



Green Sanctuary
 Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
 24 Farnsworth St
 Boston, MA 02210-1409

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Climate Urgency Candidate for Re-Accreditation

*Please use this process if your congregation has remained engaged at a high level of activity after GS accreditation and wishes to take their EJ work to the next level.

Congregation Information

Date July 17, 2020
 Congregation Name Bull Run Unitarian Universalists
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 Web site www.BRUU.org
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Post-Green Sanctuary Accreditation Narrative

Since our original Green Sanctuary accreditation in 2004, BRUU has embarked on a sustained journey of reducing our environmental footprint. In the past six years, our focus has been on energy efficiency and climate change, with an emphasis on minimizing (and for the past two years, neutralizing) our carbon footprint.

Below we summarize our activities in the areas of (1) mitigation, (2) adaptation and resilience, (3) climate justice, and (4) cross-cutting activities.

Mitigation

- Funded a professional energy audit for our building, which produced a detailed action plan and list of priorities.
- Have worked through the priorities, implementing a series of energy efficiency projects on lights, motion-activated switches, appliances, and other equipment.
- Implemented projects requiring capital expenditures including improvements in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) – in fact, we will have to replace a 25+-year old HVAC system in the next year, and insulating the building envelope.
- Bought an infrared camera to detect areas with poor insulation in the building envelope. We've also encouraged members to borrow the IR camera to assess and seal leaks in their homes/ apartments.
- Sought proposals from solar companies to install photo-voltaic (PV) panels on our roof. Economics

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were very unfavorable (greater than 20-year payback period) due to (a) our utility's electric rate structure, (b) need to replace roof within a few years (which would require uninstalling and reinstalling panels), and (c) lack of federal tax break.

- Met with our municipal electric utility to seek changes to rate structure so that BRUU (and other places of worship) aren't disincentivized to install solar. The utility's rate study is pending.
- Highlighted experience of a Green Team member who installed PV panels and geothermal heat pump at his home, and how others can take advantage of net metering (at the residential level) to become energy-independent and carbon-neutral.
- Purchased carbon offsets to neutralize BRUU's carbon footprint.
- Encouraged members of the congregation to also purchase individual carbon offsets; seven have done so to date.

Adaptation and Resilience

- Maintain our courtyard garden, certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a *Wildlife Habitat*, which is one of the only green spaces in Old Town Manassas. This serves two adaptation functions: (1) it helps reduce the urban heat island effect and (2) it provides pervious surface within an urban watershed that is highly impervious, thus buffering some of the hydrologic extremes associated with climate change. It also provides habitat for a limited number of native plant and wildlife species.
- Sponsor classes and meetings of the Merrimac Farm Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists. Two BRUU members teach the class on Climate Change Impacts in Virginia, and class materials include information on adaptation measures at the state and local scale. One BRUU member teaches classes on botany, geography and geomorphology. VMN provides volunteer opportunities in citizen science, education and outreach, and stewardship; BRUU's Green Team sponsors VMN's use of our facility and resources, which strengthens this community.

Climate Justice

- Maintain a Food Pantry that regularly feeds over 100 families a month (about 100 families and 500 individuals through our emergency food pantry, and about 60 families and 300 individuals through the USDA food pantry; many families are helped by both programs). Many of the supported families are low-income and minority families at risk of environmental and climate justice-related stressors. Prince William County has a large immigrant population, and many of these families have fled from such stressors.
- Sell Equal Exchange Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate, even during the COVID shut-down, by making home deliveries. Our fair-trade efforts help struggling agricultural communities in Latin America. Proceeds have been used to fund carbon offsets, as well as support for local and UU environmental groups (see below).
- Contribute regularly to the UUSJ Advocacy Corp, lobbying Congress on social justice issues through the "Write Here, Write Now" campaign, including climate change and environmental justice concerns.
- Financially support local environmental groups, including UUSJ, Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), Prince William Conservation Alliance, and Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL).
 - In addition to the "Write Here, Write Now" campaign mentioned earlier, UUSJ is a leader in UU climate justice work.
 - IPL "work[s] with hundreds of congregations of all faiths across Maryland, DC, and Northern Virginia to save energy, go green, and respond to climate change."
 - Prince William Conservation Alliance lobbies local officials on stream protection, parks, smart growth, and environmental issues and spearheads direct volunteer action on citizen science.
 - CCL works for climate solutions that are effective and that would minimize impacts on low- and moderate-income households, focusing on an approach with carbon pricing, distribution of dividends to households, and a border carbon adjustment.
- We co-sponsored a showing of the film "The Eagle and the Condor," a film about the need for north-south collaboration on climate and environmental justice.

