples didn’t include pipeline and storage leaks.

How much leakage is too much to negate climate benefits?

The “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences” looks at the amount of global warming produced by various uses or technologies of natural gas. For electricity production, fuel switching to natural gas from coal reduces the global warming potential by about 25% in the first 40 years using the EPA’s leakage rate of 2.4%. Again, the EPA leakage estimates are very conservative. If that leakage rate is higher than 3.6% then fuel switching provides no benefit at all. If the leakage rate is as high as measured in Colorado at 4.1%, even without pipeline leakage natural gas is worse than coal from a global warming perspective.

Are alternatives to natural gas viable?

The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) advises that utilities keep a 15% reserve margin, that is that they keep a certain amount of generating capacity on standby so that electricity can be ramped up in case of a really hot day, or the polar vortex winter days we’ve experienced over the last couple of years. NERC estimates Georgia’s current reserve margin at 37% and expects it to go up to 43% in the next few years. As costs for solar and wind continue to come down and energy storage helps even out the grid, Georgia will have less and less of a need for existing natural gas plants, and we certainly don’t need to build any new ones. 🌲

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



The Acquisition of AGL Resources by Southern Company: A Perspective

By Sam Collier

Last spring, I had the chance to speak up for a stable climate at two annual shareholder meetings. In April, Ian Karra and I represented Calvert Investments, one of the oldest and most respected socially responsible investment funds, in calling on AGL Resources to develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Then in May, along with several dozen other activists, we also called on the Southern Company to plan GHG reductions.

The contrast between the two meetings was dramatic. The AGL meeting was pro forma, scripted, nervous. Not a word was uttered that was not expected, every outcome, down to who would make motions and who would second them, planned in advance. I have been to several corporate meetings, but never one quite this tense. When asked if there were any questions, not a hand went up.

The meeting was over in 18 minutes.

The Southern Company (SO) shareholder meeting was very different. CEO Tom Fanning presided over an entertaining, informative explanation of where the company was headed, and what a great investment we shareholders have. This year's business meeting included his vision of the future in which SO becomes more like an energy service company, not just delivering electrons over a wire, but helping the end user manage a variety of smart devices and renewable energy sources on either side of the meter - the kind of transition that is crucial to stabilizing our climate.

After an hour of this business meeting, there was over an hour more of Q&A! Responding to questions on the



The author addresses the Southern Company shareholders meeting in April

spot, Fanning gave measured but not perfunctory answers to all inquiries.

Given that a dominant topic of both meetings - aside from the usual reporting and required governance motions - was climate change, one reason for the difference is this: SO has options, and AGL has few. AGL's business model is moving and selling a fossil fuel, and if they don't move and sell more each year, there is no growth. In a rapidly warming world, the growth model is at odds with a fossil fuel company. Despite natural gas's lower carbon emissions, it is still a source of significant GHGs, and gas's role in a carbon-constrained world will dwindle over time.

Southern Company, on the other hand, is (or soon can be) on a pathway to provide all energy services with little to no carbon emissions. This pathway holds the potential for significant growth.

Thus, the merger of these two corporations is both good and bad. On the bad side, the sheer political power of Southern Company changes the debate over fracking and gas pipelines. Affected communities will have less voice in these debates because Southern Company's political influence is deep and wide - from every little hamlet, all the way to

Congress.

But on the good side, once SO begins its ascent to a low-carbon future, natural gas will be a temporary part of the transition: replacing coal in existing plants, smoothing out production from renewables in small gas peaking plants and replacing electric appliances like space heaters, water heaters and cooking appliances (it is much more efficient to create heat where heat is needed than at a steam turbine miles away).

But given this limited time for natural gas, it will be necessary for the combined company to do the following:

- Rapidly develop a comprehensive business plan that phases out 80% (or more) GHG emissions by 2035, a 20-year horizon.

- Scale the trajectory of all investments with this time horizon in mind, and do not make capital investments in gas that cannot be retired in this time frame. A populace experiencing climate disruptions will have little sympathy for stranded assets - especially assets deployed with notice of their risk.

- Do not over-sell natural gas as a long-term solution, but only as an interim replacement for coal.

- Put Southern Company's considerable political clout to work calling for strict regulation of fugitive emissions of gas (leaks during extraction, transport, storage). Since gas (methane) has a 72-times greater effect on climate change over this 20-year horizon than CO₂, it can be worse, even, than coal if it is not regulated. A little leakage at the wellhead negates all benefits. This means federal regulation, since many different companies are in the gas supply chain, and they ALL need to be regulated. Self-regulation in this regard is wholly inadequate. ♣

LNG Puts Savannah at Risk

By Karen Grainey and
Stacey Kronquest

Painted sky blue in a vain attempt to make them less prominent as they loom over the salt marsh, the massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage tanks on Elba Island are a familiar sight to Savannah residents when traveling along the Islands Expressway a few miles east of historic downtown Savannah. Due to the vagaries of the natural gas market, the Elba LNG import terminal has been largely dormant during most of its nearly four decades in existence, but this will change if the facility's latest owner gets its way.

