

February 2009

# Sierra

## North Alabama Group



Visit our website  
<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/na.html>

**Biofuels and the Environment,**  
**Huntsville Public Library**  
**Auditorium, Thursday, February**  
**19 at 6:30pm**

### **Tuesday Night Hikes**

Meet at 6:00pm at the Land Trust  
parking lot, 907 Franklin St.

### **Biofuels and the Environment**

For the February 19<sup>th</sup> general meeting, Jim Yeager will speak about biofuels, which have been both lauded as another way to lessen our dependency on oil and criticized as a waste of cropland at a time when food supplies around the world have been in short supply.

Jim Yeager graduated in Agricultural Engineering from Auburn University. His lifelong interest in fuel production, right on the farm, stems from a love of farming and the dire need for a new commodity that will foster prosperous American agriculture. He is now an Engineering Consultant, retired from a development career spanning launch propulsion and farm machinery. This interest led him into a full appreciation for the key role carbon plays in Creation Care. Jim's avocation, for several years now, has been to make a difference in Creation Care and Social Justice.

For the March 19 meeting, we will have a presentation on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, a 35,000 acre refuge providing a winter habitat for thousands of waterfowl every year.

The North Alabama Sierra Club meets at 6:30 the third Thursday of every month at the Huntsville Madison County Public Library in the main auditorium. The library is in downtown Huntsville on Monroe St. just off Governor's Drive. Everyone is invited.

- the Editor

### **Update on the Coalition for a Greener Huntsville**

The Coalition for a Greener Huntsville and Madison County wants to thank the North Alabama Sierra Club for its commitment of \$1,750 to purchase the software package that will be the underpinning to help the City reduce its carbon output. This gift hinges on Mayor Battle signing the Mayor's Climate agreement, which is part of the Cool Cities Initiative. The Sierra Club has been a steadfast "Green Partner" and will be invited to participate in a meeting with the Mayor.

Last week, the Coalition recognized Missy Mourant of the Stokes Street Homeless Camp for her recycling efforts in her camp. The City of Huntsville Operation Green Team also awarded Ms Mourant a certificate and a goody bag. The purpose was to raise awareness that even the homeless are recycling, so there's no excuse to not be recycling.

There will be many opportunities this coming year for our partnership to grow. Thank you again for your support to our joint efforts.

- Lynn Leach, Chair, Coalition for a Greener  
Huntsville and Madison County

### **National Sierra 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 your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information 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 about the candidates by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. The Club's election website provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2009election>

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 Internet voting site to save time and postage.

- National Sierra Club

### **Sierra Club Backs Ash Recommendations**

After the second TVA coal ash spill, this one at the Widow's Creek plant near Jackson, AL, environmental groups in Alabama drafted a letter to state legislators urging stricter regulations for coal ash storage. The letter was drafted by the Alabama Environmental Council and the Alabama Rivers Alliance. The Alabama Sierra Chapter signed the letter. The letter points out that not only are the ash waste retention ponds a potential environmental and health hazard, cleaning up a spill costs much more than taking steps to store the coal ash waste more effectively. The cleanup costs for these two spills will of course impact the utility bills of All TVA customers at some point.

Excerpts from the letter follow:

"On the heels of a massive spill of toxic coal ash waste in Tennessee and another separate incident in Alabama, the Alabama Environmental Council and the Alabama Rivers Alliance along with the organizations signed onto this letter, are calling for you, the leaders of our state, to take immediate action to ensure that our citizens, wildlife, and natural resources are better protected from these unregulated coal combustion waste storage facilities."

"Nine coal-fired power plants currently operate in Alabama with similar material retention ponds. Despite decades of problems, TVA has not upgraded to more protective dry storage technologies due to the perceived expense. They are now faced with spending hundreds of millions of dollars in cleanup, when a proposed option for technology upgrades in 2003 would have cost only \$25 million."

"DOE reports indicate that electricity production by coal is projected to increase almost 25 percent by 2020 and 64% by 2030. The increase in the production of coal ash is roughly proportional to the increase in the use of coal for electric power. CCW generation will increase, therefore, at least 25 percent by 2020."

"Suggestions for ensuring that CCW is stored properly and citizens and waterways are not endangered include:

- \_ Every impoundment needs to be certified by a structural engineer licensed in Alabama
- \_ An impact assessment should be performed that assumes complete impoundment failure so that regulators and the public may know which impoundments present the highest potential for harm
- \_ The volume/quantity of fluid in the impoundments must be reported and the chemical content of the fluids in the impoundments need to be characterized.
- \_ Each facility should be required to examine how it might convert to dry storage.
- \_ Each facility should have an emergency response plan in place, along with the financial assurance to implement an emergency response

Please take the time to write, call or email your local state legislator and urge them to work on stricter regulations for storage of coal ash waste. It will help keep our state cleaner and healthier and will probably save us money on our utilities bills in the future.

