



SIERRA
CLUB
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA CHAPTER

Alabama Sierran

Winter 2011

THINGS TO DO:

- *Vote using the enclosed ballot*
- *Attend a Meeting*
- *Go on an Outing*
- *Write a letter to your representative or senator*
- **VOTE FOR FOREVER WILD**
(learn more inside)
- *Talk to your friends about the environment*
- *Tell a friend about the Sierra Club*
- *Stay up-to-date on Sierra Club activities and the state of the environment by visiting alabama.sierraclub.org regularly*
- *The website is updated regularly, so visit often! alabama.sierraclub.org*

Dear Alabama Members

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club, we want to thank you for your continuing support of and participation in our Club's efforts to protect our natural environment, improve air and water quality, and introduce more residents to the incredible natural bounty of Alabama through educational programs and outings.

Since we have moved to an electronic version of our newsletter, which can be accessed at alabama.sierraclub.org, there are fewer opportunities to communicate with you directly. We would appreciate your adding your e-mail address to our database, so we can keep you better informed of issues in our state. **Having your email is important—we will not overuse it, we promise!** Without your email we can't inform you of important Sierra Club issues as mailing is too expensive and likely to become more unreliable due to USPS cutbacks. To furnish your email, simply go to the chapter website at www.alabama.sierraclub.org. There will be a prominent link on the front page to enter your email easily.

The Executive Committee, commonly referred to as the ExCom, members meet quarterly to discuss state-wide environmental issues, to share what our Groups are doing, and to determine how we can best support these efforts with our limited financial and volunteer resources. Among these actions are

support for several Water Festivals which educate youngsters about the value and quality of water resources, monitoring of water quality (especially with regard to industrial/coal pollution), and lobbying the State Legislature for improved enforcement of environmental protection. In year 2012, our major thrust will be to convince voters to continue support for the Forever Wild program, which for the past twenty years has been acquiring land for preservation for us and future generations.

We are now asking you to participate with your vote (and stamp) in our annual election of members of the ExCom. This year, we have four well-qualified and dedicated candidates for four openings on the board. Each candidate has submitted a brief statement about himself or herself. Write-in candidates are always welcome.

Consider including in your New Year's resolutions a commitment to attend a Group meeting, to go on an outing, to write a letter to your representative or senator or the newspaper, to vote for Forever Wild, to promote awareness of environmental concerns, or to introduce a friend to the Sierra Club.

Thank you for being a member!

Thank you for caring about our environment! Thank you for voting!

Sincerely,

Steve Garrison, Peggie Griffin, and Margo Rebar, Co-chairs for the Alabama Chapter

Group Updates

CAHABA GROUP UPDATE

Last year there were strong attempts made to re-energize the Cahaba group (encompassing the greater Birmingham area) and re-establish regular meetings. Tragically this was interrupted by the untimely death of Jay Hudson who was the local leader of this effort. The Cahaba group has more active members than any other group in the state and your state chapter wants to assist in a full-scale effort to reestablish the group. I am volunteering to serve as a temporary group chairman until things are firmly underway.

The kickoff month will be February 2012 with a general interest meeting, speaker to be announced, and snacks on Tuesday, February 28, at 6:00 in the auditorium at the Birmingham Zoo. Read the Alabama Sierran for updates (alabama.sierraclub.org/) or contact me. I hope to see you there!

Regular meetings will be held on the fourth Tuesdays of each month, thereafter, at the Zoo. In addition, the Cahaba group will continue to offer various outings/hikes.

These are trying times for environmentalists and the voice of the Sierra Club is more important than ever. Your membership in the Sierra Club indicates that you are a person who "cares". Assistance is needed to bring the group back to vibrant life – please reach out with your willingness to attend this meeting and perhaps to give a helping hand.