Houston-based Kinder Morgan is proposing a \$1.5 billion project to transform Elba into an import/export complex. The fracking boom in the U.S. has driven the price of natural gas to near historic lows. To drive up profits, the industry is in a rush to export natural gas overseas where prices are much higher. Elba is one of 28 proposed export terminals. Six have been approved with five already under construction. If all of these projects are built, the U.S. could end up exporting over a third of domestic gas production, driving prices up and further invigorating fracking with all its attendant environmental damage.

In the summer of 2015, Sierra Club Georgia Chapter's Coastal Group initiated a local campaign to prevent the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) from adding Elba to the growing list of approved export terminals. It is FERC's responsibility under the Natural Gas Act to authorize the siting and construction of LNG terminals, and the agency is set to release a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Elba Island in February. Due to environmental and safety hazards that have the potential



to significantly impact the quality of the human environment, the Sierra Club has requested FERC implement the more rigorous process of producing an Environmental Impact Statement. Georgia Sierrans will be able to help by submitting comments supporting this request during the 45-day comment period for the Draft EA when it is released. Contact Karen Grainey at karengrainey@bellsouth.net for more information or to be added to the list for updates on this project.

With Elba's location on a busy shipping channel in close proximity to a major population center and the Savannah River industrial corridor, reviving this sleeping giant will expose Savannah residents to serious safety and environmental risks.

Safety Hazards and Danger Zones

LNG is methane super-cooled to minus 259 degrees Fahrenheit, condensing it into a liquid to render it commercially viable to transport overseas in tankers. The liquefaction of large vol-

umes of LNG (11.5 billion cubic feet storage capacity), will require the on-site storage of large quantities of toxic and potentially explosive refrigerants, including propane, ethane, acid gases and cancer-causing benzene.

While regulators acknowledge that leaks of LNG and these other chemicals could lead to flammable and potentially explosive vapor clouds and pool fires,¹ independent scientists believe FERC under-rates the hazards of LNG export facilities and the risks of cascading catastrophic events that "could cause the near-total and possibly total loss of the facility, including any LNG ship berthed there. Such an event could present serious hazards to the public well beyond the facility boundaries."²

The most serious hazards from LNG spills are pool fires and vapor clouds.³ The federally funded Sandia National Laboratories report identifies "hazard zones" for LNG spills over water.⁴ Depending on where it is in the shipping channel, a spill from a tanker in the Savannah River could put half of Tybee and several neighborhoods in danger

zones.

FERC only examines land-based hazards, so hazards from an LNG tanker spill, even while at dock, are not analyzed in the application process. Also, spill/accident analysis is based on small leaks, not cascading worst-case scenarios.⁵ According to Jerry Havens, a chemical engineering professor at the University of Arkansas who helped develop LNG hazard modeling, “We’re talking about so much energy and so much potential for a catastrophic event to occur. We should really think about whether we should allow these things to be built close to any population center.”⁶

Havens defines the hazard zone to the public as a minimum of a 3-mile radius from an LNG facility.⁷ Within 3 miles of Elba Island are four schools and thousands of homes and businesses. Yet, emergency response plans for an accident at Elba Island have not been presented to the community or made public.

Dangerous Air Pollution and Toxic Chemicals

According to Kinder Morgan’s own documents, the facility on Elba will emit hundreds of tons of hazardous air particulates, volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide into Savannah’s air. These additional air pollutants could result in a wide range of local environmental and health impacts. Ozone pollution, for example, has been linked to increased respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, especially in children, the elderly and other vulnerable populations.

Leaving aside the emissions from the extraction and burning of natural gas, greenhouse gas emissions from the facility’s operations will increase 700 percent. If approved, the LNG export facility will require a new electrical substation, quadrupling the electrical capacity to Elba Island.⁸



Traffic Congestion and Roadway Safety

According to Kinder Morgan’s estimates, over 10,000 heavy construction trucks a month will deliver equipment and material to the facility,⁹ increasing the volume of traffic in peak hours over 50%. Operations traffic, post-construction, will include regular transport of flammable refrigerants (including ethylene, propane and isopentane) on Savannah roads, exposing the public to additional safety hazards.

Aquifer and Surface Water

Elba Island will continue to withdraw water from the Floridan aquifer for use in treating gas for export. Some 10,000 gallons per day will be drawn from the region’s most pure and important water source.¹⁰ Additionally, over 7,000 pilings will be driven 100 feet into the island during construction, yet Kinder Morgan is proposing that “no extra measures are required to prevent excess surficial water from entering the Floridan Aquifer.”¹¹

In addition to carrying a volatile, potentially explosive cargo, the LNG tankers, equivalent in length to three football fields, would dump billions of gallons of ballast water which could introduce invasive species and contaminants into the nearby Atlantic waters and Savannah River each year.

