



The Highlands Voice

The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

“CLEAN COAL” IS THERE SUCH A THING?

Concerns about rising oil prices and global warming have renewed interest in “clean coal technology.” Coal industry groups have promoted “clean coal technology” as a way of addressing these problems, citing ways in which this technology could, if ever perfected, result in cleaner burning of coal, etc.

Absent from the discussions of “clean coal” is the mining of it. Even if the technology existed to burn coal more cleanly, the discussions do not address the mining of it.

Coal River Mountain Watch has now moved to fill that gap in the discussion. It has generated a letter in response to the ongoing “clean coal” push by the coal industry, pointing out that no matter how “clean” the burning of coal might theoretically become, there is no such thing as “clean coal” so long as it is mined in such an environmentally and socially destructive manner. The letter has now been widely circulated and at least sixty organizations (including the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy) and individuals have endorsed it. The text of the letter appears below.

Dear Conscientious Citizens and Organizations,

Recent media reports promoting integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) coal power plants and coal fuel liquefaction as clean

energy sources seriously undermine the movement in Appalachia to save our homes, communities, and environment from the ravages of mountaintop removal (MTR) coal mining. Even IGCC plants add pollutants and greenhouse gases rather than replacing older plants. Research funding for unproven, risky ideas such as carbon sequestration

would be better spent on solar and wind solutions. But regardless of new coal plants’ methods, the nightmares created by MTR will haunt our homeland forever. There is no such thing as clean coal technology as long as coal is produced by raping the land and oppressing the people.

The MTR process begins with clear-cutting thousands of acres of some of the world’s most biologically diverse temperate hardwood forests. Much of the timber is either burned or buried. Then, tons of explosives, the same mix used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, are detonated to loosen the rock. Three million

pounds per day are currently detonated in West Virginia alone. In a week’s time, this is nearly the same net explosive force used on Hiroshima. And this goes on week after week.

Then, the topsoil and rubble are dumped into nearby valleys.

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“There is no such thing as clean coal technology as long as coal is produced by raping the land and oppressing the people.”

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Cows in the Streams

Would you believe that here in West Virginia the very people who have done the best job of taking care of the land are about to be punished for their fine stewardship? In our part of the state, senators, delegates, and county commissioners have been inspired by the Farm Bureau's lobbyists to complain that punishment will be the effect of the Department of Environmental Protection's plan to list nearly four hundred streams under the heading 'Tier 2.5.'

Tier 2.5 is the latest step in our long slow dance of compliance with the Clean Water Act. A comment period on the presumptive list of streams ended December 31. An earlier comment period, in 2002, pruned the list by fifty, from 444 to 394. Maybe this go-round will trim a few more.

The Clean Water Act, in effect since 1972, told states to deal with water pollution in two ways: clean up dirty streams, and don't let clean streams get dirty. "Antidegradation" is the regulatory label for the latter job. Tiering is how we rank our streams' cleanliness. Tier 1 streams are in a bad way, Tier 2 streams are better off, and Tier 2.5—not quite all the way to Tier 3, which are wilderness streams—are worthy of special protection because of their water quality.

Many presumptive Tier 2.5 streams flow through the Monongahela National Forest or other public lands, but there are quite a few segments on private land, and the riparian owners were given specific rights to notice and comment. The West Virginia Farm Bureau took up their cause. In 2002, most of the 4,000-odd comments on Tier 2.5 were form letters provided to landowners by the Farm Bureau.

It's interesting that the Farm Bureau and the West Virginia Forestry Association have been the lead opponents of antidegradation implementation, in light of the fact that both farming and timbering are exempt from the process. Ah, but there's a rub: those "nonpoint-source" activities (i.e., they don't discharge pollutants from a single point, such as a pipe) are to be left alone so long as they observe "best management practices."

A friend who farms land in Upshur County explained it to me this way: "They don't want anyone telling them not to let their cows in the stream."

It seems the Farm Bureau originated the claim that landowners were being punished for taking care of the land. Their "Sample Tier 2.5 Objection Letter" declared, "Now you want to penalize us for being good stewards by taking away part of [our] private property rights." And, "The whole concept . . . is unjust."

During the comment period, that argument was heard from the usual suspects who oppose any regulation for any purpose whatsoever. They'd be happy to repeal the Clean Water Act. As the deadline approached, even the more reasonable delegates seemed to be feeling the heat. The Legislature had passed antidegradation rules and approved the presumptive list five years ago, and the final list will come before them next year. Meanwhile, nodding toward their most outspoken constituents, they blamed the Department of Environmental Protection for "poor communication."

It wasn't easy to discover what property rights landowners thought they'd lose. The Farm Bureau's sample objection letter came nearest to specifics: "It will limit the right to build on property or at least substantially increase the cost and bureaucracy a landowner must contend with

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Great Progress So Far But Still More To Do

UPDATE ON PLANNING FOR THE MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST

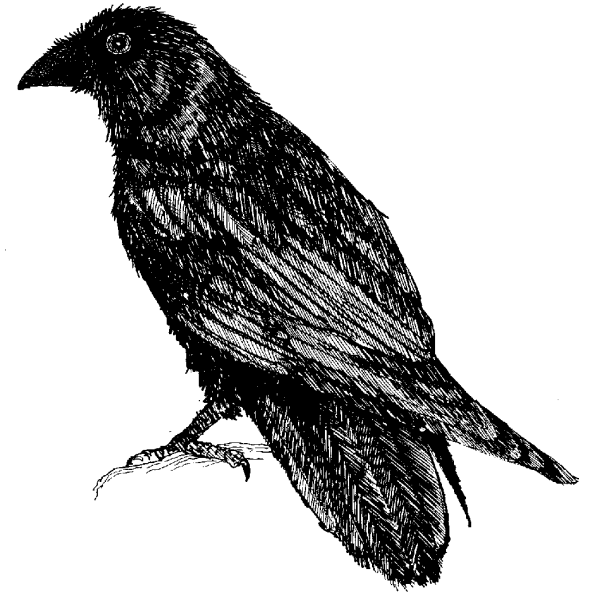
By Matt Keller

This Holiday season, we should all be in good cheer given our amazing efforts to protect Wilderness this year. As a community of people who care about wild places, we were able to generate an overwhelming response on the Mon National Forest's management plan revision comment period. Estimates have the number of comments near 15,000! Even better, well over 90% of these comments are in favor of Alternative 3 and protecting significantly more wilderness than was presented in the Forest Service's preferred Alternative 2.

