



WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the
Western North Carolina Sierra Club

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

NOV 2015 - JAN 2016

Upcoming Events:

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

Wednesday, Nov 4
Laura Lengnick

*The Impact of Climate
Change on Food Production*

Wednesday, Dec 2
Holiday Party!

*All are warmly invited to
attend our 6th Annual
Holiday Party and
Recognition Awards.
Please bring a potluck dish.*

Wednesday, Jan 6
Drew Jones

*Climate Change
Interactive Simulation &
update on Climate Negotiations*

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

All members are invited to attend.

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

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

Impact of Climate Change on Food Production - Nov 4



Laura Lengnick

As we enter the Thanksgiving and holiday season, our thoughts turn towards the celebration of food shared in the company of family and friends. Fundamental to our identity as a species, crucial to the health and well-being of our communities, the way that we eat fuels the 21st century challenges that threaten our way of life. How is a changing climate affecting our food supply? What can consumers do to cultivate a climate resilient U.S. food system?

Join us as Laura Lengnick, scientist, educator, policy-maker, and farmer, shares some of the adaptation stories in her new book, *Resilient Agriculture: Cultivating Food Systems for a Changing Climate* (New Society Publishers 2015). A masterful story-teller,

Laura weaves the practical lessons learned by some of America's best sustainable farmers and ranchers with the latest climate science and resilience theory to share a message of hope in these troubling times.

Laura Lengnick has explored agriculture and food system sustainability and resilience through more than 30 years of work as a researcher, policy-maker, educator and farmer. Trained as a soil scientist, her work in soil quality and sustainable farming systems was nationally-recognized in 2002 with a USDA Secretary's Honor award. She contributed to the 3rd National Climate Assessment as a lead author of the 2012 USDA report Climate Change and U.S. Agriculture: Effects and Adaptation. After more than a decade leading the academic program in sustainable agriculture at Warren Wilson College, Laura left the college in 2015 to launch Cultivating Resilience, LLC, a private firm offering climate resilience planning services. She is an affiliated researcher with the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's Local Food Research Center and holds an adjunct faculty position in Horticulture at NC State University.

6th Annual Holiday Party & Recognition Awards - Dec 2

Climate Change Interactive Simulation: Part 2 - Jan 6

What it is going to take to stabilize the climate



Drew Jones

Drew Jones will have recently returned from the Paris UN climate negotiations and, in this interactive presentation, will brief the group on what the deal brings and will run "what if" scenarios in his simulators to show what work remains to address climate change.

Drew led a hands-on, interactive session for our Sierra Club meeting on May 6 where we worked together to create a global scenario for addressing climate change and then tested it in the simulator his team built for a wide range of

decision-makers from the UN to the Chinese Government. We will do this again with the Paris UN information from the climate negotiations.

Drew Jones is Co-Founder and Co-Director of Climate Interactive, a top-rated climate change think tank that creates accessible, policy-maker-oriented simulations. He and his team at CI and MIT Sloan developed "C-ROADS", the user-friendly climate simulation in use by the U.S. State Department, John Holdren in the White House, and the analysts for the Chinese Government. Trained in system dynamics modeling at Dartmouth College and MIT, Jones has worked at Rocky Mountain Institute and served dozens of clients ranging from the CDC to Harley Davidson to the U.S. Government Climate Change Negotiators. He teaches Systems Thinking and Sustainability at MIT and the UNC Chapel Hill's Kenan Flagler Business School.

North Carolina State Legislature Recap—2015

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

The good news is that the NC General Assembly has finally adjourned; the bad news is that legislators passed House Bill 765, an anti-environmental regulatory repeal bill just before leaving town. This bill, if it becomes law, will take North Carolina in the wrong direction, and rather than promote economic development as the bill's proponents allege, it will allow companies to pollute our air, water and streams with less accountability and enforcement.

The bill would make changes to risk-based remediation laws that would allow some contaminated properties to be cleaned up to lower standards; repeal heavy-duty vehicle idling restrictions, which would be detrimental to air quality; and require the Division of Air Quality to remove many air quality monitors across the state. This is a repeat of the General Assembly's failed attempt in 2014 to shut down approximately half of the air quality monitors in North Carolina.

