

Delaware Sierra News

A Sierra Club Newsletter about Environmental Matters Important to Delaware

Winter 2008

Letter from the Delaware Chapter Chair

by Jay Cooperson

A number of recent letters in the News Journal and the declarations of at least one “major” primary candidate for the presidency, Ron Paul, indicates that the belief that global warming may be far from real remain strong and widespread. At best, in the face of overwhelming evidence, some deniers admit that there has been warming but argue that it is only the result of long term, cyclical changes which have always been characteristic of the earth’s climate.

Many, many years ago, in an essay in the New Yorker about the placing of nuclear waste in containers and dumping it in the ocean, E. B. White asked: Suppose those who questioned the governments’ assurance that this was safe turned out to be wrong. Place a similar question, in reverse, before these deniers: Suppose that you have erred in your disregard for global climate change. What will be the results of a failure to reduce these effects and to take steps to plan for and mitigate the changes that will occur?

Conversely, however, substantial benefits can come to all societies through measures that would also reduce the effects of global warming among them: reduction of air and water pollution, elimination of the threats to pristine natural areas and the ocean beds in the search for, and exploitation of resources, less incentive for land use sprawl, and less inducement to underwrite and support dictatorial and oppressive

regimes that control oil and natural gas reserves. These and other results of a sound energy policy are in themselves good even in the absence of the overwhelming threat of climate change.

* * *

We are grateful to Senator Tom Carper and Representative Michael Castle for their support of the federal energy bill—a small step at least in the right direction. Particular thanks to Senator Carper for his leading role in crafting the bill and special recognition to Representative Michael Castle for the courage to stand apart from most of his fellow party members in the House vote.



Pictured at the annual Make A Difference Day, sponsored by the Kent County Parks Department, is Carl Solberg, chairman of the project, Ron Zink from the Sierra Club, U.S. Congressman Mike Castle and Nick DiPasquale from the Audubon Society.

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Sierra Club - Delaware Chapter
100 West 10th Street, Suite 1107
Wilmington, DE 19801

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News and Notes: First State Happenings

by Ron Zink

Cool Cities - Plans are being made by the Southern Sierra Club Group to launch an all encompassing effort to bring as many of the smaller communities into Cool City as possible. Rich Anthony, ExCom member, has stated that we are joining forces with the Sustainability Council of Delaware. In a recent meeting sponsored by the chapter, 70 members from Sussex County communities pledged to work toward this goal. A work plan and budget will be submitted after the first of the year.

In Newark, Ezra Temko will be heading the effort with assistance from the Sustainability Council. Contact Ezra to assist as volunteers are needed.

In Dover, the city has appointed chairmen of four city departments to form a Clean, Dream Team to study energy usage in their departments. Senior City Administrator, Teresa Tieman, said that several executive orders had been issued. They include the purchasing of city vehicles. The most efficient vehicle will be purchased that is needed to do the job. No over sized pick up will be purchased where an electric golf cart will work. We have found many easy examples of "this is the way we have done it" purchasing . It just took a commitment.

The Cool City project headed by Carol Grandfield is developing a display to be used in the state fair as well as other educational opportunities. It will include a model of a home showing each critical point of energy use. A doll house has been donated and is being reconstructed.

Holiday Party – Over 30 members attended the annual Holiday Party this year in the home of Jane and Ron Zink, Capping the evening's activities was a birthday party for Phil Shuman's dad who celebrated his 95th birthday.

A special cake was purchased by new member Brian Graham.

Lots of good food was brought by the members with Tim O'Connor bringing lots and lots of chicken wings. No one left hungry.

Summer Picnic – Mary and Dan Snyder hosted the summer picnic this year with a Hawaiian Luau as the theme. The Snyder's are quite active in promoting the Cool City project. The picnic was attended by the largest number of club members in recent memory.

Dover Socials – First Thursday is being expanded to include an enviro update of what is happening around the state that is of interest to club members. December's meeting was led by Nick DiPasquale with a briefing on topics ranging from canal deepening,



On October 13, volunteers from the Sierra Club, 4-H, Boy and Girl Scouts, and Garden Clubs throughout the state policed the Broad Kill Watershed. The mission was to open any clogged drain or ditch furnishing water into the stream. Assessing the project is Nick DiPasquale, chairman, and Sandy Rothermel, Sierra Club Member.

nuclear, wind, coal, transmission lines as well as topics brought by members.