This happened not only happened because folks like you cared enough to send in their own comments, but because many individuals got involved on a much deeper level by encouraging others to write, hosting Wild Mon parties, phone banking and being active in

many other ways. We were blown away by the outpouring of support and enthusiasm.

While this is a big victory for our wild places on the Mon, much work still needs to be done. The Forest Service is due to have a final plan released as early as April. We'll be working hard to make sure that they listen to what the public has clearly insisted they do. With an even bigger list of recommended wilderness areas from the Forest Service in hand, we'll be working closely with West Virginia's congressional delegation to ensure legislation is introduced and passed that will protect many special places on the Mon. We'll be working hard to build support for this legislation and will need your help. Stay tuned on how you can be involved in the process.



FOREST SERVICE ISSUES OFF ROAD VEHICLE RULES

The Forest Service has released off-road vehicle regulations for use of the national forests. The new regulations direct forests to end widespread cross-country travel by ATVs, dirt bikes, and other off-road vehicles. They direct forests to designate specific routes (and even limited areas open to cross-country travel) where off-road vehicles may be driven legally.

The national rule does not have an immediate impact. Rather, the rule requires that each national forest or ranger district designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicles. Designation will include class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year for motor vehicle use. A given route, for example, could be designated for use by motorcycles, ATVs, or street-legal vehicles.

Once designation is complete, the rule will prohibit motor vehicle use off the designated system or inconsistent with the designations. Designation decisions will be made locally, with public input and in coordination with state, local, and tribal governments.

For full text of the final regulations go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/>.

The Forest Service expects national forests and grasslands to complete the designation process within four years.

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The *Highlands Voice* is always printed on recycled paper. Our printer use 100% post consumer recycled paper when available.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page is www.wvhighlands.org.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose:

The purposes of the Conservancy shall be to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation—including both preservation and wise use—and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation, and especially of the Highlands Region of West Virginia, for the cultural, social, educational, physical, health, spiritual, and economic benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and Americans.

NET METERING: IT'S A GOOD THING

By Frank Young

How would you like to make your electric meter run backwards?

"Net metering" is a concept that would change West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) rules to allow homeowners to be reimbursed for any excess electricity they may generate from alternative sources like solar, wind and other means.

Allan Tweddle, Renewable Energy Campaign Coordinator for the WV Environmental Council (WVEC) recently said, "Net metering is an important tool for moving forward on renewable energy policy".

Recently, on behalf of WVEC, I intervened in the WV PSC's ongoing, although nearly stalled, investigation of into implementing net metering in West Virginia. Information on how you can participate and comment in this important case is at the end of this article.

Net metering is often considered as part of electric restructuring or deregulation, but which has not been approved by the WV state legislature. However, several states have implemented some form of net metering while maintaining regulated rates for electricity. Those states include: Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Wisconsin, and perhaps others. Those states have implemented net metering by rule or order of the respective regulatory commission or by utility tariff filing.

West Virginia law (WV Code § 24-1-1) directs the WV Public Service Commission to regulate the practices and services of public utilities for the provision of economical utility services and the encouragement of the productive use of the state's energy resources. Net metering is a concept that is receiving national attention. It is the practice of measuring the difference between the total generation and total consumption of electricity by customers, usually home and small business owners with small generating facilities. One of the goals inherent in a net metering program is the encouragement of private investment in renewable energy resources. Other goals of net metering are diversification of energy resources and improving the environment. Thus, net metering has the potential to provide both economic and productive use of the state's renewable energy resources.

"In essence, net metering allows a homeowner to generate power for the home and to supply any excess electricity to the power company," explained former PSC Chairman James D. Williams. "This power moving onto the grid has a value, but there's also a cost for the company to maintain the lines and to safely move that power. So, we've asked the companies to suggest what they think would be a fair way to compensate the supplier, how that compensation for the new power could be efficiently tracked, and what other considerations they think would be prudent to make sure such a program would work."

More than three years ago the state PSC opened its "investigation" into tariff (rate) filing or rulemaking that would allow and regulate net metering in West Virginia. Both official PSC agency and public interest in the case in the intervening months has been lackluster. Only 13 case comment or document filings are indicated during all that time.

Asked recently why progress in the net metering investigation case had been so slow, Earl Melton, the PSC's Engineering Division Director, said, "There has been no constituency for net metering", ex-

plaining that almost no one has been making requests or comments to the Commission on net metering matters.

Some of us believe that the net metering issue does indeed have a constituency, but that there has been little publicity around which to activate those interested in net metering to offer comments to the Commission.

Net metering is an important piece of the renewable energy puzzle in West Virginia. With net metering there is a bigger incentive for residents to invest in solar and wind power equipment, and other renewable energy sources.

In coming months I will report on power company posturing on net metering issues, and on some relatively low cost home sized renewable energy components and related technology. And the WV Environmental Council will include net metering in its larger campaign for renewable energy development, including public education and lobbying for better public policy leading toward renewable energy development.