Further, HB 765 would prohibit DENR from requiring mitigation for impacts to intermittent streams and smaller perennial streams. Forty-six percent of North Carolina stream miles – over 50,000 miles out of 112,000 miles – are intermittent. Of the streams that supply public drinking water systems, 56% are intermittent, ephemeral, or headwater streams. That's over 7,000 miles out of 13,000 miles of streams that our families depend on

as our sole source of drinking water. These streams can already be filled in and developed, but developers are currently required to do mitigation to compensate for those impacts – this change would remove the state requirement for mitigation.

There is also a section in the bill that would create a new avenue for polluters to get immunity from penalties and fines for environmental violations if they self-report, a measure that undercuts the effectiveness of penalties as a deterrent to future violations (because a polluter could avoid a penalty by "confessing"). It also allows environmental audits that could hide contamination to be kept secret from the state and the public.

Our public health is dependent on having clean air and safe drinking water. House Bill 765 would bring more harm than good to North Carolinians. For all of these reasons, Governor McCrory should veto the bill.

In other legislative news, the General Assembly failed to renew the renewable energy tax credit, also known as the solar tax credit, which will expire at the end of this year. This tax credit has played a big role in North Carolina becoming the fourth largest state in solar installations and has created thousands of jobs. Unfortunately, the state legislature put anti-tax credit ideology ahead of jobs and clean energy in this circumstance.

Continued on page 4

Modernization Plan Off Promised Path

By Kelly Martin & Joan Walker

Two years ago, the Asheville Beyond Coal coalition was instrumental in the passage of the City of Asheville's Clean Energy Resolution. That resolution, adopted unanimously by Asheville City Council on Oct. 22, 2013, created a partnership between Duke Energy and the city to help Asheville meet its carbon reduction goals "by decreasing its reliance on fossil fuels, including transitioning from coal to electricity provided by clean renewable energy sources."

Duke Energy supported passage of the resolution, and we believed that partnership would put the region on a path toward replacing the coal plant with homegrown clean energy and phasing out the use of fossil fuels in Western North Carolina. We are thrilled that Duke Energy is retiring the coal plant at Lake Julian, a critical first step toward ending reliance on fossil fuels.

In light of this history, however, we find Duke Energy's "WNC Modernization Plan" deeply troubling.

Rather than aligning with the goals in the resolution to transition to clean energy, Duke's plan doubles down on powering our region with fossil fuels for decades to come, preventing the city from meeting its carbon reduction goals, and exporting electricity while our community bears the brunt of the impacts from new, large scale transmission lines.

The "modernization" calls for Duke to build a 650-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant and an approximately 40-mile, 230-kiloVolt (kV) transmission line from a new substation to be built in Campobello, S.C., to the Lake Julian plant.

So far, Duke has not provided solid data to support its claim that our region needs this massive buildout. Thousands of WNC and Upstate South Carolina residents want and deserve to know the justification for this project and whether Duke is choosing the most economically and environmentally viable solution option. Has Duke even analyzed the opportunities for clean, renewable energy to power our region? Where is their commitment to the city partnership to work toward clean energy solutions?

Elected officials in Polk County and Mills River, among others,

have passed resolutions opposing this massive project, our federal representatives Patrick McHenry and Mark Meadows oppose the plans, and more people are joining the cause and asking Duke for answers each day. Hundreds of people and groups have come together under the banner of the Carolina Land Coalition.

The Asheville Beyond Coal coalition is adding its voice to this grassroots movement by calling on Duke Energy to publicly provide data that supports its claims of increased energy demand that would justify the near doubling of electric generation in WNC.

We also call on Duke to publicly provide its analysis regarding the potential for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources to power the mountains.

If a natural gas plant is indeed needed here, it should be sized to provide the electricity needed only after all renewable energy generation and energy efficiency is maximized — and the plant should not be sized to export power out of the region. In addition, transmission lines should not threaten to disrupt hundreds of property owners, sensitive ecological habitats, and the visual beauty of the southern mountains.

Duke has a profit incentive to build this gas plant and the transmission line as large as possible, because it is guaranteed a rate of return on all capital investments. The Asheville Beyond Coal coalition and our supporters call on Duke Energy to prioritize the health of the people, environment and economy of this region over stockholder profits. A truly modern plan would include large scale renewable energy investments, be appropriately sized and sited, and would not impact important natural areas and viewsheds or fragment our irreplaceable farmlands and communities.

Kelly Martin is the senior campaign representative for the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign in North Carolina and Joan Walker is MountainTrue's campaign coordinator. To find out more and get involved, visit carolinalandcoalition.org.