1 GEXCON, (2015) Elba Island Liquefaction and Export Project - Updated Hazard Analysis - September 30, 2015. (Docket CP14-103). Retrieved from www.ferc.gov

2 Havens, J., & Venart, J. (2015). United States LNG terminal siting policy is faulty. Submitted to FERC (Docket No. CP13-483). Retrieved from www.ferc.gov

3 Parfomak, P., & Vann, A. (2009). Liquefied natural gas (LNG) Import Terminals: Siting, safety, and regulation. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <http://research.policyarchive.org/19859.pdf>

4 Luketa, A., Hightower, M., & Attaway, S. (2008). Breach and safety analysis of spills over water from large liquefied natural gas carriers. Sandia Report. Retrieved from http://www.lngfacts.org/resources/SANDIA_2008_Report_-_Large_LNG_Vessel_Sa.pdf

5 Havens, J., & Spicer, T. (2007). United States regulations for siting LNG terminals: Problems and potential. *Journal of Hazardous Materials*. doi:10.1016/j.jhazmat.2006.10.020

6 Sickinger, T. (2014). Gas explosion at LNG facility in Washington prompts concerns about proposed export terminals in Oregon. *The Oregonian*. Retrieved from <http://www.oregonlive.com>

7 Ibid.

8 Kinder Morgan. (2014). Application of Elba Liquefaction Company and Southern LNG Company, L.L.C. for authorization under Section 3 of the NGA. (Docket CP14-103). Retrieved from www.ferc.gov

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Environmental Data Request (2014, May 12). Docket No. CP14-103. Retrieved from www.ferc.gov

Pipeline in Southwest Georgia and Central Florida Risks Drinking Water

By Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper

The Sabal Trail pipeline, a joint venture of Spectra Energy, Duke Energy and NextEra Energy, poses threats to Georgia and Florida communities on multiple fronts. For southwest Georgia and north Florida residents it's all risks and no rewards. However, federal and state authorities have thus far been unmoved by arguments against it.

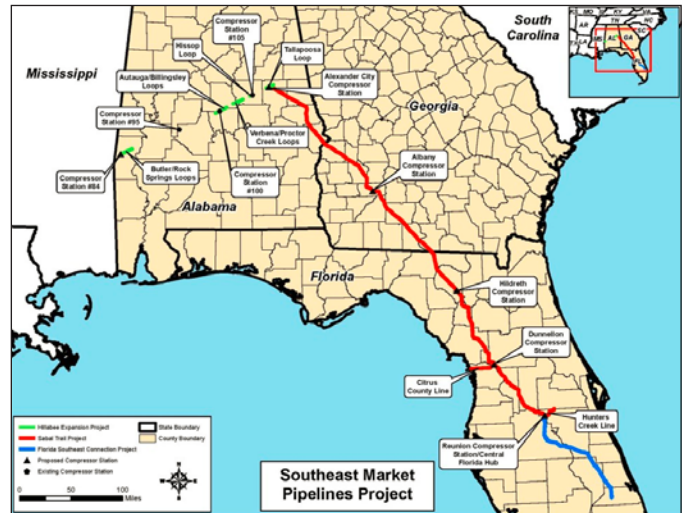
During the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) public comment period, the agency received more than 1,000 written comments, mostly opposing the project, including resolutions against it from seven counties in Georgia and Florida, and three of the largest cities in its path (Albany, Moultrie and Valdosta).

Congressmen Sanford Bishop, John Lewis, Hank Johnson and David Scott also urged FERC to deny permission, but to date they have received only cursory responses. Another pipeline company has warned that the Sabal Trail's path crosses its own pipeline too many times, increasing the risk of corrosion, leaks and explosions.

Despite this opposition, FERC issued its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in September, concluding that the pipeline would not have significant impact on the environment. This was in spite of clear documentation within the Draft EIS itself that the proposed line is routed through a limestone karst, a sinkhole-ridden and sinkhole-prone region that will lead to line failure – a matter of when, not if. The Draft EIS further ignored federal executive directives to avoid disproportionate impacts on environmental justice communities by placing the proposed, polluting compressor station immediately adjacent to low-income, African-American neighborhoods.

A week later, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Board, ignoring opposition from southwest Georgia property owners and community leaders, agreed to grant easements to drill the pipeline under five major Georgia waterways in its path.

Following these decisions, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wrote to FERC objecting to the proposed route and calling for a re-evaluation of the project, with much of the rationale based upon the risks of failure, significant adverse environmental effects including potential contamination of the Floridan aquifer, and the prominence of environmental justice issues.



In early November, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division held a public hearing in Albany on the air permit for a compressor station and is now deliberating its issuance. Citizen and expert comment both opposed the placement of the multi-story station (with 41,000 hp of compressor capacity, noise and emissions) in a low-income, minority neighborhood of Albany.

This pipeline would transport a gas purported to replace coal-fired facilities in central and southern Florida. As both Sierra Club and the EPA pointed out in 2014, it is not clear that Florida needs any replacement power at all, given substantial increases in grid and home/business efficiency, with resultant downward trends in demand. Meanwhile Georgia is the fastest growing U.S. solar power market, and Florida may have on its next ballot a constitutional amendment to facilitate solar financing much like the law Georgia passed in 2015.