Each meeting will be open to this type of discussion and will encourage members from sister organizations to attend.

Meeting are to be held at Sorentino's restaurant, Dover, with dinner at 6:30 and the discussion at 7pm.

A Message from Our New Treasurer

by Lorri Fencer

Greetings everyone! My name is Lorri Fencer and I have recently assumed the responsibilities of Treasurer for the Delaware Chapter. Although currently working in the insurance industry as an underwriter, I have an accounting background and a CPA. As an active member of the club since 2003, I represent the Sierra Club on the Citizen Advisory Panel at Valero and have served on the club's executive committee.

I am firm believer that as citizens of the United States, we have the power to control our destiny and effect change politically. Chances are, that if you are reading this, you care about the environment. So, take action! Get involved with the Sierra Club. There are many opportunities--outing leaders, making phone calls to legislators and members, recycling, energy and climate change.....the list goes on!

What a great New Year's resolution!

Southern Delaware Group Activity Report

by *Rich Anthony*

On December 11, in conjunction with Sustainable Delaware (the local chapter of the North East Sustainable Energy Association), the Southern Delaware Group co-sponsored a seminar on Zero Energy Housing. The seminar, which lasted slightly over two hours, was well attended and had spirited discussion and interaction between presenters and attendees. The focus, energy conservation, consisted of real time solutions to controlling residential energy consumption.

2008 Kent & Sussex Counties Cool Cities Campaign (<http://coolcities.us/>): The Southern Delaware Group will be joining the Chapter's Cool Cities Committee in a partnership with Sustainable Delaware to bring a broad based Cool Cities Campaign to Kent and Sussex Counties. The campaign will be a dual purpose action focusing on, (1) municipal and county participation and (2) providing public education programs

Be Involved: Help Green 2008!

by *Ezra Temko, Member & Community Engagement Coordinator*

It's going to be an exciting year and I hope you will be involved. I send out electronic news updates – if you have not been receiving these it is because I do not have your e-mail address! Drop me a line at Ezra.Temko@SierraClub.org to subscribe.

I would encourage everyone to go to our website at Delaware.sierraclub.org and click on the link that says "Interested in volunteering with the Delaware Chapter? Fill out our online sign-up form. Thanks!" This is a volunteer sign-up form and is a great way to let us know what your interests are so I can better connect you to the chapter!

We have also begun hosting Membership Engagement Meetings. These are designed for new members or veteran members who would like to get more involved. We have had one in Wilmington and in Newark. These fun casual get-togethers are a great way to find out what the club has been doing, have some discussion with like-minded individuals on environmental issues, have some snacks, and get plugged into our great grassroots organization. Sierra Club would not function without its members and volunteers – that means we depend on you! Look on our events calendar on the website and in your electronic newsletter for upcoming Member Engagement Meetings in Middletown, Wilmington, Newark, and Dover this Spring.

Sierra Club has been active in 2007 – but there is more to be done! The environment needs you. Consider becoming involved by helping to organize a group

(similar to the Zero Energy Housing program) for the general public with both programs embracing a youth element. Sierra's Cool Cities initiative was recently a topic at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali where local Sierra Staff member Glen Bessa did a presentation (<http://coolcities.us/fullStory.php?storyID=59&mode=view>).

Some additional activities in which the Southern Delaware Group has engaged since the last publication include the following:

- I. Kent County Land Use Plan
- II. Testimony on Sussex County Forested Buffers
- III. Testimony to the Delaware Department of State Planning regarding the Sussex County Land Use Plan Process (11-27 PLUS Review)
- IV. Attendance at the Livable Delaware Council (12/10) in opposition to the presentation of the Draft - Sussex County Land Use Plan.

outing or getting involved with our newly established Political Committee to help ensure we have pro-environment elected officials in the state. Consider being active through our Energy Committee where you can fight for renewable energy or by writing an article for the next newsletter. Help our chapter grow and function by working to organize speakers, socials, and other activities. Work to make your municipality a "Cool City" that combats global warming. If any of these avenues sound exciting to you, or if you are interested in something else like recycling or land use development, let me know! This is your chapter and I am here to help connect you to it. Together, we can help green Delaware.

