

# Orange-Chatham Group Sierra Club

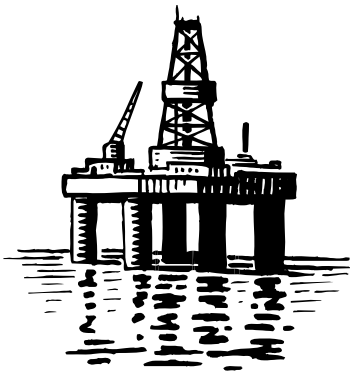
<http://nc.sierraclub.org/ocg/>

P.O. Box 1303, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

## Drilling off the coast of NC?

By Judith Ferster, Conservation Chair

High gas prices during the electoral campaigns of 2008 stirred policy changes about coastal oil drilling on several fronts. In June, the Bush administration lifted a ban on oil exploration. In September, Congress let a 26-year ban on drilling lapse. Presidential candidate John McCain reversed his position on the ban and smiled as supporters shouted "Drill, baby, drill," and Barack Obama, though denying that drilling could reduce gas prices in the short run, said he could compromise. On January 14, at Binkley Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, OCG members discussed how drilling for oil and natural gas might affect North Carolina.



First, Executive Committee member Jean Westbrook presented a chilling case study of drilling in Louisiana, which she fought for a number of years. Jean helped to create an organization that worked to protect the salt- and fresh-water marshes that had formed barriers against the wind and waves that batter New Orleans during hurricanes. She described how oil drilling brought jobs and revenue to Louisiana, but at a price. To bring the oil ashore, the industry cut canals through the marshes and cypress swamps and ran pipelines from the wells to the shore. These practices devastated the ecosystems, destroying estuaries that produced fish and other wildlife, polluting water, and leaving New Orleans more vulnerable to storms. Ultimately, one and a half million acres of healthy, solid marsh were reduced to several hundred weakened and fragile acres. Louisiana loses 25 square miles of wetlands each year. In combination with poorly-constructed and -maintained levees, the severely reduced wetlands could not prevent the devastation of the city in 2005's Hurricane Katrina.

Subsequent discussion outlined the different stakes for North Carolina, which is the sixth most popular American tourist destination, bringing 49 million visitors per year. Although oil companies promise environmentally benign operations, the industry would bring infrastructure that is at least ugly and potentially damaging, including roads, storage tanks, pipelines, and processing plants. It would likely produce great quantities of waste, including toxic contaminants such as benzene, arsenic, lead, radium and others; air pollution from nitrous oxide sulfur dioxide; and volatile organic hydrocarbons.

An Elon University poll done in September of 2008 found that two out of three North Carolinians favored drilling and four in ten believed that the results would affect gasoline prices in five years. There were people at the January meeting who had distributed Sierra Club postcards opposing drilling at Chapel Hill's Festifall. They reported smaller ratios of people who refused the postcards because they favored drilling, but refusers made up a significant minority. For all the intrusion on its beaches, air, and water, drilling of North Carolina's shores would probably not produce oil for 7-10 years, and when it did, oil would flow to the world markets and have no impact on local gasoline prices.

However, "Drill, baby, drill" did not win in November, and on February 11, President Obama shelved the plan that Bush promoted in the last days of his administration. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced plans to study coastal drilling, "but only as part of a broader energy policy focused on producing more renewable energy from wind, solar, geothermal, and tidal and wave power" (<http://tinyurl.com/d2nl74>). He promised the oil and gas industry a place in the debate. The Sierra Club should surely have one, too. Given the Elon poll and OCG's experience at Festifall, we have our educational work cut out for us.

## Group Events

*Attention all members:* Our monthly meetings are now at Binkley Baptist Church., off Fordham Blvd./15-501 near University Mall. For more-detailed directions, see <http://www.binkleychurch.org/about/directions> or contact Loren Hintz (see reverse). Please attend and share your ideas for future speakers and programs.

### Energy, Climate-change Solutions and Sustainability

**Part I: Wednesday, April 8, 7-9 p.m.**

**Part II: Wednesday, May 13, 7-9 p.m.**

Binkley Baptist Church (directions above)

Join us for workshops and discussions about local communities' initiatives to reduce global warming and encourage energy-efficient alternatives. Learn about what is and can be done in our community to address the environmental impact of climate change. To make this more fun, bring a snack to share and an idea you practice, read or saw.