Registering your comments about net metering is easy:

Public comments are being accepted by the WV Public Service Commission. It is important that your letters of comment begin by citing the PSC's case number which is: 02-

1495-E-GI- Net Metering. Comments need not be either technical or lengthy. Short and concise comments are best. If you think of or learn of other net metering related comments later, you can always submit additional comments. Send comments to:

Executive Secretary, WV Public Service Commission, 201 Brooks Street, Charleston WV 25323

Always reference Case Number: 02-1495-E-GI-Net Metering.



ROARING PLAINS RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

By Lovell R. Greathouse

I first hiked this area some years ago, as the WV LWCF Plan coordinator, with A. Lee Maynard, Director of the WV Dept. of Commerce and Dr. Tom King, Chairman of the State Trails committee. We largely traveled the mountain top southward from Dolly Sods, through "Red Creek Plains", "Roaring Plains", over Mt Port Crayon and followed the irregular ridge crest down to US 33. We made many side trips west to view the Flat Rock Plains of S. Fork of Red Creek, and east to view the "fore knobs" and across the South Branch to the high extension of North Fork Mountain. This was a grand uplifting experience.

I have always thought a significant part of the blueberry shrub areas, which the old timers referred to as "huckleberry plains" should be preserved, and that a foot trail should extend from Dolly Sods down this mountaintop from Dolly Sods to US route 33 and beyond, following the mountain crest, around the head of White Run and down the west crest of Seneca

Creek Basin to road 103 near Spruce Knob Lake. (I have hiked nearly all of this.)

Our trip from Dolly Sods to route 33 was filled with inspiring views, both west and east, but especially across the Fore Knobs and across the South Branch River to the main mountain back drop. Much of this trip was open or partially open with blueberry shrubs, but with patches of scattered trees containing many ripe service berries which we ate to our delight. There was not much woodlands with the appearance of potential saw timber.

There was significant terrestrial wildlife, including black bear with signs of a good population.

We carried light packs and stayed over night about halfway to route 33.

We met Robert "Bob" Radtke a top forest planner and his assistant on the second day. We spent most of an hour with Bob discussing our experiences

and traded impressions of the lands potential for management.

It would be ideal to preserve this crest trail from Dolly Sods to US 33, with side trails for the views, and include the North and South Forks of Long Run (for brook trout) as part of the Roaring Plains Wilderness. (I realize there is a private land ownership problem south of Mt. Port Crayon, but hopefully someday USFA can acquire this.)

Editor's Note: Mr. Greathouse is a longtime (there at or at least very near the beginning) West Virginia Highlands Conservancy member. He wrote this in around 1960; Don Gasper recently came across it and passed it along. Mr. Greathouse was calling for a Roaring Plains Wilderness back then, just as the Conservancy and the Wilderness Coalition are today.

WILDERNESS PROTECTION: MR. HECHLER'S FINEST HOUR

By Ken Hechler

Of the thousands of votes I cast during my 18 years in Congress, I am proudest of my fight for the health and safety of West Virginia coal miners and protection of our natural environment, particularly my vote for the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Preserving wilderness areas under this historic law applies only to federal land, such as our Monongahela National Forest. The U.S. Forest Service, however, did not take the initiative to consider any part of the Mon for this protection. Rather, West Virginia citizens came to me with their own well-thought-out proposals. In 1970, I introduced legislation to designate the Cranberry, Otter Creek and Dolly Sods wilderness areas.

Back then, Congress enacted laws designating the three areas I proposed and two other small wilderness areas in the Mon. Yet, today, less than 9 percent of our 919,000-acre national forest enjoys this vital protection.

Now the Forest Service is revising its management plan for the Mon, proposing to open much more of the forest to logging. Yet our leading hunting, fishing and conservation groups tell me that in the draft plan the agency has again not given the idea of protecting additional wilderness areas a fair shake. Indeed, the Forest Service has completely left out some of our states best wild, roadless areas that I know Congress will judge to be eminently suitable for wilderness protection.

This is just not good enough. Every West Virginian has a stake in this important question. Wilderness areas are well-used for hunting, fishing and family enjoyment of nature. These are quiet, natural areas that West Virginians will visit and treasure for all the generations to come but only if we protect them.

Some of the special interests will try to mislead us with misinformation this is nothing new. As I told my congressional colleagues while explaining my wilderness legislation in 1970, there are always commercial exploiters eager to destroy nature for their profit. At that time, the Forest Service was proposing to allow more than half of the Otter Creek area to be logged. In 1971, I again alerted my colleagues that the once plentiful and beautiful

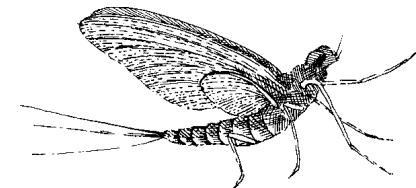
scenic areas of the East particularly West Virginia are falling prey to certain special-interest exploiters of our natural resources. I quoted an official of the highly respected Izaak Walton League of America who, addressing the proposed Cranberry wilderness area, said:

"I know I can speak for many in the league who become completely nauseated when they hear someone say, lets leave it to the experts.... In West Virginia, we would have lost recreation on the New River to the Blue Ridge project, covered the Smoke Hole with water and completely ravaged the West Virginia hills with strip mining and, yes, we would have had a policy of clearcutting on the Monongahela National Forest ... if we had left this to the experts."

So it is again time for thinking citizens of West Virginia to speak up. Tell the Forest Service to fairly consider wilderness preservation and to recommend a generous sampling of still-unprotected areas to Congress places such as Seneca Creek, Roaring Plains, East Fork Greenbrier, Cheat Mountain, Big Draft, Spice Run, additions to Cranberry and Dolly Sods, and other areas recommended in the broadly supported citizen proposal.

