



THE HIGH KNOB HERALD

EARTH DAY EDITION

The Clinch Coalition Newsletter

The Clinch Coalition Welcomes New Governing Board Member!

The Clinch Coalition welcomes
Kara Dotten

Kara Beth Dotten grew up in Wise, Virginia, and intends to stay in Central Appalachia in hopes of improving the community that she loves so much.

Kara graduated from the University of Virginia's College at Wise in 2019 with a degree in Visual and Performing Arts and currently works as the Transfer and International Admissions Counselor at her alma mater.

In her spare time, Kara enjoys hiking, backpacking, kayaking, and other outdoor adventures. She currently serves on the Board of Trustees for the Pro-Art Association and is in the process of finishing the Virginia Master Naturalist training course.

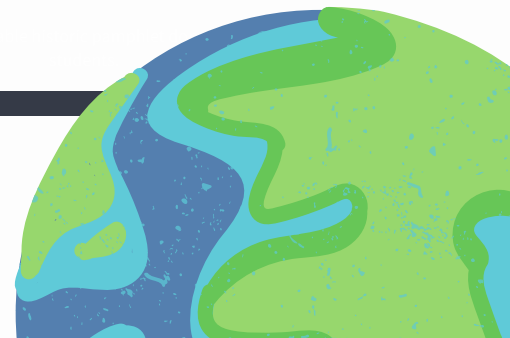
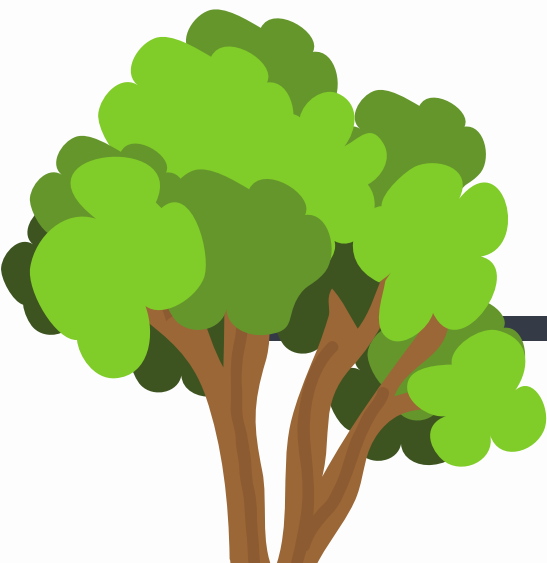
TCC's President, Sharon Fisher, stated, "The Clinch Coalition is delighted to have Kara join us, whose first act as a Board member was to offer her graphic skills to help TCC promote the Clean Water Act. Her love of nature and willingness to work for environmental protections are exactly the characteristics TCC values."



Photo provided by Kara Dotten.

The Clinch Coalition Celebrates Earth Day!

- On April 22nd, TCC's Hiking Club will host a round-trip hike to the High Knob Recreation Area, beginning at 11 am at the High Knob Tower. Contact the Hiking Club for more information at tcchikingclub@gmail.com.
- TCC staff members, Jala Tyler and Melissa Hines, will be attending the UVA Wise Appalachian Leaders and Learners: Conference on Experiential Learning. Come stop by the conference and we'll see you there!
- Beginning on page 3, read the beautifully written and informative article on Earth Day by Wayne Browning, TCC Board Member.





Upcoming Events

April 22nd, 2023 @11am: TCC Hiking Club meets at 11am at the High Knob Recreational Area for Earth Day. Contact TCC Hiking Club for more information at tcchikingclub@gmail.com.

Pine Mountain Naturalist Rally is May 6th from 8am-4pm! The rally includes several hikes and educational sessions conducted by volunteers and representatives of area state parks and organizations. Participants can learn about local flora and fauna, local paleontology and salt making.

The Clinch Ranger District is seeking summer hosts for campgrounds at Bark Camp Lake and High Knob Recreation Area. For more information call 276-679-8370.



Photography by Bill Harris

Now is the time to become a new member or renew your membership. Also, consider making a tax-deductible donation. Your support is vital to helping us continue our advocacy for a clean and protected environment. In 2023, The Clinch Coalition enters its 25th year dedicated to working on environmental justice for our communities and protecting our forests, waters, and the vast biodiversity of Southwest Virginia. Only together can we conserve our natural heritage, create excellent recreational opportunities, and build a culture of land stewardship.