To reach me, please either e-mail Ezra.Temko@SierraClub.org or call (302) 981-3007.



Despite a driving rainstorm, over 1000 trees were planted by several volunteer organizations throughout Kent County on October 27. Pictured above are participants Jane Zink, Phil Schulman and Angel Reys.

Political Committee Update

by Brooks Twilley

The chapter's Political Committee is up and running. It is looking for interested members to join and support its sub-committees. The sub-committees are:

1. Candidate Forum – This subcommittee will be working to host a gubernatorial forum/debate to inform the electorate where candidates stand on environmental issues before the Fall 2008 elections.

2. Political Action Committee – Members of the Chapter's Political Committee will be working to develop Delaware's first environmental political action committee (PAC).

3. Candidate Questionnaire/Score Card – The committee will be working to research, interview and assemble a voters' guide on votes taken in the General Assembly on environmental bills as well as candidates' positions on environmental issues. This may be printed or web-based.

4. Election Advocacy – The sub-committee will be considering endorsement of a state-level candidate and will work to actively support his/her run for office.

There are so many ways to get involved, at least one committee is sure to fit your interest and schedule. **Political Committee Website** – Look for our new web page within the chapter's site. The link to our page will be available from the chapter's home page. The Political Committee's page will include information about the efforts of the sub-committees, monthly web polls, enviro-political commentary from members and bloggers, and much more. Once the "Voter's Score Card" is complete, chapter members will be able to access it on our page as well.

For questions, interest or information regarding the Political Committee, please contact us at: politics@delaware.sierraclub.org

Introducing Our New Newsletter Editor, Jay LaCorte

Delaware Chapter Sierra Club welcomes volunteer newsletter editor Jay LaCorte. Jay will work with staff member Ezra Temko and volunteer Sue Oldenburg to produce the Chapter's quarterly printed and web newsletter. Submissions, including articles, event notices and photographs, may be sent to Jay LaCorte c/o Sierra Club, 100 W 10th St, Ste. 1107, Wilmington, DE 19801 or e-mailed to jay.lacorte@yahoo.com or newsletter@delaware.sierraclub.org. The deadline for upcoming editions is printed on the last page of each issue. Jay hopes to meet many fellow members at events during the coming months.

Message from Our Webmaster

by Mike Casale

You may know that the Delaware Chapter of the Sierra Club maintains its own website. Information is posted there regularly concerning local events and important environmental issues. We encourage our members, and even non-members, to browse the contents on a regular basis.

Our "home page" is located at <http://delaware.sierraclub.org/indexNew.asp>.

The web server is physically located in California, but all of the content for our chapter's web pages comes from us. Whenever there's a hot story (like the Delaware wind farm), we post a short piece of info on the home page, and then a link to get more in-depth information.

About a year ago, we developed a "clickable" chapter calendar. Essentially, it's an online calendar where events are posted on the date(s) they are to be held. If you click on the event title, a new window appears with more detail. We also include events from other organizations that might be of interest to our members.

If you have an idea to make our web pages more useful or interesting, please let us know.

Sierra Club Membership Application Coupon

New Member Name(s) _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Membership Categories (circle one)

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
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Regular	\$35	\$43
Supporting	\$50	\$58
Contributing	\$100	\$108
Life	\$1000	\$1250
Senior	\$15	\$23
Student	\$15	\$23

All dues include subscription to *Sierra* (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1). Dues are not tax deductible.

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Thoughts Facing a New Year

by Al Denio

Al Denio is a member of the Sierra Club of Delaware and serves as the chapter's Pollution Committee chair.

Our environment seems to be in poor shape and getting worse. I have been asked to share my thoughts about some of our problems. Before reading further, you may wish to mix a martini, pour a glass of wine, grab a beer, or reach for a Prozac!

Global Warming – As a chemist I am convinced by the data, tons of it, that the problem is real and must be faced. At my advanced age it would be easy to say: “What the hell, I’ll be dead when the Delaware beaches sink beneath the ocean.” However, I must think of the world facing our children and grandchildren.

