I AM A CONSERVATION VOTER

I am Jennie Peze and I am a Conservation Voter. I grew up on my family’s farm in Darlington County. My earliest memories include walking in the woods with my dad identifying plants. My path has led me to Montana, D.C., Boston and back to South Carolina but my path has always remained focused on the outdoors.

I have found a way to work and play outside, whether it was working in the tobacco and soybean fields or labeling plants at Riverbanks Botanical Garden. My favorite place to be is on Black Creek. As far as I am concerned, it’s South Carolina’s prettiest stream, with serene moving black water and high banks covered in mountain laurel and spicebush, right here in Darlington.

I’m scared of snakes and other biting things under the water, but I just figure it’s worth the risk to get to enjoy life outdoors. I care about having elected officials who will protect the South Carolina I love. I am a Conservation Voter and believe CVSC has the nerve and the power to elevate the dialogue about conservation. I believe we can’t get the job done without organizations like CVSC.

That’s the kind of Conservation Voter I am. What kind are you?

Share your conservation story. Send it to sophie@cvsc.org

THE CONSERVATION VOTER

ABOUT DAM TIME

By Rebecca Haynes, Government Relations Director

The historic flooding in October 2015 changed everything. CVSC was taking stock of an already tough year and working hard to prepare for the next legislative session. Then the floods came. We put everything on hold to join our neighbors in piecing our community back together. Once again we saw just how resilient South Carolinians are.

After the waters receded, we learned that almost fifty “regulated” dams failed across the state and that we have the second worst dam safety program in the country. I thought of the long-neglected dam safety program tucked away in the dark corners of DHEC’s Bureau of Water. Decades of oversight had left the program with a shrinking budget and an inadequate number of staff – making it a sad joke within the halls of the agency.

With the legislative session on the horizon, I resolved to use my past expertise at DHEC and American Rivers to support efforts to reform our dam safety program with our conservation partners at the State House.

When Speaker Jay Lucas (R/Darlington) pre-filed the dam safety bill (H.4565), it seemed clear that legislative reform to protect South Carolinians from unsafe dams would be a silver lining to the floods. After seeing the worst case scenario how could we not come together for the common good?

The Speaker’s bill was sold, reflecting recommendations from DHEC’s dam safety officials and other states’ dam programs that would suit South Carolina. Unfortunately, a handful of vocal dam owners and special interests began to draw out the testimony of experts.

After a string of House Agriculture and Natural Resource subcommittee hearings, H.4565 is barely a shadow of its former self. In their effort to accommodate all imaginable concerns, legislators agreed to a package of amendments to “decrease undue burdens on dam owners.” This has left the bill too big and too complicated – sinking under its own weight.

Our lawmakers owe the people who lost their lives, their homes, and their communities more than this. The legislature is on track to fully fund DHEC’s request to staff the current program, but money alone won’t fix outdated and inadequate regulations.

Owning a dam comes with risk and liability. To protect dam owners, we need clear and pragmatic regulations that define their personal responsibilities as well as the State’s.

Please ask your legislator to support strong dam safety reform that gives DHEC the authority to protect lives in the event of another flood.

THE COAST IS CLEAR!

After months of opposition, and tireless efforts by folks throughout South Carolina – the future of our coast is clear of dirty oil rigs and potential oil spills. The Obama Administration heard our collective voice – that of mayors, councilmen, legislators, businesses, conservation organizations and thousands of citizens like you who came together to fight for South Carolina’s pristine beaches.

On March 18th, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) officially removed the south Atlantic coast, including Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, from the plan for offshore drilling.

Members of SODA POP, a grassroots group against offshore drilling in the Atlantic, celebrating the Obama Administration’s decision.

Even as we celebrate the removal of the Atlantic coast from offshore drilling, we remain vigilant because permits have already been issued for seismic surveys. Sonic boom blasts from airguns during seismic testing can travel 2,500 miles underwater and could disrupt the feeding and mating of marine mammals and fish. Both the South and Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Councils have expressed “grave concerns” about impacts on commercial and recreational fisheries.

Fortunately, the three seismic permits that DHEC issued are under appeal in South Carolina’s Administrative Law Court. Conservation Voters joins our coastal communities and grassroots advocates, SODA POP and Don’t Drill Lowcountry, in opposing seismic testing off our Coast.

Stay tuned for how your voice can keep our coast clear!
THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED US IN 2015

Thank you for your contributions to CVSC, CVSC Education Fund and CVSC PAC. Please let us know if you have not been properly acknowledged as we can correct our records.