### Executive Committee Meetings

**Fourth Monday of each month, 7-9 p.m.**

Carolina Meadows

All members are invited. Contact Judith Ferster (see reverse) for more information.

## What we can do locally

By Judith Ferster, Conservation Chair

On March 11, members heard from two commissioners from each of our two counties. George Lucier, elected to Chatham County's board in 2006, and Sally Kost, elected in 2008, were part of a transformation of that board to a more pro-environment stance. Through most of 2008, Chatham County observed a moratorium on new development. Meanwhile, the BOC and the Planning Board, then chaired by Kost, worked on changes to make sure growth didn't overrun the county in haphazard fashion.

On the night Kost was installed as Commissioner, the Board passed the new regulations that had been crafted during the year. At our March meeting, Lucier and Kost outlined some of the changes, including new subdivision regulations, watershed ordinance amendments, protections from soil erosion and sedimentation, and creation of a department and advisory groups focused on environmental issues. (For a fuller version of this list, see the Conservation page: <http://nc.sierraclub.org/ocg/conservation.html>)

Environmental responsibility began less recently on the Orange County BOC. Alice Gordon, a commissioner since 1990, mentioned three areas of concern: water, open space, and regional transit. She helped create several environmental committees and was important to the state's first Lands Legacy Program, which has protected 2200 Orange acres. She supports the creation of regional light rail and expansion of bus services to coordinate with the new train.

Bernadette Pelissier, former chair of OCG, joined Gordon on the BOC in 2008. Like Gordon, she supports regional transit, and she hopes for a half-cent sales tax to support it. She is also concerned about land use. She expects the county's 1981 land use plan to be updated to account for historic preservation, and she supports a family-farm incubator near Hillsborough because farming preserves land.

OCG keeps BOCs focused on environmental concerns by endorsing candidates during elections and by speaking at public hearings. The commissioners urged us to contact them about concerns and stay involved as decisions are made. Join us! If you wish to participate, contact a member of the Executive Committee (see reverse).

**Volunteers needed for Political Committee! Contact Loren Hintz (see reverse).**



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# Outings

Sierra Club outings are open to all. Outings are educational unless designated as a social (S). All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

## Ongoing Service Outing

**3rd Saturdays on the Bolin Creek Trail:** This is a long-term habitat restoration project, and we need many more volunteers. It's hard work, but very rewarding. The difference is visible immediately, and the effect is long-lasting. We meet at the Greenway entrance on Bolinwood Drive, just off Hillsborough Street in Chapel Hill. Please contact Bill Bracey at [arbor-net@mindspring.com](mailto:arbor-net@mindspring.com) or 942-9937.

## Current Outings

**APR 11 (Sat) North Carolina Chapter.** Urban hike in Durham. 4-mile loop starts at 9 a.m. at Indian Trail Park, located at Indian Trail & Albany (east side of Hillandale golf course; south of I-85 & Hillandale Rd).. You'll see a little nature and learn some Durham history along the way. Local history lover John Schelp will narrate along the way. You don't have to register. Ample parking (for your bike or car) is available on Albany St and nearby. Well-

## Please support the NC Chapter

*By Ginny Kloepfer, Chapter Treasurer*

Over ten years ago, the NC Chapter of the Sierra Club opened an office in Raleigh and hired Molly Diggins as its first state director. Since that date, the Chapter has steadily added staff to help deal with complex issues in a changing world. Currently the Chapter has five staff that support and enhance the efforts of volunteers across the state.

Through the efforts of our staff, the Sierra Club has increased its stature and influence in Raleigh with both the executive and legislative branches of the state government. Elected officials look to the Sierra Club for guidance on environmental issues. Our staff is asked to attend committee meetings regarding environmental legislation. Political candidates from all levels of government seek out the Sierra Club's endorsement when they run for office.

These are tough economic times. Many of us are cutting back on our discretionary spending. These are also tough times financially for the North Carolina Chapter. The National Office has cut funds received from membership dues to the NC Chapter by about \$20,000 for 2009.

Donations the Chapter receives from members like you and me support our work lobbying in our state legislature to pass bills that help improve North Carolina's environment and the health of our citizens AND help us defeat bad bills that would harm our environment. While many candidates that the Sierra Club endorsed were recently elected, we can not become complacent that these representatives will always represent environmental causes well.