Steve Garrison, temporary acting chairman, sgg@alexcomp.com
256 – 442 – 8799

COOSA VALLEY GROUP

The Coosa Valley Group represents Sierra Club members in North and Central East Alabama—that is, the greater Gadsden area. Started in 2007, it has been active in Chapter activities, with three members on the EXCOM committee and the host of the 2010 annual retreat. We have supported actions against the Rosa Mine which will further stress the already fragile Locust Ford River, have participated in clean up days in Etowah County & Earth Day in Mentone, AL and have members who are actively involved in water quality, the Coosa Riverkeeper and recycling efforts.

Program Meetings in 2012 will be held at 6:30 at the Joe Ford Center, 405 Korner Street, on the Gadsden Community College campus on the 2nd Thursday of the month. Our program meetings are always on topical environmental or sustainable issues and for 2012 we will start out with a presentation from Pete Conroy, the Director of the Environmental Policy and Information Center and the Field School at Jacksonville University. In February our presenter will be from Tigers for Tomorrow, and the March program will be on bicycling.

MOBILE BAY GROUP

Mobile Bay Group Sierra Club continues to enjoy and protect the Alabama Gulf Coast, Bays and Rivers, to teach others to understand and respect the fragile environment, in which we live, and to practice and promote the responsible use of South Alabama's ecosystems and resources.

Mobile Bay Group Sierra Club's general meetings and programs are the first Tuesday of each month.

Join us at 5 Rivers, Alabama's Delta Resource Center, 30945 Five Rivers Blvd., Spanish Fort, AL (entrance is across from Meaher State Park on the Mobile Bay Causeway). Our general meeting is at 6 p.m. Socializing with great talk and great company and refreshments are served at 6:40 p.m. An educational program starts promptly at 7 p.m. (General public is always invited, no admission.)

In September, Mobile Bay Group Sierra Club was once again a Sponsor of Alabama Coastal Cleanup. This is one of our annual community service projects. Club members and friends checked-in at Dog River Park and worked on many cleanup sites in the Dog River Watershed. Not only did we walk along shorelines and creek banks removing litter and trash, we were also in kayaks and canoes picking up shoreline trash that was not accessible by land. Coastal Cleanup is a statewide volunteer program that sponsors an annual day of removing trash from coastlines and rivers. Participants received lunch and T-shirts.

On Sunday, APRIL 22, Mobile Bay Group Sierra Club will again sponsor Earth Day Mobile Bay 2012 at the Fairhope Pier in Fairhope, AL from 10:00 a.m. til 6:00 p.m. We are in the planning stages and welcome volunteers. This year's 42nd Annual Earth Day of family fun will host over one hundred environmental displays and activities, a wide variety of interactive art and educational opportunities for children and adults. Live entertainment will start at 10:00 a.m. and Live Music will continue throughout the day. FREE BRATS Shuttle Service (from Food World,

Ecor Rouge Plaza) <http://www.earthdaymobilebay.org>

MONTGOMERY GROUP

In 2012 we will establish regular outings, on the second and fourth Saturday of every month. For the January & February we will meet at 8:30 to hike the Martin Wildlife Trail. The Montgomery Group meets monthly at Aldersgate United Methodist except for a few special meetings per year where we meet at a local restaurant or a member's home (Christmas party). The past year we have been treated to a tantalizing array of speakers. Attendance has lagged as several regulars go North for the summer and our recruitment efforts have met with limited success.

Our principal involvement is with the local water festivals held in Autauga and Montgomery counties to educate young people about the various aspects of water. We support this with our budget and with our time and the past few festivals have proven successful.

NORTH ALABAMA GROUP

In keeping with the North Alabama Group's long tradition of being the state's leader in outings, Sandy Kiplinger submitted an article about the history of outings and the Sierra Club. To learn more about the many outings the North Alabama Group hosts, just visit the Alabama Chapter website and click on "Groups".