But don't leave it at that. Tell our senators and representatives in Washington, too. For, thanks to the Wilderness Act, they and not the Forest Service will decide the fate of our wilderness heritage on the Mon.

Mr. Hechler is a lifetime member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. He worked for President Truman in the White House, served in the House of Representatives from 1959 to 1977, and was West Virginia's Secretary of State from 1985 to 2001. For details on the citizen wilderness proposal, visit www.wvwild.org. This article originally appeared in the Charleston Gazette.





Animal Waste Management

SAVE THOSE DATES

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy winter Board Meeting	January 29
Spring Review	April 28-30
Summer Board Meeting	July 29
Fall Review and Annual Meeting	October 20-22

Locations to be announced. In the past few years, the Fall Review has been at the Cheat Mountain Club and will probably be there again this year.

Each gathering includes the quarterly Board meeting. The spring and fall reviews also include programs, outings, etc. The fall review includes the annual meeting of the organization, including the election of officers.

All members are welcome at all Board meetings whether members of the Board or not. They are free to talk, discuss, palaver, babble incessantly, debate, whatever. They just cannot make motions or vote.

BUMPER STICKERS

To get free I (heart) Mountains bumper sticker(s), send a SASE to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314. Slip a dollar donation (or more) in the SASE and get 2 bumper stickers. Businesses or organizations wishing to provide bumper stickers to their customers/members may have them free—if they can afford a donation that will be gratefully accepted. Cost to WVHC of printing and mailing is \$.25 per sticker.

Speakers Available!!!!

Does your school, church or civic group need a speaker or program presentation on a variety of environmental issues? Contact Julian Martin 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston WV 25314 or imaginemew@aol.com or 304-342-8989.

MONONGAHELA FOREST HIKING GUIDE

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

Published by the
West Virginia
Highlands Conservancy

The 7th edition covers:

more than 200 trails for over 700 miles
trail scenery, difficulty, condition, distance, elevation, access points, streams and skiing potential.

detailed topographic maps

over 50 photographs

5 wilderness Areas totaling 77,965 acres

700 miles of streams stocked with bass and trout

send \$14.95 plus \$3.00 shipping to:

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321

Or, visit our website at

www.wvhighlands.org

Compact Disc version of Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

WV Highlands Conservancy continues to bring its publications into the computer era with its latest innovation- the publication of the Electronic (CD) version of its famous Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide, **Allen Dehart, Bruce Sundquist**, 7th Edition, with maps and many other enhancements by WVHC contributor **Jim Solley**

This premier edition of MNF7, on computer disc, includes the text pages as they appear in the printed version of the 7th edition in an interactive pdf format. It also includes the following ancillary features, developed by a WVHC dedicated volunteer, and **not available anywhere else:**

- All pages and maps, or even a single page in the new Interactive CD version of the Mon hiking guide can easily be printed and carried along with you on your hike
- All new, full color topographic maps have been created and are included on this CD. They include all points referenced in the text.

Special Features not found in the printed version of the Hiking Guide:

- Interactive pdf format allows you to click on a map reference in the text, and that map centered on that reference comes up.
- Trail mileages between waypoints have been added to the maps.
- Printable, full color, 24K scale topographic maps of the entire Allegheny Trail In the Monongahela National Forest
- Printable, full color, 24K scale topographic maps of many of the popular hiking areas, including Cranberry, Dolly Sods, Otter Creek and many more

Introductory free shipping & postage offer:

All this is available to *Highlands Voice* readers for only \$20.00, including postage

To receive the latest in printable hiking trail descriptions and printable topographic trail maps send \$20.00 to:

Hiking Guide CD
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
P.O. Box 306
Charleston WV 25321

HATS FOR SALE

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy caps for sale. The cap is khaki and the pre-curved visor is forest green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in gold above the I [Heart] Mountains. The heart is red; we and mountains are black. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. \$10 by mail. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to Julian Martin, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

T SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-Shirts with the I [heart] Mountains slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. Sizes S, M, L, and XL. \$10 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:

Julian Martin
WVHC
Box 306
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

LONG SLEEVE SHIRTS

We now have I [heart] Mountains long sleeve shirts in sizes S, M, L, XL. The shirt is heavy cotton and white with blue lettering. The heart is red. \$15 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:

Julian Martin,
WVHC, Box 306,
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

BROCHURES

The Sierra Club, Citizens Coal Council, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Focus(Kentucky), Big Sandy Environmental Coalition(Kentucky), Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy have put together a new brochure entitled "Mountaintop Removal Destroys Our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!" For a copy send a self addressed stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

Quantities are available for teachers, civic and religious groups and anyone who can get them distributed.

Forest Service Releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Blackwater Canyon Trail

By Judy Rodd, Director, Friends of Blackwater.

The U. S. Forest Service has just released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Allegheny Wood Products' proposal to turn the Blackwater Canyon Trail into a commercial logging road.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statements "Preferred Alternative" would permit severe degradation of the Trail's recreational, historic and cultural resources, and allow severe damage to the habitat of rare and endangered species. Moreover, the Forest Service uses legally flawed premises to allow the timber company to use public land for private gain.

Citizens, experts and public officials who want to preserve the Blackwater Canyon Trail as a valuable public resource must speak out now! Public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement can be made until February 6, 2006. Details on how to comment may be found through the information in the accompanying box ("How to Comment"). Friends of Blackwater is also offering information on how to comment. Go to www.saveblackwater.com for more details or call Friends of Blackwater at 1-877-WV-LANDS.

A Deadly Precedent for All of our Public Land

Under both Republican and Democratic Administrations, the U.S. Forest Service has, in the past, shown a strong commitment to preserving West Virginia's unique, celebrated landscapes — like Dolly Sods, Cranberry Glades, and Seneca Rocks.