The WWALS Watershed Coalition, representing the Waterkeeper affiliate for the Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha, Little and upper Suwannee River watersheds, filed suit and recently completed court proceedings challenging the legality of the FDEP permit on environmental grounds. The presiding judge did not side with WWALS, recommending FDEP move forward with the permit. WWALS and their attorneys are examining an appeal. Sabal Trail wants to drill under Okapilco and many other creeks in Georgia, plus the Withlacoochee, Flint and Chattahoochee rivers in Georgia, in addition to Florida's Suwannee. The Sierra Club Florida Chapter contributed to the WWALS legal fund for their case, following up on the

Focus: Energy

March 2014 joint resolution against Sabal Trail by the Florida, Georgia and Alabama Chapters. Save Our Suwannee also contributed financially, while Our Santa Fe River, Suwannee Alliance for Sustainable Growth and SpectraBusters assisted in other ways, such as by finding witnesses. Without the permit, Sabal Trail cannot drill under the Suwannee River. FDEP cannot issue the permit until this legal case is resolved, and there will almost certainly be an appeal.

At the end of April 2015, the Sierra Club, through its Florida Chapter, filed an emergency petition with the EPA seeking designation of the Floridan aquifer as a Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) under the EPA's Sole Source Aquifer Protection Program. Work is progressing on that designation, which might help prevent Sabal Trail and other new pipelines.

Routes for the Sabal Trail pipeline exist that are safer and make use of already existing pipeline easements, but thus far FERC has dismissed these alternatives, including a Gulf of Mexico route that would completely avoid the upland karst and river-crossing issues, leaving the environmental issues in play, and property owners to face eminent domain proceedings. 🌲

What Sierrans and Other Interested Citizens Can Do

Support the Legal Fight Against the Pipeline. *The Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club has joined together with private landowners including the Kiokee-Flint Group of Dougherty County, as well as Flint Riverkeeper®, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper® and their attorneys, coordinated by Steve Caley of GreenLaw. This team, along with independent actions by WWALS and Sierra Club Florida, are opposing what has come to be called the "Sinkhole Trail" on every legal and public front available. Financial support of these efforts is critical. Choose your group and write them a check. If you are in a position to do so, choose them all.*

Contact Governor Nathan Deal's office about your opposition to the air permit and to the creek and river crossing easements:

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
206 Washington Street
111 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Contact your Representative in the Georgia House and ask her or him to help the southwest Georgia delegation reverse the easements that Governor Deal's Department of Natural Resources has recommended to issue.



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Sierra Club

Gift Planning Program

85 Second Street, Second Floor
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gift.planning@sierraclub.org • (800) 932-4270



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Georgia Power Preparing to Update Long Term Energy Plan

It's that time again! Every three years, Georgia Power updates their long-term plan to meet Georgia's energy needs. In January, the company will file their proposal with the Public Service Commission. Throughout the spring, Commission staff, other interests like industrial users, consumer advocates, and others will present additional information and the five Commissioners will adopt the final update in July. Sierra Club plans to be very involved in the process. Here's what we'd like to see:

Retirement of Plant Hammond (Floyd County) and Plant McIntosh (Effingham County). *These plants are old, dirty, expensive, they don't run very often, and we have more than twice as much reserve margin as recommended by regulators.*

Triple our renewables. *By next year, Georgia will have over 1,000 megawatts of solar in state and 250 megawatts of wind from Oklahoma. Last year 6,500 megawatts of wind responded to a Request for Information and our solar installers are just gearing up. Let's build on the momentum.*

Get real on energy efficiency. *Georgia Power's programs save less than other utilities; 0.4% compared to the industry standard of 1%. Georgia Power residential customers use about 18% more electricity than the average residential customer in the US.*





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*Terms and conditions apply, see www.credomobile.com/sierraclubga for all the details.

Election Brings Changes to Chapter ExCom

Congratulations to **Jeff Schoenberg**, **David Emory** and **Mark Woodall**, who were re-elected to the Georgia Executive Committee. (Schoenberg was previously appointed to finish the term of a member who had resigned.) Emory and Woodall will continue to serve as our Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Joining them and other continuing members will be **Marinangeles Gutierrez**. Congratulations and thanks for your leadership!



Clockwise from top left: David Emory, Marinangeles Gutierrez, Jeff Schoenberg, and Mark Woodall.

"I'm honored to have the opportunity to learn from such a knowledgeable group of individuals. I'm looking forward to continuing great work within the environmental justice movement."
- **Marinangeles Gutierrez**

"I am very excited to continue my board service. I intend to invest real effort in getting members more engaged in the political and legislative work of the club. I believe more grassroots activism has the power to multiply SC's political effectiveness. We're already a force because of the quality of our local staff, but people power can build on their great work. We're leading the fight on clean energy, expanded transit and protecting clean water in Georgia. I think our members will get excited to do their part in supporting that work 365 days a year. We just need to teach them how to get their voices heard in the halls of power."
- **Jeff Schoenberg**

Retiring ExCom Member Norman Slawsky Reflects on Sierra Experience



I joined and became active in Sierra Club because a friend, Sam Collier, invited me. I volunteered to serve as the Program Chair for the Atlanta group when it was the only group in the metro area. We had exciting programs which sometimes attracted 200-300 people. This was a time when the threatened policies of Reagan's Interior Secretary James Watt attracted people to the Sierra Club.