Sierra Club Outings: The Beginning

"Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." –John Muir

In 1868, a young John Muir, later known as a naturalist and preservationist, saw Yosemite Valley

for the first time. Although his estimated stay was ten days, it was a life changing event. In 1869, Muir wrote in a letter, "I must return to the mountains—to Yosemite... I am bewitched, enchanted, ..." Muir's most intense years in his "University of Wilderness" were between 1868 to 1874. When not working, Muir could be found with journal in hand, documenting the valley's plants, wildlife and geology.

In 1889, an older John Muir, a well-known conservationist with several published articles, and Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of an influential magazine, sat around a campfire in Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows and devised a campaign that would create Yosemite National Park. Their proposal was passed by Congress the following year. Muir and Johnson soon realized that an organization was needed to protect the Park. At the same time, a group at the University of California was interested in promoting recreational opportunities in Yosemite. Muir, the UC, and other interested parties in the San Francisco Bay Area, came together and on May 28, 1892, the Sierra club was incorporated "to explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them," and "to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada."

Eight years after its incorporation, the Sierra Club had 384 members. Recognizing that numbers influenced politics, Muir became a cheerleader for tourism. "If people in general could be got into the woods, even for once, to hear the trees speak for

themselves, all difficulties in the way of forest preservation would vanish." In 1901, William Colby led the Sierra Club's first national outing to Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows. This was not just a 'hiking' or 'camping' trip. In addition to the 96 participants being advised to read Muir's "The Mountains of California" and Joseph LeConte's "Journal of Ramblings through the High Sierra" prior to the trip, once it began, they received lectures on forestry, biology, the history of Yosemite and geomorphology. This became the model for what became known as the High Trip, the Sierra Club's main cultural event for more than 50 years.

www.sierraclub.org/history/origins/

www.sierraclub.org/history/leconte/lodge.aspx

www.sierracollege.edu/ejournals/jscnhm/v1n2/muirquotes.html

WEST ALABAMA GROUP

The West Alabama Group is based in Tuscaloosa-Northport and has been continuously active for about 30 years. We meet the third Thursday of each month, currently at the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church and Student Center, 811 5th Avenue, near the University of Alabama. Recent programs have featured Nelson Brook, Black Warrior River Keeper, discussing the proposed Shepherd Bend coal strip mine near the river, as well as Beth Motherwell on "Urban Chickens". The next planned program is Jan. 19, when Laurie Johns will speak about Rebuilding Tuscaloosa. We have an active outings program led by Outings Chair Dexter Duren, most recently to the Walls of Jericho in northwest Alabama. The January outing will be to Monte Sano state park near Huntsville.

Coosa Riverkeeper Project Video

The Sierra Club encourages partnering with other environmentally oriented organizations. Last year the chapter executive committee authorized a \$5000 contribution to the newly formed Coosa Riverkeeper in order to investigate coal ash issues on the Coosa River. That investment has been validated we think. Please watch the very informative video that has been produced by this partnership with Alabama Sierra Club and the Coosa-Riverkeeper. We think that this is information that every one who believes in defending the environment should see. Please distribute this far and wide among your circle of acquaintances.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYIET3PQmyM



If you happen to be away from your home computer and want to show it to a friend, merely go to www.YouTube.com and search “Coosa coal ash”. It will pop right up.

Protect Forever Wild



On November 6, 2012, a major election will take place in Alabama. Of course there is the all-important presidential election, but Alabama voters will also be voting on the 20-year extension for the Forever Wild program. Since Forever Wild was

first approved 20 years ago (by an overwhelming 83 percent of voters), Forever Wild has protected thousands of acres for the benefit of Alabamians. Some of the state's most visited natural areas, such as the Walls of Jericho in north Alabama and the Mobile Tensaw Delta in south Alabama, are open to the public because of Forever Wild. Many Sierra Club outings involve hikes or other activities on Forever Wild lands.

The Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club is a member of the Protect Forever Wild Coalition, dedicated to the protection and reauthorization of Forever Wild funding. This coalition of conservation, environmental, hunting and angling, outdoor recreation, and business entities recognizes Forever Wild's success in securing

public lands for outdoor recreation for our citizens and protecting the ecological integrity of Alabama's landscape. We are working to insure that Forever Wild is reauthorized for another 20 years.