But in the case of the Canyon Trail, the Forest Service's "preferred alternative" — turning the intimate, historic footpath of the Trail into a commercial logging road — is a dramatic shift in policy.

We must fight for every inch of the Blackwater Canyon Trail — or the Forest Service will have a green light for this "private profit first" policy for all of our public land!

The Canyon Trail and the Campaign to Preserve and Protect the Blackwater Canyon

For countless millennia, the magnificent 10,000-acre Blackwater Canyon has been a pristine, magical, and majestic place — of shining, splashing waters, rocky glens, and rugged cliffs — a home to graceful creatures and complex ecosystems.

One hundred years ago, the quest for private profit dealt the Canyon a setback, as loggers

reaped their plunder. Then the Canyon began to heal, again managed for the public good for 80 years.

In 1997, negotiations began to fully protect 2,500 acres in the Canyon that were owned by a public utility. A private timber company, Allegheny Wood Products (owned by John Crites) bought the Canyon land instead.

Since 1997, citizens, public officials, and civic groups have battled to stop renewed exploitation and degradation of this land, and to return it all to public ownership and management. This campaign had significant victories, including reclaiming Lindy Point and adding 500 acres to Blackwater Falls State Park.

The strategy of the campaign to save the Blackwater Canyon is to build and sustain a powerful circle of love and commitment — that will protect the Canyon, and will move all of the Canyon land into public ownership. The battle to protect the Blackwater Canyon Trail is an important part of this overall campaign.

How long will this campaign last? The answer is simple, though the task is not: as long as is necessary! The supporters and members of Friends of Blackwater are in this fight for the long haul — and because we are, together we can be strong. Please help do your part. "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."

Meanwhile, the campaign to save the Blackwater Canyon continues on many other fronts. Friends of Blackwater's outreach programs in the Highlands are reaching new supporters. Our environmental education programs involve young people in appreciating the unique ecology of the Land of Blackwater. And we are celebrating local culture and history, and supporting green businesses in the Allegheny Highlands.

The battle for the Canyon Trail is only beginning. We have to mobilize public opinion. We must follow the Forest Service's decision process, which can be a complex one. And we may well be in court, pursuing legal alternatives.

As the New Year begins, the days are lengthening. We turn to nature, and to each other, in love and appreciation and friendship. We are nourished in our spirits and mind by the great gifts of the universe. May your New Year be one in which you receive these gifts. Thanks for your support of this important effort.

How to Comment

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Allegheny Wood Products Easement has been posted to the Monongahela National Forest website at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/environmental/environmental_index.htm

The Public Comment Letter is also posted at this site. It gives details on how to comment, including the addresses for sending comments and the number of the person to call for more information.

You will find these document posted toward the bottom of the page under NEPA Documents.

If you do not have internet access, here is essential information on commenting:

Comments may be mailed to:

Clyde Thompson, Supervisor,
Monongahela National Forest
200 Sycamore Street
Elkins, West Virginia, 26241.

Send electronic comments to comments-eastern-monongahela-potomac@fs.fed.us. Electronic comments should say Allegheny Wood Products Easement EIS in the subject line. The acceptable formats for electronic comments include Microsoft Word documents (.doc) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). Faxed comments should be sent to (304) 637-0582, or provide comments by phone to Bill Shields, NEPA Coordinator, at (304) 636-1800 ext. 287. Hand-deliver comments between the hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, at the Supervisor's Office in Elkins, West Virginia.

For additional information, please contact Bill Shields, Project Team Leader, Monongahela National Forest, 200 Sycamore Street, Elkins, WV 26241; (304) 636-1800, ext 287

Join Now !!!

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Membership categories (circle one)

	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Org</u>
Senior	\$15		
Student/	\$15		
Introductory/ Other	\$15		
Regular	\$25	\$35	\$50
Associate	\$50	\$75	\$100
Sustaining	\$100	\$150	\$200
Patron	\$250	\$250	\$500
Mountaineer	\$500	\$750	\$1,000

Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Working to Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful!

More About "Clean Coal" (Continued from p. 1)

These valley fills have buried or negatively impacted over 1,200 miles of Appalachian streams so far. Valley fills often fail, causing damage to nearby homes and streams. The coal is extracted layer by layer, and then coal companies "reclaim" the land by coating it with a thin layer of topsoil substitute and nonnative grass seed. Over 600 square miles of West Virginia's mountains have been leveled this way.

The barren land, devoid of trees, undergrowth, topsoil, and natural drainage, sheds rainwater to create catastrophic floods. A dozen people have been killed in recent years, and hundreds of homes destroyed or damaged. West Virginia recently led the nation in FEMA relief, relief that rarely covers damages to homes and land. People whose families have lived in the same area for hundreds of years have been displaced, adding cultural devastation to the physical devastation.

The coal is prepared for market in processing plants that use a mysterious mix of chemicals to remove impurities. The washed-out heavy metals and cleaning compounds are stored in multibillion-gallon toxic waste ponds—sludge dams—placed precariously above homes, communities, and schools. One of these dams failed at Buffalo Creek, WV, in 1972, killing 125 people. Another failed in Kentucky in 2000, polluting over 100 miles of streams, killing 1.6 million fish, and destroying water supplies for 27,000 people. Over 150 of these dams threaten the residents of southern West Virginia, including the 230 students at Marsh Fork Elementary School attending class 400 yards from a seeping, 2.8 billion-gallon dam. These students also breathe coal dust from the coal silo loading trains 220 feet from their school. The list of problems goes on and on.