I-26 Connector Project Update

By Julie Mayfield, Mountain True

Anyone who has lived in Asheville for any length of time knows about the I-26 Connector Project – the 20-year old proposal to complete I-26 through town. Work on this project has come in fits and starts over its history due to community opposition, budget reallocations, and the introduction of new alternatives. This fall, NCDOT anticipates releasing a new draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the project, which will be the latest – and perhaps last – opportunity for the public to provide input.

The project is divided into three sections – Section C is the I-40/I-26/I-240 interchange near Brevard Road on the west side of town; Section A is I-240 through West Asheville to Haywood Road; and Section B is from Haywood Road north, across river and up 19/23 to Broadway.

Here is some guidance on what we might see in the DEIS and the funding status of each section:

Section C: There will be a few options presented here, all with the goal of creating a full connection between I-40 and I-240 without having to exit at Brevard Road. **Cost estimate:** \$105 million. **Start date:** this section is funded and could start within the next five years.

Section A: For the first time, NCDOT will present options other than just eight lanes. **Cost estimate:** \$115 million. **Start date:** this section is NOT funded and has no start date.

Section B: There will be four alternatives presented: 3, 3C, 4, and 4B. All options have a new bridge for I-26 across the river. Among

other differences, 3 and 3C leave I-240 traffic on the Jeff Bowen Bridges, while 4 and 4B include new bridges across the river for I-240, allowing Patton Avenue to become a boulevard. All alternatives should contain bike/pedestrian infrastructure across the bridges. **Cost estimate:** between \$230 and \$330 million, depending on the alternative. **Start date:** this section has tentative funding and could start between 2021 and 2025.

Key things to look for in the DEIS are: impacts of the different alternatives on neighborhoods like Burton Street, Montford, Hillcrest and West Asheville; bike/pedestrian accommodations; complexity/simplicity of new interchanges, such as at Patton Ave. and the new I-26 bridge; relative compliance with City of Asheville long-range plans; and cost.

So what happens next? Within 60 or 90 days of releasing the draft EIS, NCDOT will hold a formal public hearing to accept oral public comment (in addition to written public comment). Within a few months of that, DOT hopes to select preferred alternatives for each section and move forward with detailed design. This all assumes broad-based community support and agreement on the preferred alternatives by Asheville and Buncombe County.

MountainTrue is the lead organization on this project on behalf of Asheville's neighborhoods and environment. We work closely with neighborhood representatives, design experts, and our lawyers at the Southern Environmental Law Center. We will provide analysis of the DEIS and suggested comments and will be looking to make sure DOT has provided a complete analysis as required by federal law. You can also check out www.i26connectusproject.org for more information about the project.



Late Fall-Early Winter Hiking Schedule



SAT, NOV 7 – LOOKOUT MTN IN MONTREAT - LOOKOUT MTN AND RAINBOW RD. TRAILS - Meet in Asheville at 10 AM and return around 5 PM. Moderate/Easy hike, approx 5.5-miles on this loop. We will start on the pretty Lookout Mtn. Trail, going to the rock outcrops which offer some beautiful vistas of neighboring mountains. The trail is a little steep toward the end. Then the hike will follow the Rainbow Rd Trail, which provides a more gradual descent. There will be learning opportunities regarding the impact of the loss of hemlocks on the streams, along with some information on conservation. This hike recommended for experienced hikers, or talk with hike leader. RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

TUES, NOV 10 - HARPER CREEK (Strenuous due to elevation change) - This is an approximately 8-mile in and out round trip hike in the Harper Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) on a section of the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) to a great view of South Harper Creek Falls, our lunch spot, and turn around point. From the trail head, we will follow a short connector trail and cross Harper Creek before a steady climb on the MTS Trail that gains 900 feet in elevation. The Harper Creek crossing can be "wet crossing," so be prepared. We will discuss and learn about the Harper Creek Wilderness Study area and the history of wilderness in North Carolina. This hike is for experienced hikers in good shape and good footwear is required. Round trip driving time from Asheville is 3 hours, and total hike time is 5-6 hours, so this is a full day with an early 8 AM meet time. Call or email trip leader David Reid if interested at 828-713-1607, daviddbreid@charter.net. Wilderness ethics apply and group size is limited to 10, including leader.