You can help by publicizing the benefits of Forever Wild, and by voting in favor of Forever Wild reauthorization in the 2012 election.

Additional information is available at <http://www.protectforeverwild.org/>

Can You Imagine...ICO Outings

Can you imagine that wading in a local creek is a new (and very exciting) experience for a ten-year old? Can you imagine believing that a walk in a nearby wooded area would be dangerous because of the tigers and bears? Can you imagine living in the Birmingham area, being fourteen years old, and not ever been to the zoo? Can you imagine not knowing that carrots actually grown under the ground? Can you imagine waiting until you are a teenager before going into a cave? Can you imagine living here your entire young life and never visiting the Gulf shore? Can you imagine the joy of youngsters enjoying these seemingly routine childhood experiences for the first time? If so, welcome to Inner City Outings!

One of the Sierra Club's missions is to preserve and protect our environment; however, without experiencing the great outdoors beyond the urban landscape, even envisioning a need to care about the natural world is far-fetched. Making the connection between nature and inner city

youth is the goal of the Inner City Outings program, one branch of the Sierra Club. Once a month, a group of volunteers in the Birmingham area take youths, aged 8 to 18 years, on a day outing to explore the outdoor wonders of Alabama. Not only do these trips enhance the children's lives, they also re-inspire us adults.

In October, our ICO outing took us to Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, where we hiked through colorful fall foliage; learned about acorns, rock formations, mining for iron ore, and other natural phenomena; climbed into a narrow rift in the limestone cliffs; ate lunch overlooking the Jones Valley and Birmingham airport; and explored an abandoned quarry, scrambling up its rock scree border.

In November, our ICO participants traveled to Oak Mountain State Park



where they experienced farm animals up close, sometimes too close when cracked corn was offered! A hike through the woods to see the rehabilitation center's birds of prey, all of which are too injured to return to the wild and time to sit back without electronic interference and enjoy the quiet beauty of the lake and surrounding woods completed our day's outing. In between, we prepared our own lunch over a charcoal fire. For these participants, a day outside in this setting is unusual, even though for many among us these experiences are routine.

We welcome new volunteers to our ICO program. Contact me, Margo Rebar, msrebar@gmail.com or 205-970-6500 if you are interested in rejuvenating your own enthusiasm for the outdoors.



What You've Been Missing

Want to find out more about what's happening in Alabama's environmental community? Want to keep up-to-date on the latest outings and events the Sierra Club offers throughout the year? Want to learn about global warming or a new birding trail? Find a great new book to read? Just take a moment to browse over to www.alabama.sierraclub.org and you'll find all this and more. Below are some headlines from just the last three months!

- Jay Hudson Tribute: His Biodiversity Powerpoint presentation for your enjoyment
- The 2012 Alabama Legislative Session (with information on how to lobby and some excellent reading on Climate Change)
- National Sierra Club's Support for the "Occupy" Movements
- A New Rails-to-Trails Corridor Coming?
- Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail now open
- ADEM Cuts Funding for Water Watch Program
- Sierra Club Outings
- A Book of Interest from David Newton
- Annual Retreat: Nov. 18-20, 2011
- Alabama's Own Carol Adams-Davis of Mobile Wins National Sierra Club Award (this is an updated article from Robert Hastings with lots more good information than last month's--congrats again Carol (AND A BIG THANKS!))
- Our Congress members choose polluters over healthy families: a letter from David Newton
- This Congress: The Most Anti-Environmental Congress on Record (browse a database that highlights how each congress person voted on environmental issues)
- Northern Beltline (Birmingham) Public Hearing and Public Comment Period
- October 15 Jay Hudson Memorial Pinhoti Challenge Dayhike
- A Book of Interest (The Wave) from David Newton
- Bear Creek to Flint River Trip Report from North Alabama Sierra Club member Debra Wonder
- AlaRuck 2011
- Michael Brune's blog Post: Wildlands Are Your Lands

National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway.

Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include info on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to

function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership.

This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. Visit the Club's election

website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2012election/>

This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment. You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If necessary, you will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

National Sierra Honors Local: Carol Adams-Davis

At the annual awards ceremony on September 23, Carol Adams-Davis of the Mobile Group was honored with the National Sierra Club Environmental Alliance Award. This was indeed a well-deserved honor and we congratulate Carol for this recognition of her energy and dedication to the Club. The following is the statement submitted with her nomination for this award:

From 2008 through 2011, Carol Adams-Davis has been a leader in developing Environmental Alliances for the Mobile Bay Group Sierra Club and the Alabama Chapter Sierra Club.

In January 2008, Carol Adams-Davis was the Mobile Bay Group Sierra Club's liaison to set up a 501(C)(3) non-profit Sierra Club Foundation account to give temporary non-profit status to a newly formed organization called Earth Day Mobile Bay, until it could achieve non-profit status. Today Earth Day Mobile Bay is a stand-alone non-profit, no longer under the Sierra Club Foundation umbrella, but still sponsored by the Mobile Bay Group and the Alabama State Chapter Sierra Club.

Representing Sierra Club, Carol Adams-Davis has worked year-round for five years to produce the South's largest and most exhilarating

annual Earth Day experience. With more than 10,000 attendees, Earth Day Mobile Bay has grown the environmental movement on the Gulf Coast through involving community groups, environmental organizations, (federal, state, county and city) government agencies, museums, schools, local businesses, and leadership of Mobile and Baldwin Counties in environmental education throughout the year.

Read even more about Carol here: alabama.sierraclub.org/chapternews/november2011/

2012 Alabama Legislative Session on the Way

Most would agree that getting to know the elected officials who represent you is an important component of protecting the things you care about, e.g., air, water, and land -- the special places in your life.

Of course, among those elected officials are members of the Alabama State Legislature -- in particular, your Alabama State Senator and your Representative. If you don't know who they are, you should visit: <http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/zipsearch.html>. If you need contact information for them, visit the web pages that contain the rosters of the Alabama senate and the house of representatives. Links to these rosters are often available along the left side of the legislative web page you are currently consulting.

As you recognize, all of this is to help prepare you for a visit with your legislators. If you need tips on how to proceed to make arrangements and how to conduct an interview, you can visit alabama.sierraclub.org/chapternews/dec2011/do-dont.pdf. You may want to include one or two friends in the meetings. Tip: Meet well in advance, and decide on issues and presenters.

One thing you should do while you are visiting your legislators is to share with them the document on climate change indicators, available at alabama.sierraclub.org/chapternews/dec2011/climatechange.pdf. You can indicate that this one-page document can be useful in providing "sound science" to constituents who need information about climate change. Of course, it can also be useful in

making the case about climate change to the legislators.

Another item that can strengthen your position is a bar graph concerning the frequency of tornadoes in Alabama over the last 60 years. Just visit alabama.sierraclub.org for a view of the graph obtained from the U.S. National Weather Service in Birmingham. Notice the marked increase in F0 and F1 tornadoes, beginning in 1995.

The 2012 Regular Session of the Alabama State Legislature begins February 7. It is now time to get to know your legislators or to renew your acquaintance. Be ready and go do it. It is important.

Submitted by David Newton



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The Gulf Oil Spill Disaster

The Gulf oil disaster continues to be an environmental issue of major concern to the Alabama Chapter. Several organizations, including the Mobile Group of the Sierra Club, are monitoring the coast and political activities to insure that environmental concerns are properly addressed. Jill Mastrototaro, Gulf Coast Protection Campaign Director for the Sierra Club, has been especially active in this effort. Carol Adams-Davis of the Mobile Group was recognized for her service in this area by being given the National Sierra Club's 2011 Environmental Alliance Award.

