I AM A CONSERVATION VOTER

My name is Alex George and I am an intern with Conservation Voters. I am from right here in Columbia.

When I was little I was all about animals. I ran around catching lizards, tadpoles, and insects. I remember exploring a local creek with my dad and climbing on what we called “rino rock” on the Saluda River. As I grew older, I became concerned as I realized that protecting our environment was often not a political priority. Gas prices skyrocketed and Americans panicked about energy. The evidence behind climate change crystallized, but people still denied it. It seemed like the environment was in danger and people weren’t paying attention.

Now I study Environmental Science and Marine Science at USC and want to dedicate my career to sustainability. I’m also very interested in issues of social justice for people of color, women, and the LGBT community. To me, progress for humanity means questioning the status quo to make life livable for everyone and to respect the soil we depend on.

I like CVSC because the people who work here are interesting and kind. And we all share a common goal. Interning with CVSC this year feels like the right place at the right time.

That’s the kind of Conservation Voter I am—what kind are you?

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

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

We are excited to welcome William and Sophie to our team and wish Lara Winburn success at the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

William Mitchell
Development Director

William Mitchell (right) joined CVSC in February to expand our grassroots organizing capacity. A native of Columbia, 2003 Furman Graduate, and political campaigner, William welcomes the opportunity to grow Conservation Voters’ base of enthusiastic supporters.

Sophie Halpin
Administrative Assistant

Originally from Maine, Sophie graduated from the University of Vermont in 2014 with a B.S. in Environmental Science. She worked for The Audubon Society and local environmental organizations in Vermont. Sophie moved south in September to join Conservation Voters.

A REALLY BAD IDEA

The jury is in: offshore drilling is a really bad idea for South Carolina. If you don’t believe us, then listen to the local leaders from the growing number of coastal communities in South Carolina that have taken a public stand against it. This September, Pawleys Island City Council joined twenty other municipalities that have passed resolutions against offshore drilling.

Conservation Voters has been an outspoken opponent from the beginning. Tourism and fisheries in South Carolina support almost 79,000 jobs and generate $4.4 billion in GDP each year. It’s not worth the risk when you consider that estimated oil and gas reserves off of our coast only have the potential to supply the United States demand for six days. The potential gain is too small for such a great threat to the economy and quality of life of our state.

Passed Resolutions Opposing Offshore Drilling and Seismic Drilling Throughout South Carolina

- Atlantic Beach
- Beaufort
- Charleston County
- Charleston
- Columbia
- Edisto Beach
- Folly Beach
- Georgetown
- Isle of Palms
- James Island Public Service District
- James Island
- Kiawah Island
- McClellanville
- Mt. Pleasant
- Mt. Pleasant Beach
- North Myrtle Beach
- Pawleys Island
- Port Royal
- Rockville
- Sullivan’s Island
- Surfside Beach

DON’T DRILL SC CAMPAIGN

You can thank Nikki Haley for South Carolina’s inclusion on the list for offshore drilling. Given her pride as the “jobs” Governor, it’s ironic that she would risk South Carolina’s tourism economy for “big oil.”

Equally puzzling is Senator Tim Scott’s sponsorship of federal legislation to mandate drilling and reduce the buffer to twenty miles from our beaches without any pretense of transparency or public input. His bill also allows for any oil produced to be exported to foreign countries. It has been noted that Senator Tim Scott is among the top twenty recipients of oil and gas industry contributions in Congress.

Please join us in saying “no” to the exploitation of our Coast. In May, Conservation Voters started a petition asking the Governor to reverse her position on offshore drilling. She alone can change our status as a pro-drilling state. In July, partnered with SODA (Stop Offshore Drilling in the Atlantic) to host a “Public Alert Day” to educate citizens on the dangers of offshore drilling and ask them to join our campaign. In just one day volunteers set up over 100 tabling sites, collected 1,700 signatures, and made over 1,000 phone calls to coastal residents. The resulting momentum has now generated over 5,500 signatures.

The “Don’t Drill SC” campaign is expanding its efforts by asking businesses to challenge the Governor’s assumption that offshore oil would bring jobs and energy security to our state. If you own a business or patronize a business, please consider adding your voice today.

Visit dontdrillsc.com to add your name or business to the petition against offshore drilling!
THE POLLS ARE IN...

Recent polling confirms that the clean energy policies that Conservation Voters of South Carolina is fighting for have broad popular support. Technological advances have made solar and wind power cheaper, and Americans are excited about it.

In August, the League of Conservation Voters and Natural Resources Defense Council Action Fund released a poll showing that 72% of South Carolina Republican primary voters support renewable energy like solar and wind over traditional sources of energy. 59% of those same voters support limits on carbon pollution from power plants. 48% believe there is evidence that climate change is happening.