I have called both our state and federal representatives and asked them to take all possible steps to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We are trying to reduce our energy use at home and plan to purchase a new refrigerator and dishwasher. Our next car will be more efficient. We have already purchased some “compact fluorescent lights” or CFLs. The traditional incandescent light bulbs converts 95% of its energy input into heat – how dumb is that?

We may even need to build new and safer nuclear plants to replace the present coal and oil based power plants. I certainly support the proposed ocean based wind farm but doubt that it can adequately meet all our power needs. Before we go down the nuclear road we must solve the waste storage problem and replace the pro-industry Nuclear Regulatory Commission with a Nuclear Safety Board that is fully funded and given the power to shut down plants that are deemed unsafe.

The Delaware River – Those folks who want to dredge the river to make it five feet deeper want us to pay the bill to help them make more money. They care not about aquatic life when it comes to their bottom line. I feel that the river bottom is more important.

Then there is the BP Plan to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal across the river from Claymont. We hope the U.S. Supreme Court will support Delaware’s position and our Coastal Zone Act. If they do, it will certainly be a good victory. However, I then predict that BP will simply move the terminal about a mile north and out of Delaware waters. We would still have to deal with these very dangerous tankers sailing up the river and passing beneath the Delaware Memorial Bridge, a scary thought.

A third problem to be faced is the use of the Delaware River for cooling water. The three nuclear plants near Salem, N.J. suck in huge volumes of water and, in the process, kill millions of fish and other life forms. On the Delaware side the Valero Refinery in Delaware City also kills a lot of aquatic life, along with

duPont’s Edgemoor Pigments Plant and the Conectiv Power Plant. We need legislation passed to mandate cooling towers for these Delaware facilities.

Recycling – I hope you do it! If you have not yet realized that it is your duty as a citizen of the earth, please get a copy of the January issue of National Geographic and turn to page 64. The next twenty three pages should be pretty convincing.

Val and I moved here from Wisconsin in 1998. Recycling there was mandatory with a weekly curbside pickup. Here it was voluntary with recycling containers located near to most citizens. Periodically I would fill the trunk of our car and drive a short distance to the UofD campus to unload newspapers, cans, plastic, junk mail, etc. These containers were unloaded by the Delaware Solid Waste Authority.

The DSWA did a poor job of removing ice and snow during the winter. At times it was dangerous getting to the containers. In the summer, the bins for plastic and metal cans were often full of angry hornets who were a direct threat to my health!

About a year ago we subscribed to the DSWA curbside pickup plan at \$6/month. I felt it was too expensive but Val felt it would be less demanding of my fragile back. Now the DSWA has provided a recycling container on wheels where all the materials are commingled – that seems like a step backward from the bay system where we had different bags for paper, plastic, etc. We also get to pay the same \$6/month but collections are every other week! Yes we get half the service for the same fee. I may defect but we shall continue to recycle.

Let me give you one more reason for why we recycle. When an aluminum can is recycled, it takes only 5% of the energy to melt and reuse it compared to the energy used to extract the same weight of the material from bauxite, the ore that is used.

Other Problems in Delaware – The Indian River Power Plant of NRG is a leading health threat and needs to be replaced. However, in the short term, the best available control technology should be added to reduce mercury and sulfur dioxide emissions.

The duPont dioxin waste pile near the Edgemoor Pigments Plant is still there. We must urge DNREC to order the waste sent to a licensed hazardous waste landfill.

Wilmington must speed up the redesign / retrofit of its sewage system so that this waste is not sent to the Brandywine River during heavy rains.

I fear that my thoughts may have driven you to drink, for which I apologize. However, the bottom line is that we all need to reduce our energy consumption in the year ahead and urge our governmental representatives to do the same.

My motto for 2008: Energy is too good to waste!