- Recent advocacy efforts include working with local residents to block development of an asphalt plant near a neighborhood with a high percentage of minority residents. The anticipated emissions from that plant would have impacted children going to a nearby elementary school, as well as residents.

Cross-cutting actions (i.e., actions that support more than one of the above categories)

- Conduct regular “Write Here! Write Now!” campaigns to advocate for climate action (mitigation, adaptation, justice).
- Conduct annual Earth Day services and other periodic worship services stressing related environmental topics. For example, this year’s service discussed BRUU’s efforts to reduce our carbon footprint, and how (after years of mitigation measures) we neutralized our footprint with offsets. We’ve encouraged members to calculate and neutralize their own footprints. In terms of resilience, we’ve had services to raise awareness about climate impacts and what measures communities and people can take to improve resilience.
- We successfully lobbied our board to pass a resolution on climate change, text below:

Whereas climate change is one of the most serious challenges facing the world today, posing serious risks to vulnerable human populations and the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part;

Whereas the solution to the climate crisis is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (often measured as a carbon footprint); and

Whereas we need deep emission cuts within the next decade if we are to avert irreversible, serious changes in the climate system;

Bull Run Unitarian Universalists (BRUU) hereby resolves to minimize or neutralize our carbon footprint in our own facilities, and to encourage our members and friends to minimize their footprint at home and in their transportation practices.

Furthermore, BRUU calls upon the United States Congress to enact legislation in support of carbon pricing, which economists and policy analysts agree is the most cost-effective and durable approach to achieve deep, economy-wide cuts in emissions. In particular, BRUU endorses the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763), or similar legislation, and we urge Congress to enact such legislation before the end of 2021.

BRUU also calls upon Virginia, Prince William County, Fairfax County, Manassas City, Manassas Park City, and other local jurisdictions to take actions at the state and local level to reduce greenhouse gases and to increase resilience to climate change.
- BRUU members spoke at county supervisors’ meetings on a county-wide resolution to set climate, clean energy, and resilience goals. The resolution passed.

Describe Two Proposed Climate Urgency Projects

The BRUU Green Team has developed four ideas for Climate Urgency projects, described below. The first two share the theme that BRUU has taken action at the congregational level, and that action demonstrates what’s possible and sets a good example. But what we’ve done at our facility is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what we could do cumulatively if we all take action at home.

The third and fourth projects involve focused support for organizations on the front lines of the climate fight, with engagement with marginalized front-line communities.

- Problem 1: Rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide, which drive climate change, and disproportionately affect poor, minority populations.*** Solution: BRUU has launched a carbon footprint challenge, where we’ve asked members and friends to (1) calculate their footprints and (2) take actions to reduce carbon emissions by at least 50%, unless they’re already carbon-neutral (in which case you can’t reduce emissions further). Participants are using the EPA GHG calculator

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(<https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>) or the TerraPass calculator (<https://www.terrapass.com/carbon-footprint-calculator>) to figure out their baseline; the EPA calculator allows you to estimate how much you're reducing emissions through specific actions.

In response to a suggestion by the Green Sanctuary Reaccreditation Team that we establish a quantitative baseline, BRUU has started tracking participation and emission reductions through a survey of members. 64 members responded to the survey. Key findings are as follows:

Home Energy

- A majority of BRUUsers already use a variety of methods of reducing their energy use, such as turning their A/C thermostat in summer to 75 degrees F or above or buying Energy Star lights and appliances.
- 12 respondents (19%) have used BRUU's infrared camera to determine and fix heat loss in their home, and another 36 (56%) plan to do so
- 8 respondents (13%) are buying "Green Power" from Dominion or NOVEC in an attempt to get renewable energy as their source of electricity, and 42 others (66%) are considering it
- 2 respondents (3%) already have solar panels on their house, and another 10 (16%) plan to purchase them within the next 5 years