Contact Information

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____
Email: (To receive The Clinch Coalition's Monthly Newsletter) _____
Phone: (Optional) _____

Renew Membership or Become a New Member

___ Student \$10 ___ Individual \$25 ___ Family \$40 ___ Business \$50

Make check to: The Clinch Coalition, P.O. Box 2732, Wise, VA 24293

Make a Tax-Deductible Donation

Amount: _____

Make check to Virginia Organizing and write on memo line: The Clinch Coalition

Mail check to: The Clinch Coalition, P.O. Box 2732, Wise, Virginia 24293, or go to clinchcoalition.org and click on Donate.

Paypal/Credit Card: Go to clinchcoalition.org and click on Donate to be linked to TCC's PayPal.

Follow us on Social Media!

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Please considering making a donation to support TCC's efforts in Environmental Justice! To do so, please visit www.clinchcoalition.org.



Earth Day 2023



**Written by Wayne
Browning**

Fifty-three years ago this month, on 22 April 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated to bring attention to the exquisite beauty of a fragile, blue marble hanging in the vastness of space. A planet like no other known in the Universe. A sphere of life possessing a diversity so vast that even today it remains incompletely documented and understood. A complex system where all life forms are linked and critical, for better or worse, to the existence of each individual species and to global biodiversity.

Twenty-five years ago this year The Clinch Coalition (TCC) formed as a grassroots effort to help protect a critical piece of this global biodiversity centered on the High Knob area of southwestern Virginia, within the Mountain Empire of the famed southern Appalachians.

It is this April that a quarter-century of conservation efforts by TCC and Earth Day's theme of "Invest In Our Planet" converge in a true celebration of what is ultimately most important, the well-being and survival of the natural world in which there is no separation between humans and all other living things. When the complexity of life on Earth is viewed from this big picture perspective, where everything is intimately and intricately connected together across the planet, this is the ultimate realization which emerges from both science and philosophy (as well as embraced by many religions).



Mid-spring along the Appalachians exemplifies these connections and is a glorious time to be alive on planet Earth. Annual rebirth brings a true blessing which can lift the human spirit toward a higher purpose as life forms of all types emerge to fill the mountain landscape with a wondrous array of living things. This generates hope that death as traditionally thought about may not have the final say and that rebirth is actually the ultimate product of energy recycling and transformation as directly dictated by the First Law of Thermodynamics which states: energy can be neither created nor destroyed, only converted (transformed) from one form of energy into another form. Energy at its essence, in its most fundamental form, never dies according to the First Law.

Advances in research are showing that the Earth (Climate) System is actually linked in many more intimate and complex ways than previously imagined with many species and ecosystems, such as forests, demonstrating intelligent behaviors. This becomes possible as interrelationships increase and complexity expands across space and time within these natural settings supported by flows of energy.

Clean air, clean water, aesthetic beauty, mental peace and general physiological health are products of the natural world, called ecosystem services, which are difficult or impossible to measure in terms of economic value. These products are essentially priceless to the wellness of living things, including, of course, human beings.

Earth Day is a celebration of this wondrous complexity of life and a recognition that each individual has a responsibility to take care of these things (the natural world) that sustain life. The original Earth Day grew out of an idea of Senator Gaylord Nelson, who observing anti-war teach-ins being held on University campuses around the nation at the time had a thought, what if environmental teach-ins were to be held?

Nelson's concept caught fire because the environmental movement that resulted in this first Earth Day celebration was a bottom-up organized effort by common people concerned about conditions where they lived, unlike the early conservation movement which was part of a top-down initiative driven by wealthy and well connected people representing only a small minority of the population.

These are some of the most appropriate words spoken by Senator Nelson during April 1970. These words were originally highlighted in the April 2021 edition of a TCC newsletter describing the History of Earth Day and its local connection to Wise County courtesy of his wife Carrie Lee (also reference the fantastic Carrie Lee history given by Lynda Hubbard of Pound on the TCC website and Facebook page).