In September, the Clear Path Foundation released a poll showing similar support for clean energy policies broadly, and among conservatives specifically. In that poll, 89% of voters, and 54% of conservative Republicans, agreed.

OUR GREEN TIE LUNCHEON HIGHLIGHTS

Over 400 people joined us for the 7th annual Green Tie Luncheon on September 18th to honor conservation leadership and enjoy a delicious lunch catered by Scott Hall. We are thankful to all who joined us in making the day so enjoyable.

When asked about the event, The Honorable Brad Hutto said, “Over the years, Conservation Voters have played an important role in addressing many environmental issues facing South Carolina. I am proud to have been honored by them with the Green Tie Award. Together we will continue to face the challenges confronting our State.”

“Since inception, Conservation Voters has been a strong and powerful voice for the entire environmental community. I am proud to be their ally and honored to be recognized with the Green Tie Award.”

— The Honorable Joel Laurie

Brad Wyche (fourth from left, with Naturaland Trust Board members), accepted two Green Tie awards; one for founding Upstate Forever to promote sustainable development and the other for his late father’s conservation legacy in working with partners to protect over 100,000 acres of the Blue Ridge Escarpment. Brad’s heartfelt words left the crowd emotional and inspired.

2015 legislative honorees were Senators Joel Laurie (D, Richland), Brad Hutto (D, Orangeburg), Representatives Murrell Smith (R, Sumter) and Bill Clyburn (D, Aiken). Senator Hutto’s award was accepted by his parents.

“Protecting our environment, and the pristine areas of South Carolina that we have all been blessed to enjoy and live in, is of the utmost importance. From a strictly business viewpoint, we should all realize how the tourism industry and the condition of our environment, and our state tourist attractions affect us all here in South Carolina. The Conservation Voters of South Carolina continue to strive to improve the conditions in our state and this will in turn provide our citizens with a cleaner environment in which to live.”

—The Honorable Rita Allison, House of Representatives R, Spartanburg

LEGISLATIVE GOALS FOR 2016

Conservation Bank: Pass Senator Campsen’s bill to extend the Bank beyond 2018 and add funding to voluntarily protect Carolina bays and wetlands.

Water: Protect water flows in our rivers by requiring all withdrawals over 3 millions gallons per month to be permitted.

Waste: Hold DHEC accountable for Pinewood hazardous waste site, and support funding for pro-active maintenance and monitoring.

Energy: Support the development of a Clean Power Plan that values energy efficiency and encourages renewables like solar and wind.

Shoreline: Designate a baseline to prevent development from moving closer to the ocean and oppose special exemptions for seawalls.

Regulations: Protect citizens’ rights under the Pollution Control Act to clean up past pollution and uphold the automatic stay to avoid irreparable harm while permits are appealed.

THE STAKES ARE HIGH

When we talk about “protecting the South Carolina you love,” we think about your favorite outdoor places. But in the aftermath of the Emmanuel Nine, we thought about our communities, families, friends and the legacy we leave for the future. We did not hesitate to join the call for bringing down the flag.

We watched the votes that ensured and noted that the Representatives and Senators voting to remove the Confederate flag from the State House grounds were the same legislators who work across party lines to protect our environment. The stakes got higher for next year’s elections, and Conservation Voters is making a plan.

In presidential years, about 2 million South Carolinians vote which amounts to about 88% of registered voters. The national average in 2012 hovered around 58%.

Presumably you vote in November … but do you also vote in the June primary? In 2012, only 286,035 votes (15%) were cast in South Carolina’s primaries, in 2014, 452,990 (38%). More than a million South Carolina residents did not vote when most legislative seats were decided.

In too many House contests, whether Democratic or Republican, fewer than 3,000 voters go to the polls. That is too small a number. It makes legislators who have the courage to vote their conscience vulnerable to extremist pressures. It’s why our plan includes getting more people to vote.

Much of the fault lies in the way legislative districts are drawn in the state. Of the 124 House and 46 Senate districts, only a handful are “swing” seats, meaning that that almost all of our legislators are elected in their primaries.

We can’t change the districts, and the lines won’t be redrawn until after the 2020 census, but we plan to bring out more conservation minded voters next June 14th. That means talking to voters over the next few months to find out what you care about and why conservation matters to you.

If you like to fish— do you know that your legislator might be a deciding vote on how much water is left flowing in our rivers? If you are tired of ever increasing electric rates— do you know that your legislator will vote on four new Public Service Commission’s next year?

If you want good laws passed to protect our air, land and water, who you elect really matters.

Email Ann at ann@cvsc.org