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WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the
Western North Carolina Group of the Sierra Club

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

May/June 2005

Upcoming Programs

Thursday, May 26th

Thomas Rain Crowe
Poet, Author and Environmentalist

- Unitarian Church
- Corner of Charlotte and Edwin, Asheville
- Social 7 PM, Program 7:30

Saturday, June 25th

- PICNIC 12 PM
- Tour 1 PM (\$3 donation)
- Botanical Garden, near UNCA

Call Susan Conner, 350-1136 to reserve a spot.

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THOMAS RAIN CROWE, poet, activist, to speak at May program



Thomas Crowe

THOMAS RAIN CROWE was born in 1949 and is a poet, translator, editor, publisher, recording artist and author of twelve books of original and translated works. He was a founding editor

of *Katuah Journal: A Bioregional Journal of the Southern Appalachians*, which Gary Snyder called the best bioregional publication in the U.S.

His memoir *Zoro's Field: My Life in the Appalachian Woods*, written in the style of Thoreau's *Walden* and based on four years of self-sufficient living in a wilderness environment in the woods of western North Carolina from 1979 to 1982 will be published by the University of Georgia Press in the spring of 2005.

He currently resides along the Tuckaseegee River in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. He has been a features writer for such publications as *Green Line*, *Wild Mountain Times* and other regional publications. He currently writes features and columns on culture, community and the environment for the *Smoky Mountain News*.

As an activist, since 1979 he has been involved with such issues and organizations as The Canary Coalition (Clean Air), AMUSE (Artists and Musicians United for a Safe Environment), Project to Protect Native American Sacred Sites in the S. Appalachians, and has been on the board of the Southern Biodiversity Project and the Environmental Leadership Council for WNC.

His literary archives have recently been purchased by and are collected at the Duke University Special Collections Library.

June Meeting will be a Picnic

Come join Wenoca Sierra Club for our June event, a picnic followed by an optional guided tour through the NC Botanical Gardens.

We will meet on Saturday, June 25 at 12:00 (bring your own lunch and drinks, and a dish to pass). There will be an hour-long tour of the

Garden led by one of the Botanical Garden Staff at 1:00.

Call Susan Connor 350-1136 to reserve your spot in the tour. The tour charge is a \$3 donation. Address is 151 W. T. Weaver Blvd, between Merrimon & Broadway.

See you there!!

Wenoca Sierra Club Joins Asheville Coalition

By Russ Palmeri

The WENOCA Sierra Club will put its efforts into helping elect candidates who are environmentally sensitive, dedicated and aware for the Fall, 2005 city election. WENOCA will be coordinating our efforts with local groups who have already begun to develop this vision for the area. (see the article in the March/April WENOCAN]

The goal of the Asheville Coalition is to bring together progressive, conservationist, community-oriented activists eager to shift power in the upcoming city council elections. The group, with input from the Sierra Club and other organizations and individuals, aims to create a list of issues which must be addressed by candidates expecting support.

The Asheville coalition literature states

“We broadly defines progressives as those people who believe in stewardship of the community and the environment and whose first concern is that local government policy should reflect the intent of the U.S. Constitution, including the establishment of justice and promoting the general welfare. We also recognize that Asheville faces many important decisions as it responds to the rapid growth of the area and believe that these decisions must be addressed with deliberate care and the welfare of the whole community in mind.

To this end we broadly support ideas including real affordable housing, health care for all, minimum wages that lift people out of poverty, transportation options that work both



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economically and environmentally and the encouragement of locally based, sustainable businesses. We recognize the unique character of Asheville and want to preserve and encourage its further development. We need to work together to identify specific issues that can be addressed at the city level and we want you to help.” Because the Asheville Coalition is addressing issues, not endorsing candidates, any group can participate: for-profit, non-profit business groups, clubs, collective etc.

Although some candidates will embrace the goals of the coalition (and use them to create their own platforms), as a group the coalition will not endorse individual candidates. Instead, it will ask candidates whether they support the goals of the Asheville Coalition in order to identify candidates that progressive voters can endorse. The Asheville Coalition will not solicit dues or contributions, nor distribute money to campaigns.

The board looks forward to participating in the Asheville Coalition.

The WENOCAN, including this issue and back issues, is available online at <http://www.wenoca.asheville.nc.us/newsletters/>

Earthday Rally and Neighborhood Walk



Photo of Robin Cape by Dave Muhly

By Russ Palmeri

The Sierra Club sponsored a rally and neighborhood walk for Earthday, Saturday, April 23rd, in Montford Park in Asheville.