I was also attracted to the Political Committee and was fortunate to serve as Political Committee Chair during a period of intense activity in which we worked to elect many federal and state officeholders who had excellent environmental records. I served as a member of Lt. Gov. Pierre Howard's Environmental Advisory Committee which worked to pass favorable legislation. We had strong relationships with many dedicated public officials. My then young children distributed door hangers in Ben Jones's successful congressional campaign. And I met Marcia Abrams who had served as Political Committee Chair. We married in 1989.

In 1994, I resigned as Political Committee Chair due to the need to spend more time in my labor law firm. When my law office was in the same building as the Chapter office, I gradually became active again and served as Political Committee Chair for a second time.

I had avoided serving on the Chapter ExCom but decided I should run, was elected, and served for four years. The Chapter has been fortunate to employ dedicated and gifted staff members who often perform extraordinary work on behalf of Georgia's environment. For me, the Sierra Club has been about relationships which foster favorable environmental outcomes.

- **Norman Slawsky**

2015 Chapter Retreat One of the Best Ever



Attendees enjoy a special daylong outing to Cumberland Island

By **Betty Harris**

Many of the 109 members and friends who attended our Georgia Chapter Biennial Fall Retreat October 23-25, 2015 at Crooked River State Park in St. Marys agree it was one of the best retreats ever.

With the help of staff and volunteers of the Retreat Planning Committee and many more “hands on deck,” we pulled off a pretty amazing and memorable weekend, featuring high-profile guests and presenters; unique outings and workshops; and great food and fellowship. Among the highlights:

- National Sierra Club President Aaron Mair joined us on Friday evening to share more of his vision for the Club, after also leading an Environmental Justice Forum in Atlanta on Thursday
- Carol Ruckdeschel, renowned biologist, naturalist, activist and Cumberland Island resident, led a wonderful 4-mile walking tour of the island, accompanied by “Untamed” author Will Harlan and Wilderness Watch activist Jerome Walker
- Banquet keynote speaker and celebrated Georgia author Janisse Ray (with her family) delighted us with eloquent reflections and prose on Saturday night
- Seven kids and four adults from the Atlanta Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) camped and joined us for most of our activities
- 2015 volunteer award winners (pictured at right)
- Another “raise the bar” successful chili potluck welcome reception
- Perfect weather!

Thanks to all of you who attended the retreat; provided monetary donations, chili and other food; and helped in so many ways during the weekend. And thank you for your feedback. Planning for the next retreat in 2017 (especially identifying a retreat location) will soon be underway. Please contact the Chapter office if you can assist.

Awards Banquet Recognizes Volunteer Leadership



A highlight of every Chapter Retreat is the Saturday evening awards banquet, headlined this year author and activist Janisse Ray (left). Following Ray’s inspiring remarks, Chapter Director Colleen Kiernan delivered her “State of the Chapter” report and then presented this year’s Chapter leadership awards, pictured below. Congratulations to our winners!



Ogden Doremus Award for Conservation Leadership:
Nina Dutton



Stella Marie Schmittner Award for Behind the Scenes Impact:
Lindsay Crumpton and Sharon Soucek



Outings Leadership Award: **Bob Springfield**



Chuck McGrady Award for Political Acumen: **Jeff Schoenberg**



Outstanding Group Award: **Centennial Group**

(Not Pictured) Sam Booher Award for Group Leadership: **Judy Gordon**

Membership

Aaron Mair Visits Atlanta to Lead Environmental Justice Panel



On October 22, 2015, newly elected Sierra Club President Aaron Mair visited Atlanta to discuss the Sierra Club's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion efforts at the Center for Civil and Human Rights. Mair moderated a panel with Environmental Justice (EJ) leaders in the Atlanta area to discuss EJ 2.0 – the next phase of the movement. He returns to Atlanta in January for a special MLK Holiday Observance event at the King Center, "Building the Beloved Community with Environmental Justice."

Sierrans Celebrate Year of Accomplishments at Chapter Holiday Party



On December 10, 2015, Georgia Sierrans, friends, and partners came together to celebrate our wonderful volunteers, nosh on holiday hors d'oeuvres, and toast to the year's successes. Visit our 2015 Year In Review webpage (www.sierraclub.org/georgia/year-in-review-2015) to check out a photographic slideshow summary of our year and to read more about this year's environmental victories!



photo by Marco Scurati

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Signature _____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
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"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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2016 Forecast for LaGrange Group

The LaGrange group enjoyed a fantastic 2015, highlighted by participation in Journey for Justice, the People's Climate March, the Chapter retreat, three kayak outings, organic farm and Serenbe tours, a tour on Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's new floating classroom on West Point Lake, many informative speakers, lobbying at Capital Conservation Day, a party at Lake Martin and more!