As friends and allies in the defense of Earth and all Humanity, we ask you to heed our call. All of us who care about the health of our children and our planet must identify, challenge, and eliminate the oxymoron "clean coal" when we see or hear it. We invite you to join our fight against those who plunder our planet and poison our children. Join us in fighting mountaintop removal, fighting dirty coal power plants, and supporting renewable energy. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Janice Nease, Executive Director
Coal River Mountain Watch

Hugh says more about antidegradation (continued from p. 2)

in order to build on their property."

Landowners who looked at the regulations learned that they simply prohibit "significant degradation" of Tier 2.5 streams, which is defined in terms of baseline water quality and capacity to assimilate pollutants. Specific leeway is allowed for four common measures of pollution: dissolved oxygen, pH, fecal coliform, and temperature. (The regs are on the Secretary of State's web site, wvsos.com, at 60 CSR 5-5.)

A farmer who wanted to build a house with a decent septic system (or better, a composting toilet) wouldn't be affected at all. A farmer who wanted to build a housing development with a package plant that would discharge pollutants into the stream—well, he'd be affected. But then, he'd be affected even if his stream were downgraded to Tier 2, or Tier 1 for that matter. There is no right to pollute. (Not without a permit, anyway.)

Tier 2.5 won't add a new layer of bureaucracy and it won't subtract from rural economic development. It does promise to keep our clean water clean.

In these parlous times, it's too much to hope that all landowners along the streams on this list would feel both complimented and encouraged by the designation. But there are hopeful signs. A group of Preston County landowners, assisted by the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, used the public nomination process of the antidegradation regulations to gain Tier 2.5 protection for the stream they share, Watkins Run. Good health to them!



America's Wild Woodlands

Thick smoke blasted from the locomotive's stack, 20-foot-high plumes that churned the tree branches arching above. The long wail of the whistle punctuated the chugga-chugga heartbeat of the old Shay steam engine. We had left Cass, West Virginia, the train laboring on the slow climb up 4,842-foot Bald Knob. Leaning out from a converted railcar that once carried logs along these same tracks, I could almost touch young maples, oaks, cherries, and basswoods now growing here. My ride was part of a journey that would take me to the hardwood forests of the southeastern highlands, a portion of the vast woodlands that cloaked eastern North America when the earliest settlers stepped ashore.

The forests of this region escape sharp definition. Though dominated by broadleaf trees, they are not always strictly deciduous, nor easily typed by species. In lush cove hardwood forests, for instance, perhaps 25 species may thrive with no one species predominating. If one word of description were to suffice it would have to be *variety*. The story of these woodlands is also one of devastation, and of rebirth.

At the turn of the century many of the southern Appalachian forests were networked with railroads like the Cass. The northern forests were depleted, so timbermen moved on to these less accessible trees. "If a single technological cause—oh, hell, *villain*—is to be nominated for what happened to America's forests during the late 19th century, the Shay Engine is as good a scapegoat as can be found," writes one author. The powerfully geared Shay, along with more efficient saws at the mills, spelled doom for these virgin forests. The museums at Cass display the accoutrements of early loggers—hobnail boots, crosscut saws, beat-up hats with nicks in the brim, each cut marking a day's work. Men once spent months in the woods here for \$2 a day.

The Cass railroad took millions of board feet of timber out of these hills. From Black Mountain, to the southwest of Cass, I looked down into the Cranberry Wilderness, once again heavily forested. The wilderness encompasses 35,864 acres in the Monongahela National Forest in eastern West Virginia. It was hard to imagine the chaos that must have filled this now tranquil valley, the din of saws and locomotives, of mental on metal, of 400-year-old trees crashing to the ground.

This is the Allegheny region of the Ap-

palachians. "You're saying it wrong," I was told, "the word Appalachia." A man in Richwood, near the Cranberry, finally explained. "You know, it's what Eve said to Adam—I'll throw an apple-at-cha!" Thus educated, I joined Forest Service wildlife biologist Donna Hollingsworth and



her husband, Gary, one foggy June morning for a walk in the Cranberry.

We followed an old railroad bed through red spruce and yellow birch. Where the trail narrowed and skirted large boulders and rocks, Donna pointed out a striped maple. "It's called moosewood farther north. A lot of species here, particularly at higher elevations, also grow where I'm from—Wisconsin. Here's mountain maple, another northern type. They're scrawnier here. But the black cherry trees are giants." Here, too, flourished such typical southerners as sweet gums and Fraser magnolias.

Donna picked out the metallic song of a veery and then the whistling cry of a red-eyed vireo. We heard the distant staccato of a woodpecker. Donna spotted a thin wisp of down from a grouse chick. Gary, a native of the area, also picked up animal signs: here a turkey had scratched; there a deer had browsed. "There's a stump the bears have been working over for grubs," he said.

In a way, Donna looks at a forest in terms of how it will sustain "her" wild creatures. Though the population management of the animals is actually under state control, Donna is responsible for their habitat here. She encourages food sources like fruit and nut trees. "I ask the timber specialists to favor the beeches and oaks for the mast—the acorns and nuts—they produce." Wild turkey, squirrel, and black

bear abound in this deep hardwood forest. Black bear particularly. "We call the bears 'garbage guts,'" Donna said. "They'll eat anything." The region supports one of the largest bear populations in the East.

Since 1967, the Cranberry area has been a sanctuary for the bears, but the animals are hunted heavily nearby. Perhaps a hundred animals a year are killed in the national forest. Donna thinks the present estimated population of nearly 550 may not be viable at that rate of hunting. She calculates, through a complex series of formulas, that about 700 bears are needed to maintain a healthy, stable population in the Monongahela. But bears, and hunting in general, are political subjects in this region. It's difficult to get hunting quotas lowered. And, Donna thinks, timber harvesting activities may further disrupt prime bear habitat and lower the population levels.