- The Editor

# North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

## February – March 2009

### 2009 ExCom Members

Chair	Mirko Rakigijja	772-8548
Vice-Chair	Judy Burley	883-4267
Treasurer	Sam Denham	539-1033
Conservation	Doug Horacek	772-6788
Fundraising	Charlotte Buening	772-7348
Legislative	Charlie Cohen	
Membership	Dave Kostowny	682-1233
Outings	Tom Burley	883-4267
Political chair	Joe Imhof	858-3626
Publicity	Sandy Kiplinger	498-1023
Secretary	Linda Griffin	772-8653
Tuesday Hikes	Nancy Dudney	882-9408
Newsletter	Jack Drost	880-2644
Web Page	Steven Baty	489-0990

### Thursday, February 19 - Jim Yeager on Biofuels. Downtown Library Auditorium, 6:30pm

#### Hike Ratings

**General Note:** Saturday outings may take all day and last into early evening. The Sierra Club encourages carpooling to save fuel, but you should be prepared to drive your own car on club outings.

**Easy-**Less than 5 miles, no serious elevation changes, no trail obstacles.

**Moderate-**5 to 10 miles, some elevation changes or rough trail (rock hopping), or trail obstacles such as creek crossings.

**Strenuous-** Over 10 miles, substantial elevation change (1000 ft or more), trail may be rocky, obstructed or nonexistent.

**Exploratory-** event the leader has not experienced before, may fit any class.

**Saturday, Feb 14 - Pigeon Mountain dayhike. Strenuous.** Pigeon Mountain is a spur off the east side of Lookout Mountain and is part of the Cumberland Plateau. We will hike the Pocket Trail which includes a picturesque waterfall, wildflowers, and a wide range of geological formations. Bring lunch and water. The hike is 8 miles and rated strenuous due to the 1200 ft elevation gain. We will eat at a local restaurant on the way back. Meet at the Hampton Cove Publix at 8:15am. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburley@bellsouth.net](mailto:tdburley@bellsouth.net)

#### Sunday, Feb 15 - Honeysuckle

**Elimination.** Meet at Land Trust property across from Fagan Spring Apartments at 1:00pm. Bring loppers and gloves. We have extra loppers, a saw and a popper. Contact Doug Horacek for more information at 772-6788.

**Tuesday, Feb 17, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Gerdi Keyser, 922-2261.

**Saturday, Feb 21 - Bankhead NF, Sougdahoagdee Falls hike. Moderate.** 5 miles round trip. We will hike to the falls on a trail with varied obstacles. Bring lunch and water for a picnic at the falls. We will meet at 10:00am in Wren at the Warrior Mountain Trading Post, junction of Highways 33 & 36, south of Moulton. Contact Michael Stewart at 656-5836 or [athikerstew@yahoo.com](mailto:athikerstew@yahoo.com)

**Saturday, Feb 21- Keith Trail hike. Moderate.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot at 10:00am. We will hike 5-6 hours, going from Mountain Mist to Sinks to Stone Cuts to Logan Point and Super Cuts around to Keith Trail then the Sinks and back to cars. Bring snacks and water and sturdy hiking boots. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for information.

**Tuesday, Feb 24, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Nancy Dudney, 882-9408.

**Thursday, Feb 26 – Excom meeting 5:30pm.** Mirko Rakigijja, 772-8548.

**Saturday, Feb 28 - Exploratory hike in Sharp/Bingham Mt. Preserve. Strenuous.** This new Nature Conservancy preserve, at the western edge of Paint Rock Valley, is about 2300 acres, on the order of the size of Monte Sano State Park; "There's not a house in sight!" The Sierra Club has been given permission for this hike by the Nature Conservancy and Horace Clemmons, who bought the property to preserve it, and sold it in 2004 to the Conservancy. Horace still lives adjacent to the preserve and will let us cross his property to access the wilderness. This hike is rated strenuous because it is exploratory and will include a very steep 1200 ft climb over 1/2 mile. Bring lunch and water. Meet at the Publix Hampton Cove at 8:15am. Call Sam Denham at 539-1033 (h) 961-0436 (w) for more information.

**Tuesday, March 3, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Ken Shrider, 772-9442.

**Saturday, March 7 - Wolf Cove, Cave Cove hike. Strenuous.** We will hike 6-8 miles, some off trail. Bring lunch and water. Meet at the Publix on Winchester Rd at 9:00am. For more info call Joette 776-3551.