Our 2016 leadership team is composed of the following dedicated volunteers:

- **Kathryn Adams:** board member, tabling chair, program co-chair
- **Joanna Baxter:** outings leader
- **Sim Blitch:** board member, conservation chair
- **Laura Breyfogle:** board chair, outings chair, program co-chair, Chapter ExCom alternate, communications
- **Sam Breyfogle:** tree planting project chair, nominating committee chair
- **Mary Lou Dabbs:** curbside recycling coordinator
- **Mary Drake:** hospitality
- **Ken Fiske:** board member; Keep Troup Beautiful team leader, West Point Lake Clean-Up team leader
- **Jake Krzysiak:** Sierra Club Student Coalition leader for LaGrange College
- **Judy Lawrence:** treasurer
- **Ellen Parkhurst:** board member, membership chair, hospitality chair, communications, Chapter ExCom representative
- **Andrea Richard:** board member, LaGrange College liaison
- **Eric Simpson:** board vice chair, West Georgia Farmers Cooperative and NAACP liaison
- **Travis Towns:** communications
- **Clare Zens:** secretary



We survey our members periodically to help guide decisions about our focus. Recent survey opinion is as follows:

- **Preferred meeting topics:** outdoor adventures, environmental legislation, state and local water quality, wildlife, alternative energy, bird watching/photography
- **Preferred outings:** hikes, West Point Lake boat tour, organic garden tour, canoeing/kayaking, tree ID hike, biking, local wastewater and water treatment plant tours, Serenbe tour
- **Preferred projects:** community tree planting projects, West Point Lake Clean-Up, environmental education

As always, we welcome new folks to join us! If you would like to receive our email announcements, please contact Travis Towns at fttravist@aol.com. Also, like our Sierra Club LaGrange Group Facebook page.

- **Laura Breyfogle**

Greater Gwinnett Group

Getting outside reinforces the Sierra Club's creed to Explore, Enjoy and Protect our environment. In that spirit, the Gwinnett Group recently conducted outings to Mill Creek and to the Buford Trout Hatchery. Our Outings Leader, David Hawkins, did more than simply hike through the area; he explained how the hatchery works and why it is important.

Gwinnett County is the second largest Georgia county by population and is ranked 50th in terms of traffic congestion - a major issue. Former Chair of Gwinnett County Transit Advisory Board and current Gwinnett Group Conservation Chair Art Sheldon is working to bring rail transit to Gwinnett County. Working in Gwinnett and with the R.A.I.L. Committee,

we are laying the groundwork for alternatives to cars. Having a modern transportation system would reduce congestion, lower commute times and decrease the amount of carbon pollutants.

In addition to continuing outings and working on transportation in 2016, we will be working in concert with others to encourage the use of alternative energy sources. We are also planning a film series to highlight different environmental issues and what individuals can do.

There is a lot going on in Gwinnett. Come join us! You will meet interesting people, help the environment and have fun. What have you got to lose?

- **Dan Friedman**

Savannah River Group

Savannah River Group News

As is said, "Tis the season!" and so we ended 2015 with our annual Christmas party, unwinding if for just a short while. We also ended the year with many hikes and bicycle tours plus our usual environmental endeavors: Adopt-A-Stream and trash pick-up.

We are pleased to announce our November election winners: April Wilson, Cathy Black, Larry Komp and Tim Nelkin. We look forward to their participation in our Group Ex-Com escapades.

One of our newer outings this fall was a trip to the local Savannah River Bluffs Heritage Preserve. We enjoyed the fall colors and made some lighthearted attempts to learn some trees by leaf color, type of leaf attachment, etc. Always a challenge! It was interesting to contemplate how the American Indians labored in order to use the edible acorns of the dominant tree in the preserve, the white oak. The process to make the acorns edible was intricate and lengthy. I "leaf" it to intrepid readers to check out this process on the Internet if they are so inspired.

Wishing all a Happy Sierran New Year.

- Judy Gordon



Richard Dillenbeck, Hiker Extraordinaire



Richard Dillenbeck, an Outings Leader for the Savannah River Group, has led hikes for many years. But Richard has done something most people do not do: he has kept a record of how many miles he has hiked, which is currently over 45,000 miles. The Savannah River Group doesn't say all of them were with us, but many were.

Every summer Richard travels to Maine and then on to Germany where he also hikes.

Congratulations to Richard on this extraordinary achievement.

- Sam Booher

Metro Atlanta Group

Our group meets the second Tuesday of each month. Come for snacks at 7 p.m. and the program at 7:30. These general membership meetings are open to the public and held at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany located at 2089 Ponce de Leon Ave. at the intersection with East Lake Drive; the entrance to the church is on East Lake Drive. MARTA Bus 2 runs on Ponce de Leon Ave. between the North Ave. and Decatur stations.

Upcoming Meeting Dates, Featured Speakers and Topics

February 9: Neill Herring (Sierra Club lobbyist) and Mark Woodall (Legislative Committee Chair) will brief us on the Georgia General Assembly's new 40-day session. Look out for ways to take action on such hot topics as funding for MARTA expansion, groundwater protection, stream buffer protection and more!