$10,000
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Lisa Darden
Gretel & Dorothy Donnelly Foundation
Sue Eidon and Drew Binder
League of Conservation Voters
Charles and Celeste Patrick
Emily Hall Tremper Foundation

$5,000 - $9,999
Susan soy and Edward Sellers
Hartman Fussette
Frank and Anne Hallerman
Arnold Neimark
Jean and James Young Endowment of Coastal Community Foundation
Alex and Zoe Sander
Libby Smith

$2,500 - $4,999
Emo Emma and Dyan Brittain
Ellen Cateelle & Jeffrey Schatz
Carol Evlin
Laura and Steven Gates
Heather and Glenn Hillard
Gordon Martin
Cynthia Powell
Smith Family Foundation
South Carolina Wildlife Federation

$1,000 - $2,499
John Allen
Ann Allen
Katherine and Henry Beard
Andy Berty
Blackmore Family Foundation
Margaret Bridgforth
James and Marianne Crawford
Dan Doyle and Marjorie Spruill
Dan and Bettya George
Doug Harper
Lisa Harper Helms
Ernest "Chip" Helms
Susan Hilfer
Mary K. Howard
Laura Blake Irr/er
Jane and Marion Braddock
Greg Bragg
Bob & Barbara Meier
Laura Blake Orr
Thomas and Robin Sanders
Sarah White
Ann and Elizabeth Nettles

$250 - $499
Jean Anne and Barry Beasley
Jim and Norma Bintz
Dorothy Brown
Ray and Louise Byers
Suzanne White
Suzanne White
Sarah White
Elizabeth Nettles

$100 - $249
Charles and Hall Adams
LaBruce Alexander
Sidney
Pat and Reed Armstrong
Frank and Melanie Baker
Boylan and Barbara Collett
Laura Blake Orr
Nancy and Marion Braddock
Greg Bragg
Bob & Barbara Meier
Maddox Barnett
Meat and John Burns
Masters Campbell
Carlene Carrier
Nancy Cate
Mary Carol and Cary Chambers
John Clark
Tom Clements
Bruce and Judy Coul
Larry Creel and Jodi Yarbrough
Paula Darnell
Diane Duffield
Lucy and Samuel Dargan
Marvin Duvan
Gloria Douglass
Bevondy Dugdale
George and Debbie Durban
Robert and Martha Erwin
Sarah Fellow
Dive and Wayne Fennig
Christopher and Charlotte Gatson
Robert Gray
Betty and David George
Lesley and John Gibson
Christopher and Jane Good
Ben Gregg

2015 GREEN TIE LUNCHEON SPONSORS

$5,000
Dennis Ferguson
David Friedman
William Fye
Edward Gratie
Ann Williamson and Pat Woody
Bob and Mary Williams
Chester Wilson
Wiliam Wilson
Ellen White

We said NO to Big Oil and, thankfully, the Obama Administration listened. It was good that the coalition had the facts, figures and arguments to oppose offshore drilling – and even better that we had the passion to stand up for what we hold dear.

Caring enough matters.

It matters in our upcoming legislative elections, too. If we aren’t passionate about electing good people who will pass the laws we need to protect our environment, we risk losing the fragile, bipartisanship balance of power in the Senate that has favored conservation.

Are we going to elect responsible leaders who represent their constituents and work with their peers to find common sense solutions? Or will we let “dark money” elect uncompromising ideologues who care nothing about our state?

We are alarmed that the Governor’s new “Green in SC” PAC has aligned with out-of-state groups to target some of our best conservation champions. To move our State forward and counter these negative forces, CVSC has launched an ambitious and innovative “Green in SC” campaign aimed at specific districts where our ground game can make a significant difference.

Our first priority is to re-elect our pro-conservation friends like Republican Senators Wes Hayes (York) and Larry Martin (Pickens) and Democrats Floyd Nicholson (Greenwood) and Martin Kimpson (Charleston). We also hope to unseat anticonservation incumbents like Senators Lee Bright ( Spartanburg) and Tom Weaver (Orangeburg) who consistently vote against the interests of the Upstate.

In these races and others, we plan to moderate voters to turn out in record numbers for the June primary. These mainstream voters must show up if we are to overcome the impact of fringe voters who consistently elect anti-conservation candidates in low turn-out elections.

We invite you to support our campaign goal to plan the 2016 elections to literally reshuffle South Carolina’s political landscape, ensuring that we can further leverage power and solidify our conservation mandate for all four years and beyond.

Who we elect matters.

Email Ann at ann@cvsc.org