We switched back and forth down a steep slope. Beech leaves carpeted the trail in coppery brown. We

nibbled on the astringent leaves of wood sorrel. Ramps in bloom showed little white seedpods. Ramps. No other forest plant causes the stir raised by this eminently pungent member of the lily family. Spring in West Virginia brings ramp feeds at churches, fire departments, Moose clubs. It's a time, a local teacher told me, when kids who've been eating the odorous wild garlic are sent home from school. Doctors post signs: "If you've been eating ramps, go someplace else." Some say the phenomenon stems from a craving for the first greens that appear after a long winter.

Chester Carden dug up a ramp bulb with his pocketknife. "As soon as you can see 'em pushing up through the snow, you can smell 'em cooking in Richwood." I declined Chester's offer of a taste. For me one whiff was enough. A wiry outdoors-man, Chester grew up in these woods. To him, ramps represent a kind of initiation for newcomers. One time, he told me, he persuaded two young women from New York to try some before they headed home. "I figured they'd get kicked off the airplane over Washington, D.C.!" he said with a chuckle.

Before retiring, Chester spent 24 years in the Cranberry with the Forest Service. "I worked like I owned it," he said. "If I saw muddy water filling a stream, going into our water sup-

Continued on p. 11

More Wild Woodlands (Continued from p. 10)

ply, I'd just walk upstream to find out where it was coming from. I've closed timber cutters down for cutting too close to the creek."

One morning we headed along a trail Chester had built around the Cranberry Glades. At first we followed an old railroad right-of-way. Chester's father had worked here on the railroad and in the logging camps. "First locomotive I ever heard in these hills," Chester told me, "I wondered how did they get that thing up on the mountain. Back when I was a kid, they'd bring one big log out on a car—had to use dynamite to split it." We headed into deep forest, where there were a few big trees, black cherries, yellow birches, maples and beeches, left by loggers who had high-graded, or cut selectively.



Chester said he had made most of the signs that mark the trails and roads in the Cranberry. They are neat brown signs with white lettering and barbed wire on the edges. Barbed wire! Yes, apparently the bears eat the signs. Even with the wire, we found some unreadable, with great hunks bitten out. Some think the bears like the taste of the paint. I prefer to believe they just want to confuse interlopers in their territory.

Nature has healed many scars in the Cranberry—scars left by logging, erosion, and the scorching fires that swept through tinder-dry slash, often ignited by sparks from machines. But one fire in the 1930s burned with such intensity on Black Mountain that the very soil—centuries worth of rich humus—burned right down to bedrock. Standing on the high ridge where the fire had been, I could see a rocky expanse where laurel, elderberry, and blueberry bushes were making a valiant attempt in the long process of rebuilding a devastated forest.

Ramps may provide amusement for Chester Carden, but Ed Buck credits the pungent herb in part for his 82 healthy years. "The Good Lord, the outdoors, and ramps have been kind to me!" he says. Spry, with a quick wit to match, and white hair and beard worthy of Santa Claus, Ed continues to roam the woods—to fish, hunt, and trap, and to show visitors like me the wonders of the Cranberry. Ed had seen that great fire up on Black Mountain in the thirties. He was an environmentalist before it was fashionable. In Richwood High School, where he taught biology, he formed a conservation club. He has remained concerned about the welfare of the Cranberry and the whole Monongahela.

At the 750-acre Cranberry Glades Botanical Area, adjacent to the wilderness, Ed and I cut through alders, choke-cherry, yellow birch, and shoulder-high ferns. We walked on a boardwalk that bridges the unstable glades—the local name for a bog. The glades, it is thought, began to form about 10,000 years ago following the Ice Age, which had forced many northern species southward. Uneven erosion from streams and springs trapped water in a kind of basin. Then layer upon layer of sphagnum mosses and lichens built up until the bog reached 12 feet deep in places. I gingerly stepped off the wooden walkway onto the spongy mat of plant material. Clear water quickly filled the indentation my foot made.

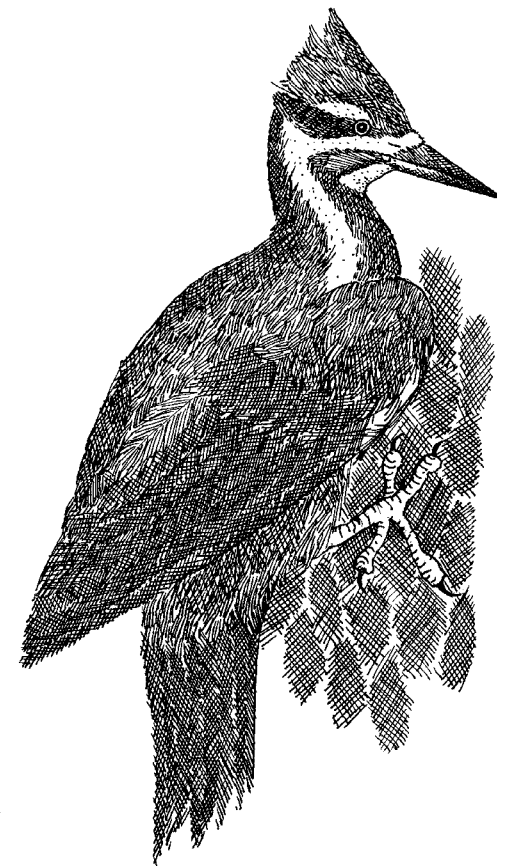
Plentiful precipitation, high elevation, and a cool climate combined to make this basin a refuge for northern species even after the Ice Age ended. Ed pointed out lichens—reindeer moss and old-man's

beard. There were two kinds of cranberries, the largest plant measuring only eight inches high, bog rosemary, and orchids such as grass pink and rose pogonia. The glades look a lot like parts of Alaska, Ed told me, a state where he has spent some time.