Adopt-A-Stream Program

Join us for biological and chemical sampling on March 12, 2016!

We meet on the South Fork of Peachtree Creek in Medlock Park, north of Decatur, 10-11 a.m. for chemical monitoring. For biological monitoring we meet 10 a.m.-noon, and we need many eyes to find the critters of the creek.

From Clairmont Road (between N. Decatur and N. Druid Hill Roads), take Desmond Drive (third street north of N. Decatur Road) until it intersects with Willivee Drive. Turn left and follow Willivee around to Scott Circle where you turn right. Parking is on your left when you reach the park. Park in the middle and, walking the dirt road with the 2-story building on your left and ball fields on either side, go into the woods behind ball field #5. Bear left and you will see us at a picnic table by the creek.

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

*For more information, directions,
updates and new events, please see:*

<http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta/>

Centennial Group

A Special Appreciation

The Centennial Group extends special appreciation to our long-time volunteer and friend **Shae Avery**, owner/proprietor of the Avery Gallery in Marietta, for hosting and supporting our December Holiday Party & Auction for each of the past five Decembers! His generosity has made a huge difference to our auction's bottom line, and the elegance and ambience of the gallery provide a perfect setting for our celebration. Congrats also to Shae for completing 50 years of membership in the Sierra Club!



More than sixty people attended our Dec. 3 event, enjoyed our delicious potluck buffet, and had the chance to bid on some excellent items with the able assistance of **Ron Warnken**, our veteran auctioneer. We generated \$1,000 in revenue. Thanks to everyone who assisted and attended.

2015 Group Awards



Clockwise from top left: **Gigi Burke** (sustainability forum and education efforts), **Angie Netteville** (Adopt-A-Mile and outreach efforts), **Lee Graham** (outing leadership), and **Cynthia Patterson** ("step-up-to-the-plate" new leader efforts). Not pictured: **Roger Buerki** (environmental stewardship legacy).

Group ExCom Update

Congratulations to **Gigi Burke**, **Kaye Klapper** and **Lynn Walston** who were elected to the Centennial ExCom in November. Welcome, Kaye! **Linda Bell** and **Angie Netteville** are continuing their terms. **Steven Bell** continues on our leadership team as membership committee chair.

Other End-of-Year Activities

Oct. 1 Sustainability & Media Panel, Nov. 5 Faith-Based Sustainability with Jim Hartzfeld of Georgia Interfaith Power & Light (GIPL), Oct. 31 Blood Mountain (12 hikers), Nov. 7 Chattahoochee National Recreation Area East Palisades, Nov. 14 Arkaquah Trail, Dec. 12 Cooper Creek Forest Issues Ramble.



Centennial Group

In with the New

As we kick off a new year, we expect more dynamic outings and monthly speakers as well as opportunities for volunteers to get more involved in local green space and parks initiatives, and smart energy and transit issues. We hope to help with legislative lobbying and the 2016 elections. We will distribute another member interest survey this quarter and will keep our focus on outreach and education. Please join us!

Upcoming Group Meetings

(All meetings start at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month, at Life University, in Room 311 above the gym. See our website and Facebook page for details.)

February 4 - Georgia Legislative Update with Neill Hering and Mark Woodall.

March 3 - Dr. Kim Cobb, Georgia Tech professor, speaking on climate change issues.

Cobb Park Bond Support

We have formed a conservation subcommittee that supports the reissuance of the 2008 Cobb Park Bond, the Silver Comet Trail completion, and improved transit in Cobb County. This very busy and productive committee met with Commission Chairman Tim Lee on Oct. 9 and continued meeting with all commissioners in the months since. Joining with the newly re-formed Cobb Parks Coalition, members adopt strategies, publish a blog (<http://lovecobbparks.com/blog>), write letters to the editor, and speak regularly at town hall and commission meetings. If you would like to help, please contact Lynn Walston (lynnwalston22@yahoo.com).

- Lynn Walston and Bettye Harris

Outings & Events

Sierra Club Outings provide a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy the beautiful outdoors. To find out more about what outings are being offered, please visit our website at: <http://georgia.sierraclub.org/outings>

Saturday, January 30, 2016

A Winter Hike - Vogel State Park to Blood Mountain

Time: 9 a.m. (Plan for a 5-hour hike and a 1/2-hour lunch break.)