Delaware Chapter Sierra Club Events Calendar

The following events have been scheduled for February, March, and April. Please check the web calendar for updated information and for current events that were not scheduled at the time of this newsletter: <http://delaware.sierraclub.org/calendar.htm#12>

Dover Social – *Thursday, February 7, 7 p.m.* – order off the menu, cash bar. All members and their guests are invited. At Sorentino's: 518 Bay Road; Dover, DE 19901. Contact Ron Zink, ron_z_19904@yahoo.com

Political Committee Meeting – *Wednesday, February 13, 7 p.m.* – location TBD. For more information, contact Debbie Heaton, humbird11@verizon.net

Conservation Committee Meeting – *Monday, February 18, 7 p.m.* – Westminster Community Center, Dover. Carpooling available. Check the chapter website for details: Delaware.SierraClub.org

Dover Social – *Thursday, March 6, 7 p.m.* – order off the menu, cash bar. All members and their guests are invited. At Sorentino's: 518 Bay Road; Dover, DE 19901. Contact Ron Zink, ron_z_19904@yahoo.com

Political Committee Meeting – *Wednesday, March 13, 7 p.m.* – location TBD. For more information, contact Debbie Heaton, humbird11@verizon.net

Executive Committee Meeting – *Monday, March 17, 7 p.m.* – Westminster Community Center, Dover. Carpooling available. Check the chapter website for

details: Delaware.SierraClub.org

Dover Social – *Thursday, April 3, 7 p.m.* – order off the menu, cash bar. All members and their guests are invited. At Sorentino's: 518 Bay Road; Dover, DE 19901. Contact Ron Zink, ron_z_19904@yahoo.com

Political Committee Meeting – *Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m.* – location TBD. For more information, contact Debbie Heaton, humbird11@verizon.net

Conservation Committee Meeting – *Monday, April 21, 7 p.m.* – Westminster Community Center, Dover. Carpooling available. Check the chapter website for details: Delaware.SierraClub.org

Outings Update



by Mark Fields

Ten Sierrans braved the elements on December 22 for a winter solstice hike in White Clay Creek State Park north of Newark. It actually turned out to be a beautiful day, slightly overcast but seasonably mild and calm. Nearly all knew about the hike via the website and email but we recruited another participant who had shown up at the park independently. Turns out she was also a club member!

We hiked the 4-mile Twin Valley Trail, which winds around the edges of the park past the Arc Monument (which marks the intersection between the arc of Delaware and the Mason-Dixon Line) and above White Clay Creek. It was the first visit to White Clay Creek for several of those participating, and they enjoyed the rolling hills and stands of tall pines and oaks in the park. The December hike was the first of a set of Sierra Club hikes to complete the Delaware Trail Challenge of fifteen hikes throughout the state. Another hike is confirmed for January 5, and others will be added throughout the year.

A Time For Action

by Chad Tolman

Energy Chair, Sierra Club of Delaware

The recent decision of the Public Service Commission to table consideration of the wind farm was very disappointing to many of us. After a clear expression of support for the wind farm by Delaware residents through public opinion surveys and months of public hearings, a handful of powerful state legislators appear to have bowed to pressure from Delmarva Power behind closed doors to kill the project.

Now is the time for action from all who value democratic government, are sick and tired of business-as-usual in Dover, accept global warming as a serious problem, and are concerned for the health and welfare of their children and grandchildren.

If you are interested in helping by calling, writing, or meeting with your legislators to ask if they support or oppose the wind farm and why, contact Ezra Temko at 302- 981-3007 or Ezra.Temko@SierraClub.org. He can provide a list of talking points and information on how to contact your legislators.

Thanks for your help in this important work.

Sierra Club Concerns about Sussex Comprehensive Plan

The following is an excerpt of a recent letter to the editor of the Cape Gazette from Rich Anthony, Chairman, Sierra Club - Southern Delaware Group

When considered in concert with recent media coverage regarding the actions of some county council members, county representatives and assorted individuals acting in support of Sussex County's governing body, the Department of State Planning's recently released PLUS report, a 71-page critique of Sussex County's proposed comprehensive plan updates, raises concerns and questions.

The PLUS report cites twelve specific categories where the proposed plan is either inconsistent with or fails to adequately address the statutory requisites elaborated in the Delaware Code. However, considering the county's inability to comprehend that clear-cutting a wooded area to construct a storm water management pond is not synonymous with maintaining a "forested" buffer, it should not be surprising that (1) the county doesn't understand state law or (2) that the county's draft plan is inconsistent with state law.