Transportation

- A majority of BRUUsers are taking some measures to reduce their transportation emissions, like buying high mpg vehicles and using public transportation when it's available

Recycling and Source Reduction

- The vast majority of BRUUsers recycle everything that is allowed to be recycled by their recycling pick-up

Carbon Footprints

- 15 respondents (23%) have calculated their carbon footprint
- 7 respondents (11%) have reduced their footprints and are neutralizing 100% of their remaining footprint through carbon offsets
- Another 3 respondents (5%) have reduced their footprints and are neutralizing >50% of their remaining footprint with carbon offsets
- 33 other respondents (52%) said they're thinking about purchasing carbon offsets in the near future. The survey provides a baseline for us to track progress as we move forward with our carbon footprint challenge.

2. ***Problem 2: Changing climate is requiring changes in the ranges of plants and animals, requiring massive migration (largely northward); at the same time, urbanization is fragmenting habitat.*** Solution: having created certified wildlife habitat in BRUU's garden, BRUU has also launched a wildlife habitat challenge, where we've asked members and friends to take actions required to get certification from the National Wildlife Federation for their properties. We established a baseline for this effort using the same survey described in the carbon footprint challenge. The survey found that:

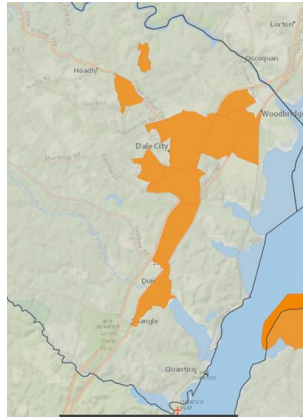
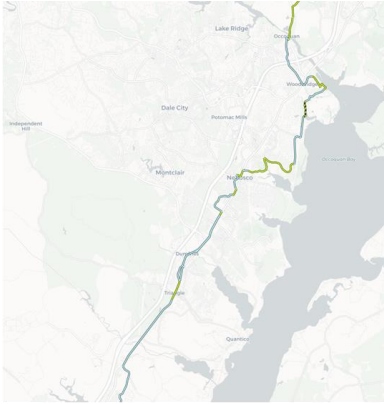
- 23 respondents (36%) have a Certified Wildlife Habitat at their house
- 32 others (50%) are interested in learning more about Certified Wildlife Habitats in order to possibly set one up at their house, school, or workplace

In the future, we may also provide info on the high-priority wildlife corridors that the Northern VA Regional Commission has identified (see map below), and map where participants' habitats are, and how we're contributing to these corridors.



Source: https://www.novaregion.org/DocumentCenter/View/3099/NVRC-GI_Report_Jan_2012-web?bidId=

3. ***Problem 3: Mobility, equity emphasis areas, and trails – the transportation sector has emerged as the largest GHG-emitting sector in the US, and access to public transport and other resources is key to reducing emissions while achieving climate justice. And as noted above, habitat fragmentation is creating a huge impediment to the imperative for plant and animal populations to change their ranges.*** Solution: The Greater Prince William Trails Coalition (<https://www.gpwtrails.org/about-us>) is a collaboration of public and private organizations, agencies, and citizen volunteers working to advance the completion of an interconnected, interjurisdictional network of multi-use trails for Greater Prince William County. The vision is to create a scenic, sustainable, and connected multi-modal trail system that enhances quality of life by providing equitable access to transportation, recreation, cultural, educational, and economic opportunities for all. Equity Emphasis Areas in the community need greater mobility, especially Safe Routes to Schools and bike/pedestrian access to libraries, parks, retail shops, and job locations. Such areas, where car ownership is limited, will gain special benefits from creating a more-complete trails network. A likely priority will end up being completion of the East Coast Greenway (see <https://map.greenway.org/?loc=12.38.59688,-77.24453>) as a spine in the eastern end of county.



East Coast Greenway (left) and Equity Emphasis Areas (right)

from <https://www.mwco.org/transportation/planning-areas/fairness-and-accessibility/environmental-justice/equity-emphasis-areas/>.