**Tuesday, March 10, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Michael Stewart, 656-5836.

#### Newsletter Labeling

**Wednesday, March 11, 5:30pm.** Stanlieo's Sub Villa, corner of Monroe St. and Governor's Dr. Liz, 461-5819.

**Fri-Sun, March 13-15 – Abrams Creek backpack. Strenuous.** This is a 21-mile backpack in the Abrams Creek area with significant elevation changes over two days. We will begin on the Cooper Road Trail and traverse Beard Cane, Wet Bottom, Abrams Falls, and Rabbit Creek Trails back to the trailhead. On this hike we will see the remains of old home sites and possible wildlife sightings. We will depart early on Friday and return on Sunday. Bring food for two days. Group size is limited to eight. Leader approval is required. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net)

**Saturday, Mar 14 - Spring Wildflower hike. Easy.** We will walk along Fagan Spring looking for wildflowers, the Trout Lilies especially. Meet at Cleermont trail head on Land Trust at 9:00am. Bring water and hiking boots. This will be an easy hike with some elevation. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for information.

**Tuesday, March 17, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Judy Burley, 883-4267.

**Saturday, Mar 21 - Collins Gulf dayhike, Strenuous.** This 13 mile loop in the South Cumberland descends into the Collins River Gorge and has many beautiful geological features including waterfalls, overlooks, and rock formations. We will descend into the gorge and climb out by way of the Stagecoach Historic trail and return along the Collins Gulf rim. This is a difficult but rewarding hike. Bring lunch and water and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at the Publix on Winchester Road at 8:00am. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net)

**Tuesday, March 24, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Virgil DeStefano, 539-0348.

**Saturday, Mar 28 - Borden Creek/Big Tree dayhike. Strenuous.** This 14 mile hike is in the Sipsey Wilderness. We will begin at the Borden Creek bridge hiking up the old logging road and down to the Big Tree. We continue along the Sipsey River to the intersection with Borden Creek and return to the trailhead. Bring lunch and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at the Cracker Barrel in Madison at 8:00am or at 7:00 am for breakfast. Optional meeting place at the Warrior Mountain Trading Post in Wren at 9:00am. Contact Tom Burley at

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### February – March 2009

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shuttle, campsite, and hot tub and must be paid in advance. Group size will be limited to a maximum of ten and participants must commit by June 1. For further information contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net)

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#### **Tuesday, March 31, 6:00pm -**

**Downtown Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Alan Greene, 534-7846.

#### **Saturday, Apr 4 - Buck's Pocket hike.**

**Easy.** Optional car camp. Meet at the Franklin Building at 8:00am. We will hike from the overlook down to Sauty Creek and lunch at High Falls. Camp set-up late afternoon or early evening. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for details.

#### **Saturday, Apr 4 - Reuben Creek hike.**

**Moderate.** We will hike 5-7 miles along Reuben Creek near Sherwood, TN. There will be numerous creek crossings, interesting rock work and abundant flowers. Bring lunch and water. Meet at the Publix on Winchester Rd at 9:00am. For more info call Joette 776-3551

#### **Fri-Sun, Apr 24-26 - Silver Comet Bike**

**Trip. Moderate.** The Silver Comet is a rails-to-trail named after a train that used the route from 1947-1968. It is a paved multi-use trail running 60 miles from the AL/GA border to Smyrna, Ga. Highlights include the Brushy Mountain Tunnel and the Pumpkinvine Trestle - a 700 ft long, 100 ft high trestle. We will depart Friday at 7:00am and set up camp at The Rock campground ( with restrooms/showers) located 200 ft off the trail. Cost \$10 per person per night, cash on arrival. Or make your own arrangements for a local motel in Rockmart. We will bike to the state line and back on Friday (45 miles). Saturday we will bike to Smyrna and back (75 miles). There are lunch stops along the trail and we eat in Rockmart each night. Provide your own breakfast. You are responsible for transporting your bike. All riders must wear a helmet. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net)

#### **Thurs-Sun, Jun 18-21, Max Patch to Hot Springs Backpack. Strenuous.**

This is a 20-mile backpack with significant elevation changes over two days. We will depart on Thursday at 8:00am, arriving in Hot Springs around 3:00pm, and will then take a shuttle to Max Patch. It is a gentle climb across the southernmost bald on the Appalachian Trail and abounds with wildflowers and is reminiscent of the opening scene from the Sound of Music. We will spend Saturday night at the Hot Springs Campground on the French Broad River with a one-hour soak in the mineral hot springs. The cost will be approximately \$30 per person to cover