State Representative Susan Fisher noted that 66% of Americans were worried about the environment, as measured in a recent Gallup poll. Rep. Fisher stressed the need for Americans to “be

sure we work together to care for this environment of ours, regardless of political differences.”

Rev. Brain Cole, of All Souls Episcopal Cathedral in Asheville, spoke on how place shapes who we are, and how “healthy forests help raise healthy people.” He called on

“people of faith” to work together to protect the environment.

Robin Cape, newly elected to the Woodfin Water Board, told the story of how a small but dedicated group of activists challenged the Woodfin Water Board’s plan to log the Woodfin watershed. By going door-to-door to discuss the logging with the Woodfin community, and then putting up a slate of candidates to challenge the existing board, the activists saved the watershed from being logged, preserving the land, protecting it for clean water.

Ms. Cape stressed the power of informing and involving the community in environmental issues. She is currently running for the Asheville City Council.

Dave Muhly, of the Sierra Club National Field Staff, advised discussing environmental issues with our neighbors, friends and family. He observed “we’re less effective about talking to our neighbors.”

After the talks, volunteers canvassed the Montford area to discuss logging in our national Forests.

NORTH SHORE ROAD – GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

By Ted Snyder

Part Two– Alternatives to the Road

The southwest quadrant of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the largest unroaded mountain tract in the East. Its forests are a haven for neotropical migratory birds. It provides unbroken habitat for both plants and animals. Because of the nature of the land, any road construction will require mammoth cuts and fills in unstable rock and soil, and the minerals exposed will leach sulfuric acid, which sterilizes any stream into which it drains.

The environmental impact study done on the building of the North Shore Road has identified three alternative routes. All of them would cut into the roadless zone of the park. The longest could cost as much as one billion dollars!

The County Commissioners of Swain County, NC, in which all of the proposed road lies, by a vote of 4-1 have asked for a cash settlement in lieu of any further construction. The Sierra Club, the major national conservation organizations, and all the regional and local conservation organizations are and have been supporting the effort of the County Commissioners to obtain a cash settlement. A group of local residents have formed their own organization, Citizens for the Economic Future of Swain County, and is waging a campaign

for a cash settlement. The Governor of North Carolina, one of the four original signatory parties to the 1943 Agreement, also supports a cash settlement.

Opposing the cash settlement are Congressman Charles Taylor, who proposed the building of the road, and by a small but vocal group of descendants of persons buried in cemeteries in the Park, who want a road for cemetery access.

Based on the original value of the road, adjusted for inflation and the interest the money would have earned, Swain County is asking for a settlement of \$52 million. The proposed settlement, invested at five percent, would yield the county \$2.6 million a year, which is equal to the county's entire 2004-2005 property tax income.

If the road were built on its longest alignment, it would terminate on NC 28 below Fontana Dam. A recent traffic count shows 280 vehicles a day passing that point. NC 28 is a modern road, four-lanes for half its length between Bryson City and Fontana Dam. Swain County receives two cents of the state sales tax. Every time a tourist buys a tee shirt or mug for \$10, the county collects 20 cents. Merchants in Bryson City would have to sell 13 million tee shirts a year to give the county an equal benefit to a cash settlement. That's 35,616 tee shirts a day, rain or snow, winter or summer.

A cash settlement with Swain County is the only reasonable, logical and non-damaging alternate under consideration.

Sierra Summit 2005

By the National Sierra Club

The Sierra Summit will be the largest gathering held by the Sierra Club in its 113-year history, and will serve as an important milestone in the environmental movement. This four-day event-taking place September 8-11 in San Francisco will be a huge opportunity for attendees to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet through a fun and rich learning experience.

The gathering will include workshops, exhibits, and speakers, including Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. of the Hudson Riverkeeper Organization.

There will be a number of hikes and other opportunities to get outdoors and socialize with other Sierra members and leaders from around the country.

Everyone is welcome to attend, have fun and learn about the exciting ways to enjoy and protect the planet. To register, go to www.sierrasummit2005.org, or call (301) 694-5243.





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The Executive Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM at EarthFare in Asheville. All WENOCA members are invited to attend. For more information, please contact Don Baker at 299-4171 or at wenocan.president@gmail.com

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