Neither should it be surprising that some Sussex County representatives have stated that a suggestion of a density reduction in the AR-1 zoning district (large-lot zoning) constitutes "fighting words" and would "require" compensation (alluding to a takings). The defensive posture pertaining to "property rights," a justly sensitive topic, has also become an arena for patriotic pontifications. But, when one attires oneself in the garb of patriotism and quotes our founding fathers one must accept the totality of that garb, not just one sleeve that fits a purpose. Many a wise man has made a remark that can be applied out of context. And so it is with quoting our founding fathers and applying their words to an issue more than 200 years later.

It must also be remembered that our nation's founders created the U.S Supreme Court and charged same to interpret the law. The court's findings spanning from the 1920s to date are consistent on takings. In *William C. Haas & Co. v. City and County of San Francisco* (1979), a California federal court approved a local regulation that reduced the allowable height for a future residential high-rise building on the plaintiff's property from 300 to 40 feet, despite a reduction in the speculative value of the property from \$2 million to \$100,000. In so ruling, the court cited the substantial public benefit of reducing congestion in the neighborhood, preserving light and air available to neighbors, and serving aesthetic values to the city as a whole. Additionally, one would think that the county government, in its alleged zeal to protect rights, would be aware of this and other aspects of the takings issue which are discussed by the Institute of Local Governments, where the following may be found on their website, there is "No Guarantee to Speculative Uses of Land. The Takings Clause is often misconstrued as a pro-

hibition against any regulation that either decreases property value or prohibits individuals from doing what they want with their land. The Takings Clause, however, provides no such guarantees." The organization's paper further states that the takings clause "...merely provides that a public agency must compensate landowners when a regulation has the same effect as a permanent governmental occupation, such as a total wipe out of value." And, it also establishes that "...one of the earliest tenets of property ownership provides that landowners may not engage in activities that interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties."

Next we listen to appointed committee representatives telling residents of municipalities that their needs do not matter. They disregard the fact that population stats establish that 30+ percent of all Sussex County residents live in municipalities. And then, we read in the proposed comp plan that the proposed transfer of development rights program, supposedly for the ag community's benefit, will have to compete with the county's density bonus program which sells density at a fixed, legislatively deflated level (not market value).

And, the cumulative impact of all of the foregoing should make one realize the true depth of the county government's indifference toward Sussex County residents.



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Delaware Chapter and Southern Delaware Group Leaders



All phone numbers are Area Code **302**

Chapter Office

100 West 10th Street, Suite 1107
 Wilmington, DE 19801
 425-4911 (Staff Direct Line: 981-3007)

Chapter Staff

Member & Community Engagement Coordinator:
 Ezra Temko 981-3007
Ezra.Temko@sierraclub.org

Chapter Appointed Officers

Chair: Jay Cooperson CoopersonArc@aol.com
Vice Chair: Lorri Fencer LorriFencer@verizon.net
Secretary: Matt Urban 661-2050
murban@mobiussnm.com
Treasurer: Lorri Fencer LorriFencer@verizon.net
Conservation: Tim O'Connor 697-7466
Tim1158@aol.com
Energy: Chad Tolman 478-3516
chadtolman@comcast.net

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Editor: Jay LaCorte – jay.lacorte@yahoo.com
 Production: Susan Oldenburg – VideoSue@aol.com

Litigation: Carl Solberg 492-1225
carlsolberg@mail.com
Membership: Ron Zink 735-8996
ron_z_19904@yahoo.com
Outings: Jennifer Egan 453-0827
jennifermegan28@msn.com
Political: Debbie Heaton humbird11@verizon.net
Tabling: June Satterfield 653-6596
junesatterfield@comcast.net

Additional Chapter Executive Committee Members

Rich Anthony 645-1732
rha@de-enviro.net
 Dick Bewick 736-1670
dynaflow29@verizon.net
 Steve Callanen 539-0635
 Kathleen Davis KDav40@aol.com
 David Keifer dkeifer@comcast.net

Southern Delaware Group (SDG) Appointed Officers

Chair: Rich Anthony 645-1732
rha@de-enviro.net
Vice Chair: Sallie Callanen 539-0635
prnmed@mchsi.com
Conservation: Harry Haon 656-4582
harryhaon@aol.com
Secretary: Carrie Bennett 732-3358

Additional Southern Delaware Group (SDG) Executive Committee Members

John Fenton jipfenton@yahoo.com

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Mail to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80321-2968