Two major reports regarding the

Gulf restoration effort were recently released. These are *"SUNSHINE ON THE GULF: The Case for Transparency in Restoration Project Selection"*, A report from the Gulf Future Coalition, of which the Sierra Club is a member (Report can be downloaded at <https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B9aLWf6FZ1qEMDVjZWZkYmEtNDAxNS00NTc2LWJ0NTMtNWE3ZDA0ZDQ2YmY1>)

and

"Protecting America's Gulf Coast: The Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy", the final report of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem

Restoration Task Force (Report can be downloaded at <http://www.epa.gov/gulfcoasttaskforce/> or at http://www.gulffuture.org/images/stories/GCERTF_Final_Strategy.pdf)

Another significant action is a bill currently being considered in Congress, the RESTORE Act, which aims to direct 80% of the BP's Clean Water Act fines towards Gulf coast ecosystem restoration. *We need to urge lawmakers to support this legislation. This is an unprecedented opportunity to fund the recovery of the Gulf coast using these fines which should amount to many billions of dollars.*



2011 Candidate Statements



CHARLIE COHEN

For the past 23 years, I have been living in Huntsville, where I have been hiking with the Sierra Club and earning my living as a scientist. I do research in meteorology, using and improving computer models of the atmosphere. For the past four years, I have been leading hikes for the North Alabama group of the Sierra Club, and for the past three years I have been on the group's Executive Committee. As the group's treasurer, I have begun to learn about the Sierra Club's finances, and I enjoy the support of the other members of the Executive Committee. I would like to continue to be useful to my fellow Sierra Club members by taking on the more complex job of State Chapter treasurer.

CINDY GARRISON

Cindy Garrison has lived in Alabama for over 20 years, enjoying its beauty and diversity. She has been concerned with environmental issues most of her life and hopes that through the Sierra Club, she can show that individuals working together can make a difference. She is one of the charter members of the Chapter's Coosa Valley Group and is currently its co-chair. Cindy co-chaired the 2010 Chapter Retreat and is currently her Group's representative on the Chapter's Executive Committee, serving as Secretary. She has an undergraduate degree in Secondary Education and a juris doctorate from Widener University School of Law. She currently works for BAE Systems in Anniston as a Contracts Director. Prior to working for BAE Systems, she served as Legal Counsel at Anniston Army Depot for both Contract and Environmental Issues.

ROBERT W. HASTINGS

Robert W. Hastings has been a member of the Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club since January, 2002, and a member of the national club since 1982. He is a marine biologist now semi-retired, but working part-time with the Alabama Natural Heritage Program on projects involving red-cockaded woodpeckers and aquatic surveys. He is a dedicated environmentalist and has been active in a number of environmental organizations, including the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation and the Gulf Restoration Network, as well as the Sierra Club. He has been a member of the Alabama Chapter ExCom for several years and has served as Vice-Chair, Conservation Chair, and the Chapter delegate to the National Council of Club Leaders. His major areas of concern relative to the Sierra Club are environmental justice, protection of natural habitats, and environmental education. He has also been involved with restoration of the Gulf coast as Chair of the Gulf Restoration Network Board of Directors.

KEN HYPHE

My name is Ken Hyche and I have been a member of the Cahaba Sierra Club since 2000. I have been a Sierra Club hike leader since 2008 and have served as temporary outings chair for the Cahaba Sierra club for about two years. I have always loved the outdoors and was a Boy Scout growing up. I worked with my son's Boy Scout troop from the time he joined as a Cub Scout until he earned his Eagle Rank at 18 years old. I was an assistant Scout Master for the last years he was in the scouts and continued to work with them after he was too old to be a Boy Scout. I enjoy leading hikes and showing people why we need to save all the special places we have. I want to work with others in the Sierra Club to preserve what we have and enlarge our outdoor access where we can. I have a grandson and I want to ensure he has clean air, water and food so he can enjoy a good life. Thanks for the opportunity to serve.