Ed's full name is Edward Theodore Buck. "I'm a great admirer of Theodore Roosevelt. I'm named for him," he said. And he certainly admires the role the 26th President had in preserving and restoring America's forests.

As early as the mid-19th century, awareness was growing that America's natural resources were being diminished. By the last decades of the century, conservationists such as John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Teddy Roosevelt, along with other citizens, were concerned that something be done to protect our woodland areas. Finally, in 1891, Congress authorized the withdrawal of certain lands from the public domain. These forest reserves, however, were in the West, where much of the land was still under federal control. But the remaining eastern forests were under siege as well.

President Roosevelt was aware of the problem. In 1901 he wrote of the southern Appalachians: "These are the heaviest and most beautiful hard-wood forests of the continent...species from east and west, from north and south mingle in a growth of unparalleled richness and variety." Roosevelt understood the connection between the denuding of the land and the violent floods plaguing the East. A devastating flood, partly originating in the Monongahela watershed, swept down on Pittsburgh in 1907. This disaster and others spurred the passing of the Weeks Act in 1911, which gave the federal government, under the guise of protecting the "navigability of navigable streams," the right to acquire and rehabilitate forests and farmlands in eastern watersheds.



This is an excerpt from a beautiful 200 page picture book It is reprinted with permission from America's Wild Woodlands.

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A personal note by Don Gasper: Ed Buck was a legend in his own time and remains so today. As a high school biology teacher and writer, this independent outdoorsman influences many generations.

Chester Carden was much more than a care-taker of The Forest. (Each Ranger District thinks of it as Their Forest.) He was a research assistant as he collected stream water samples and ran tests. He measured stream channel widths, and off and on helped me with some fishery work. I was privileged to have known, a little, these two men.

JOHN KILLORAN REMEMBERED

By Dave Elkinton

John Patrick Killoran, aged 68, of Eagle River, Alaska, died suddenly at his home on August 19, 2005. Although an Alaska resident for many years, he had played a key role in the earliest years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. Unfortunately, neither his obituary in the Charleston Gazette on August 24, 2005, nor one in The Log Train, published by the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Association, included his Conservancy ties.

John Killoran, and his former wife, Carolyn, were involved in the founding of the Conservancy. At that time he served as Assistant Chief of State Parks, under veteran Chief, Kermit McKeever. John had come up through the ranks, beginning as assistant superintendent at Watoga State Park. He was extremely instrumental in the development of the Cass Scenic Railroad. In later years, he became Executive Director of the West Virginia Railroad Maintenance Authority, and Chief Operating Officer of the South Branch Valley Railroad.

Early Conservancy members may remember John as the organizer of the 1970 Fall Review based in Richwood. Tours of the Cranberry Backcountry, the Highlands Scenic Highway, and

other mid-state areas marked the first Fall Review outside the Tucker/Grant/Pendleton counties region. He was an advocate that the Conservancy take an activist role throughout the entire highlands region.

John Killoran was born in Ronceverte January 17, 1937, grew up in Lewisburg, graduated from the Greenbrier Military Academy, and graduated from Marshall University, with a degree in journalism. He was a US Army and West Virginia National Guard veteran, retiring with the rank of major.

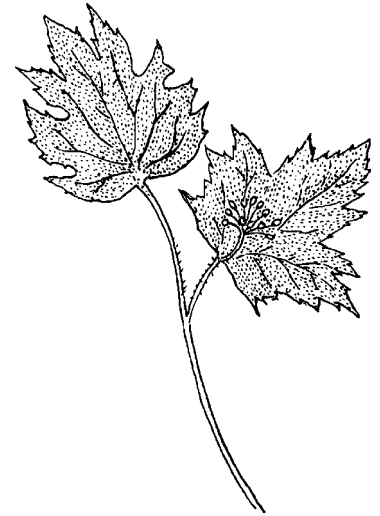
In addition to his role in the development of the Conservancy, he is credited with helping found the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society, the West Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association. As a life-long railroad historian, he traveled the nation widely, gathering research materials, and documenting the end of steam operations and logging. He authored two books on Cass, as well as numerous articles and otherwise promoted railroads and their history.

He left West Virginia to take a management role with the Alaska Railroad as it made the transition from federal to state ownership, and later served

as director of public affairs for the Alaska District of the US Army Corps of Engineers, retiring in April 2005, after 18 years with the Corps.

Survivors include his wife of 32 years, Nancy; daughters Molly and Megan, and a son Patrick.

(Grateful credit to both The Charleston Gazette and The Log Train, Nov 2005 issue)



SLUDGE SAFETY OR BLACK WATER BINGO?

By Vivian Stockman, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

If you drink water, take note.

There are hundreds of coal sludge impoundments in Appalachia. These impoundments hold the heavy-metal- and toxic-chemical-laden waste that is left over from prepping coal for market. Waste from coal prep plants that doesn't end up in impoundments is either "spilled" directly into streams or injected into old underground mines. One way or another, a significant portion of the billions of gallons of sludge generated ends up in groundwater, well water, surface water—that is, drinking water. It really is true that we all live downstream.

And wouldn't you know it—coal sludge impoundments are not necessary. Alternatives do exist, but they cost more. By using impoundments, sludge injection and sloppy practices that make for frequent blackwater spills, coal companies get to externalize their costs onto us, while maximizing their profits. Whether they come to us as contaminated groundwater and possible slow chemical poisoning, or flash floods of sludge, externalized costs are higher than the costs of dealing with the waste before it seeps or surges into our water.

During the Legislative Session, please support the efforts of the Sludge Safety Project. Check out this collaborative effort of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Coal River Mountain Watch and concerned citizens of Mingo County at www.sludgesafety.org.