"You hear the word Ecology, that's a big science, not a narrow one, it's a big concept, and it is concerned with all the ramifications of all the relationships of all living creatures to each other and their environment...I don't think there is any other issue, viewed in its broadest sense, which is as critical to mankind as the issue of the quality of the environment in which we live."

"Is there anything more vital in the long view of history than the proper protection and conservation of our fresh water lakes, rivers, and streams, our wilderness, the soils and the forests, the air we breathe, the bugs and birds and animals and the habitat in which they live? I think not."

Senator Gaylord Nelson – April 1970



This quote from Senator Nelson essentially summarizes why investing in Planet Earth is so vital to humans and all associated living things, with proper attention being the starting point and foundation for everything that may follow. Investing one's attention, directing it toward the living conditions of all living things (including, of course, humans), in a fair and unbiased manner is critical to moving forward in ways that are most beneficial. While monetary investments are required on the global-scale, locally it may be as simple as investing attention and time to cleaning up your own backyard, planting trees, picking up roadside garbage, removing invasive species or generally just becoming civically active in order to promote the well-being of your community.



Joining or just occasionally participating in organized projects with a group like TCC is an excellent way to target bigger local issues and to move forward with like-minded folks who sincerely care and want to make conditions better for present and future generations. This is the spirit that exemplified the past 25-years of TCC activities focused on the High Knob Massif area of southwestern Virginia as well as that of Senator Nelson's Earth Day movement.

The great news is that both TCC and most individuals celebrating Earth Day remain active and strongly driven by desires to make positive differences in the world and their communities. This includes support of open, publicly transparent economic development which views the big picture where conservation and the proper management of ecosystem services work together and local hot-spots of biological diversity are protected and preserved for present and future generations of humans and all living things.

If you feel out-of-touch with the world around you, depressed, have anxiety or generally worry about the future of your family, friends, and planet Earth, then take time on this 53rd Earth Day to slow down and reconnect. Find a tree, yard, park, or other natural setting and disconnect from technology, just for a while, and calm yourself. Watch and observe. Listen and smell. Engage all your senses without any looking at digital technology and you will begin to realize that you (a human) are the abnormal, you are the one deviating from nature, you are the only creature connected to an invisible network of digital, non-living devices which are ruling and controlling your life and disconnecting you from what actually sustains your life, provides this technology, and is most important for the future of all that you really care about.

A salamander wriggling under the leaves, a butterfly resting quietly on a flower, a bird singing from the tree-tops above, a chipmunk scurrying around the base of a tree in pursuit of a potential mate, all these things and so much more appear to have no connection to the iPhone in your hand. This magical, sophisticated device which can give you music, news, GPS coordinates, the ability to speak with people in disparate places around the world may seem to be so much more important, so much more elevated above these apparently "simple" things. But that is an illusion and your view of reality is distorted and immensely limited.

Whatever reality is, as I recently wrote, there is one aspect of absolute certainty, it is far more than can be seen, it is far more than can be heard, it is far more than can be felt, it is far more than can be experienced by any sense of any organism or by any human-generated machine. The reality of these apparently simple creatures is so far beyond what can be known that a human enthralled by an iPhone is, in fact, the most primitive one in such an environment. The human, being enthralled by what is on the digital screen, is looking past and missing the point of existence itself.

Is there any wonder Earth is suffering from this mainly unintentional neglect? Is there any wonder that everyone is searching for meaning in life? Is there any wonder that individuals are physically and mentally stressed to the point of becoming sick?

Perhaps, just perhaps, on this 53rd Earth day on 22 April 2023, there will be an awakening to the fact that investment in planet Earth is not at all about only money. It is about attention, becoming aware of the intricate and life-sustaining connection which all creatures possess and which collectively sustains all life on Earth. Invest a little time in planet Earth and this will become clear. Invest a little time on this Earth Day and your iPhone will seem less important, so very much less important!

Finally, please consider supporting and joining TCC as this exemplary environmental group of common folks step collectively forward into the next quarter-century with attention directed toward protecting and preserving the forest, wildlife, and watersheds of our National Forest and surrounding communities for present and future generations.

Thank you for celebrating Earth Day with us!