You have received or will soon be receiving a solicitation in the

behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. Please email Janet Hitti ([janethitti@verizon.net](mailto:janethitti@verizon.net)) with any questions.

**APR 11 (Sat) Piedmont Plateau Group.** Join us on a quest to find spring wildflowers. Moderate/strenuous hike in South Mountains State Park. About 6-7 miles and includes a few really steep sections. The highlight of the hike will be the awesome waterfall. Contact Cheryl Garrity (336-427-0413 or [cgarriyhike@triad.rr.com](mailto:cgarriyhike@triad.rr.com)).

**APR 17-19 (Fri-Sun) Piedmont Plateau Group.** Hike in the Francis Marion National Forest, on the coastal end of the Palmetto Trail, the South Carolina version of a mountain-to-sea trail. Will hike a section known for its woodpecker colony, visit wilderness areas and/or a wildlife center/refuge, and enjoy local seafood at a favorite restaurant. Group size is limited. Fitness for easy to moderate hikes is necessary. Leader pre-approval plus \$25 refundable-at-the-trailhead deposit required. Contact Terry Woods (leave a message at 336-580-0510 or e-mail [twoodswalker@triad.rr.com](mailto:twoodswalker@triad.rr.com)).

**MAY 13-25 (Wed-Mon) Capital Group.** Circuit backpack: 153 miles, six trails, and 10-11 days. Four ascents and four descents of 2500-3500 feet. Other than about 60 miles on the Appalachian Trail, we will be on primitive trails that are rougher, lesser used but beautiful. Terrain is steep and rugged in places but in general not all that difficult. Trip is rated strenuous. Limit of four (two places already taken), physical fitness and equipment questionnaire to be filled out and returned with a \$50 refundable deposit. Contact Chris David (919-676-8927 or [chrisdavid@bellsouth.net](mailto:chrisdavid@bellsouth.net)).

**International outing.** OCG outings leader Peter Calingaert is leading an outing to northern India in November. For details, explore <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/> or contact Peter at [pc@cs.unc.edu](mailto:pc@cs.unc.edu) or (919) 933-5489.

**Watch for additional outings listings on our website.**

mail from the Sierra Club's North Carolina Chapter asking you to donate money. If you previously have never sent a contribution to the NC Chapter, please consider sending at least \$10 this year. If you have supported the Chapter previously, thank you so much and we hope you can be more generous with this year's contribution.

Please make your checks payable to: NC Sierra Club and mail them to:

PO Box 27291  
Raleigh, NC 27611

Credit or debit card donations can be made at [nc.sierraclub.org](http://nc.sierraclub.org).

Please note: Contributions and gifts to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible as they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

## Orange-Chatham Group Leaders

Executive Committee Members (year indicates end of two-year term)

Loren Hintz (2009) **Group Co-chair and Transportation Chair**  
[ldhintz@bellsouth.net](mailto:ldhintz@bellsouth.net) 933-8987

May Becker (2009) **Group Co-chair** [tomatocutter@yahoo.com](mailto:tomatocutter@yahoo.com) 969-7439

Dave Keesee (2010) **Treasurer** [dskeesee@bellsouth.net](mailto:dskeesee@bellsouth.net) 933-4879

Judith Ferster (2010) **Conservation Chair** [judith\\_ferster@ncsu.edu](mailto:judith_ferster@ncsu.edu) 929-6648

Jean Westbrook (2009) [jtwdrw@hotmail.com](mailto:jtwdrw@hotmail.com) 542-6212

Matt Scheer (2010) [mws21575@yahoo.com](mailto:mws21575@yahoo.com) 370-4267

Olga Grlic (2010) [olgagrl@duke.edu](mailto:olgagrl@duke.edu) 968-4318

## Other Group Leaders

Jason Baker **Political Chair** [jason@jasonbaker.us](mailto:jason@jasonbaker.us) 338-1506

Max Felsher **Newsletter/Web** [max.felsher@gmail.com](mailto:max.felsher@gmail.com) 929-8937

Maureen Hayes **Calendar Sales** [mchayes720@earthlink.net](mailto:mchayes720@earthlink.net) 933-3140

Paul Jones **Listserv** [smalljones@gmail.com](mailto:smalljones@gmail.com) 360-7740

Annette Jurgelski **Outings** [jurge00111@gmail.com](mailto:jurge00111@gmail.com) 644-0280



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