If we build a spider's web of trails connecting to it, we will address the inadequate access to parks and trails in the Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs). Another priority may be Safe Routes to Schools, which will improve mobility in all neighborhoods. Since the majority of the K-12 school population in PW County is non-white, this has a strong climate justice component. BRUU has joined the coalition and added a representative to the Coalition as a "Partner," which involves exchanging information, sharing perspectives, helping define priorities, and supporting implementation of actions. BRUU's participation helps assure that climate justice issues are weighed appropriately in the priority-setting process. We can also weigh in for trail development that supports development of wildlife corridors.

Ongoing climate-related advocacy is targeted towards protecting residents in an EEA threatened with being evicted and having their houses torn down, in order to build a new high-speed highway for commuters. The road cuts through an EEA occupied by a high percentage of minority residents.

In this EEA, the proposed road will increase Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and associated greenhouse gas emissions, making it harder to achieve the regional commitment to reduce emissions by 2030 to 50% of the 2005 level.

On a broader scale, the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition has drafted a detailed map showing where mobility could be increased using improved sidewalks, bike paths, and trails – particularly in areas where every adult in a household does not own a car.

For decades, some low-income communities have been cut off from shopping centers, job centers, recreation areas, and schools by interstate highways. The bridge carrying Route 234 across I-95 to Dumfries has included a sidewalk since it was built, but no path was ever constructed across the entry/exit ramps. As a result, it is physically life-threatening for anyone to try to bike or walk across that bridge from Dumfries to enjoy using the national park (Prince William Forest Park) on the other side. Similarly, the low-income residents in the Coverstone community cannot cross I-66 by bike or on

foot, to access the community college or the national park on the other side. Funding for moving cars has been plentiful, but funding for moving people who lacked the resources to buy a car has been minimal.

BRUU's advocacy for a better bike/pedestrian network serves two purposes: better connectivity without requiring a trip in a car will increase equity, particularly for underserved communities, and also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

4. **Problem 4: BRUU has not yet established a trusted working relationship with a specific marginalized community impacted by climate in our area.** We need better connections in order to work in partnership with others and to support their priorities, rather than impose our own ideas. Solution: to overcome this challenge, BRUU has committed to become the first member of the Prince William County Advocacy Team for Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS, <https://faithforclimate.org/advocacyteams/>). Dedicated staff in that organization will establish a network of churches, mosques, synagogues, and other faith communities who care about increasing resilience and mitigating the impacts of climate change. FACS was founded by UUs from Fairfax and Arlington, Virginia. It is solidly based in theology and science. The leaders have been well-known to our membership for a decade, and their goals are social justice through environmental awareness and activism. Advocacy Team Members participate in the following activities:

- Are invited to participate in monthly advocacy webinars and one in-person planning meeting (held in January each year).
- Teams will meet at least twice a year with their elected officials
- Team members are encouraged to participate in programs and events hosted by their elected officials, subscribe to district newsletters, track any issues of concern in their district, and are encouraged to share updates with the full advocacy team.
- Additional opportunities for engagement, including public hearings, submitting letters to the editor, public comment, letter campaigns, etc. will be shared throughout the year.
- Participate in FACS-organized meetings as a representative of FACS, respectful of the agreed-upon advocacy priorities
- FACS leadership will assist team leads in recruiting team members, will convene the monthly advocacy webinars, manage FACS' advocacy google group and calendar, set annual advocacy priorities, and will provide additional materials, training and support periodically.

Planned actions specific to BRUU include:

- introducing BRUU to FACS through tabling and newsletter publicity in 2021-22
- a Split-the-Plate Sunday with a FACS speaker. This can help raise funds to augment the grant that is covering salary for FACS's local representative.
- Sharing invitations to live network events from FACS's larger organization (VA-DC-MD)
- Networking by helping to connect FACS to BRUU's neighboring churches, and providing information on how to set up and implement a Green Team.

In sum, this initiative offers an opportunity to engage and connect with other faiths in our county on climate. Given that Prince William County is a "majority minority" county, and given that FACS is emphasizing engagement with marginalized front-line communities, we anticipate that this will provide an excellent forum for us to learn of the climate justice concerns of these communities, and to lend our shoulders to the collective wheel to fight for climate justice.

Submission Instructions

Send your submission by e-mail to uua_greensanctuary@uua.org. If you have questions or need advice, please contact GS Manager Karen Brammer at kbrammer@uua.org.

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