SAT, DEC 19 - HIKE TO THE TOP OF JOHN ROCK - Meet in Asheville at 10 AM and return around 5:30 PM. Moderate/Easy Loop hike, approx 5-miles long, with elevation gain at approx 1000 ft. This is a beautiful area to hike through. Near the top there is a large smooth rock outcrop, which offers a nice view of the surrounding area, including Looking Glass Rock. It also offers a lovely waterfall which is on an optional side-trail. There will be learning opportunities related to fragile stream habitat and on indicators of water purity. This hike recommended for experienced hikers, or talk with hike leader. RSVP to Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

SUN, JAN 3 – DUPONT'S CEDAR ROCK & BURNT MTN TRAILS - Meet in Asheville at 10 AM and return around 5:30 PM. This hike's terrain is mostly Easy, with a little Moderate. Distance approx 5.5-miles round trip. This hike starts on Corn Mill Shoals trail, then to Burnt Mtn. trail, which offers some interesting rocky areas. Back via Little River trail, and then to the top of Cedar Rock. There we'll have some great rock outcrops and nice views of the surrounding mountains. Learn about the history of this area and how it came to be designated as parkland; also about an adjacent area that is a super fund site. Due to the distance, this hike recommended for experienced hikers or well-conditioned folks (or contact hike leader about it). RSVP to hike leader Lisa McWherter at lisamcw2@gmail.com or 828-713-4994.

If you are unsure if you can hike 3-miles or just want to get out for some exercise, you can test your stamina on one or both walks in natural areas. These walks are on level surfaces with little to no elevation gain. We will learn about aquatic habitat, migrating birds, and wetlands. Wear good walking shoes. Contact Jane at janelaping@sbcglobal.net or 828-277-7342.

SAT, NOV 14 – BEAVER LAKE - 10 AM - 2-mile walk almost around lake. Slight, short incline on paved or gravel path. Optional half-mile walk through the bird sanctuary on a boardwalk.

SAT, DEC 12 – FLETCHER COMMUNITY PARK - 10 AM - Flat 2½-mile walk on fine gravel and pavement following a creek.

The Executive Committee meets monthly. For more information, please contact Judy Mattox at 828-683-2176 or at judymattox@sbcglobal.net. All WENOCA members are invited to attend.
Our website is www.wenoca.org.

WENOCA OFFICERS - 2015 LEADERS

Judy Mattox – Chair - 828-683-2176

Lisa McWherter - Outings Leader Chair

Rich Wasch - Treasurer

Mark Threlkeld - River Cleanup - At Large

Ken Brame - Political Committee

Gail Solomon - Media - At Large

Anne Marie Doherty - At Large

Gene Keil - Website/Membership Committee

Rober Zieber - At Large

Elaine Lite - Newsletter Editor

Emma Greenbaum - Beyond Coal - 828-251-1272



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

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Prepare to Be Inspired! "Americans Who Tell the Truth Exhibit" at YMI

Don't miss the breathtaking exhibition of 52 portraits of **"Americans Who Tell the Truth"** by artist Robert Shetterly, on display now through November 7 at the YMI Cultural Center, 39 S. Market St. in downtown Asheville.

Shetterly has painted portraits of 215 American heroes who speak truth to power and combined with his narratives, highlight citizens who courageously address issues of social, environmental, and economic fairness. By using art and other media, AWTT offers resources to inspire a new generation of engaged Americans who will act for the common good, our communities, and the Earth. Shetterly's newest addition to the AWTT family is NC's own Moral Monday leader, Reverend William J. Barber, whose portrait is prominently featured in the exhibit. When the exhibition concludes in Asheville, it will move on to The International Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro. Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 11 am-4 pm and Sunday from 1-4 pm. For more info, call 828-273-1781.

NC Legislative Update - continued from page 2

On a more positive note, clean energy advocates were able to beat back attempts to repeal or freeze our renewable energy portfolio standard that requires utilities to source a percentage of energy from renewable resources. In addition, the state budget contains an approximate \$8.4 million increase in funding for conservation over the next two years.

Please continue to talk with your legislators about the environment during the interim while they are back home in-district so that they will prioritize environmental issues in 2016. Please thank Senator Terry Van Duyn, Representatives Susan Fisher, John Ager, and Brian Turner from Buncombe County, Rep. Chuck McGrady from Henderson County, and Rep. Joe Sam Queen from Haywood, Jackson and Swain Counties for their votes opposing bad environmental bills and for supporting clean energy. If you live in other parts of Western NC, please let your senator or representative know you are very disappointed in their support for environmental regulatory repeal.