Leader: Lee Graham - leegrah3@gmail.com

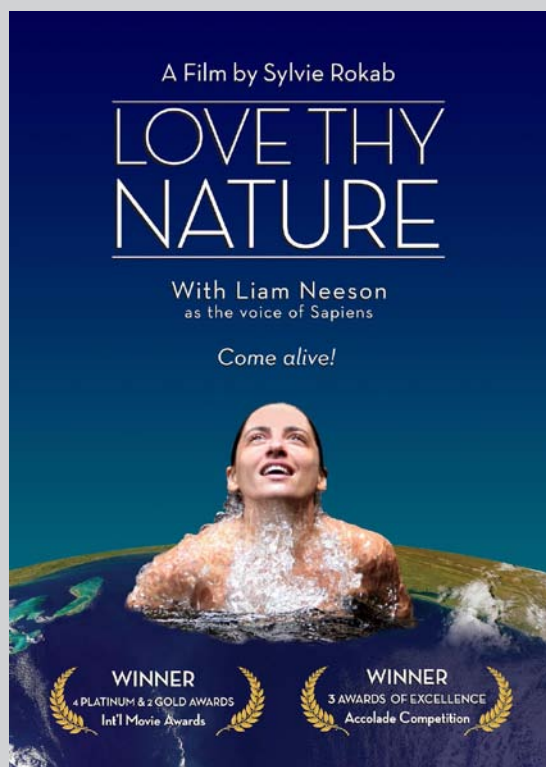
Presented by: Centennial Group

Rated: Strenuous

Description: A winter hike from Vogel State Park up to Blood Mountain via the Coosa Loop, Duncan Ridge Trail and Appalachian Trails. We will have lunch on top of Blood Mountain at the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Shelter. We will return to Vogel via the same trails, but take the parallel Bear Hair Gap Trail with a short loop trail to the Lake Trahlyta overlook on the return. Bring gloves, warm hats, good boots and layers of clothing as we enjoy the woods in the winter. The trail is generally moderate except for a steep uphill in mile 2. We will take a moderate pace. Hiking poles will be helpful, especially if we have snow or ice. The hike is approximately 9 miles with 2,200 feet of elevation gain. Limit: 10. Register with Lee Graham at leegrah3@gmail.com.



Smart Energy, Wildlands Committees to Co-host Film Screening February 8th



For details and to RSVP, please visit:
sierraclub.org/georgia/lovethynature

Chapter Contacts

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At-Large Elected Member

Chapter ExCom Meeting

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

Officers & Chairs

Conservation Chair: Alan Toney,
mudflat@comcast.net

Secretary: Eddie Ehlert, edehlert@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,
woodallmark8@gmail.com

Litigation Chair: Norman Slawsky,
nslawsky@gmail.com

Membership Co-Chairs: Lindsay Crumpton,
lcrumpton1@gmail.com and Sharon Soucek,
soucek.sharon@gmail.com

Newsletter Editors: Diane Shearer and Tanya
Frazee, gasierran@gmail.com

Outings Chair: Sammy Padgett,
sammypadgett@comcast.net

Political Chair: Eddie Ehlert,
edehlert@bellsouth.net

Webmaster: Charlotte Gardner,
ga_sierra_webmaster@yahoo.com

Issue Campaigns and Contacts

Clean Air: Dale Kemmerick,
dalekemm@comcast.net

Coastal Issues: Karen Grainei,
karengrainei@bellsouth.net

• **Coastal Marsh:** Karen Grainei,
karengrainei@bellsouth.net

• **Marine Species/Habitat:** Karen Grainei,
karengrainei@bellsouth.net

• **Okefenokee Swamp:** Sam Collier,
sam.collier3@gmail.com

• **Savannah Port:** Steve Willis,
snwillis@yahoo.com

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:

William Tomlin, wmltom@gmail.com

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:

Colleen Kiernan, 404-607-1262 x224,
colleen.kiernan@sierraclub.org

Chapter Conservation Coordinator:

Bronte McCorkle, 404-607-1262 x232,
bronte.mccorkle@sierraclub.org

Chapter Volunteer Coordinator:

Yeou-Rong Jih, 404-607-1262 x221,
yeou.jih@sierraclub.org

National Staff

Beyond Coal Organizing Representative:

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

Outings Chair: Lee Graham, 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.

Coastal Group

Serving Savannah & surrounding counties

Chair: Karen Graine, karengraine@bellsouth.net

Outings Chair: Steve Wagner, 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

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

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

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

LaGrange Group

Serving the LaGrange area

Chair: Laura Breyfogle, breyfogle@charter.net

Conservation Chair: Sim Blitch, simblitch@charter.net

Outings Chair: Joanna Baxter, 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: Jeff Bragg, braggson@springmail.com

Co-Chair: Konrad Hayashi, rainingatl@gmail.com

Outings Chair: Martin McConaughy, mcmarty@bellsouth.net

Meetings: 2nd Tuesdays, 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.

Regional Contacts

LeConte Group/Athens & Northeast Georgia

Terry Jones, wolpers4@aol.com

Forsyth County

Jim Callison, callisonjim@bellsouth.net

Macon

Fletcher Winston, winston_f@mercer.edu

North Georgia

Larry Winslett, winfog@windstream.net

Valdosta

Brian Day, bjday@valdosta.edu

Georgia Chapter Office

743 East College Ave., 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 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

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 listserv at:
gasmartenergycommittee@googlegroups.com

Subscribe to Georgia Chapter Online E-Newsletter at:
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.

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.

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RECOVERY
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SIERRA
CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID

TRADE VIRTUAL REALITY
FOR ACTUAL REALITY.

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?

Look for more info by March 1st at
sierraclub.org/georgia/johnmuiroutings



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