

The

Highlands Voice

SENECA ROCKS

Vol. 1, No. 5

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

October 1969

PRESIDENT'S COMMENT

The Fifth Annual Highlands Weekend Review is past history and two things impressed me while I was enjoying the activities and the beautiful autumn weather in the mountains.

First: The Conservancy is growing. We are growing not alone in numbers but in concern, in cooperation. I have people asking me now: How can my talents be used to accomplish the Conservancy's goals? Biologists, writers, photographers, attorneys at law, all are now contributing their professional skills to make our program work, and to preserve something of the pristine beauty of this state for future generations.

I urge that each of our members consider themselves a one man membership committee. Recruit your friends, send their address to our membership chairman; Mrs. John Killoran 1605-D Quarrier St., Charleston, W. Va., and they will receive our beautiful brochure describing our program and the benefits of belonging to our organization.

Secondly: I was almost overwhelmed by the wilderness beauty of the Otter Creek valley, it is an area to which I will return many times in the coming years. Our hike, which was led by Sayre Rodman, attracted one-hundred-nineteen people including our Secretary of State, John D. Rockefeller, IV and his wife. Also in attendance was Angus Peyton, former Commissioner of Commerce, and Mrs. Peyton. Everyone I talked to including the two leaders just mentioned agreed that Otter Creek was easily the most beautiful natural area in the State.

The Conservancy is preparing a program to meet the problems and threats in this lovely 18,000 acre retreat and you will be hearing more about it elsewhere in the Highlands Voice. I hope that every member will lend his hand to help us save the "Valley of Opportunity."

Tom King

HIGHLANDS REVIEW '69

Beautiful Indian summer weather, the beginning of plans for action based on understanding, and meaningful dialog between conservationists and local landowners characterized the fifth annual Highlands Review. Attendance was down considerably considering that more than twice the number of people present this year appeared in '67 when the weather was bad, but perhaps more was gained from this year's effort.

Elsewhere you have read of the spectacular Otter Creek hike. Although the Spruce Knob hike was cancelled, those held on Red Creek and Cabin Mountain proceeded as scheduled. The excursion into Cave Mountain went off well, the climbers covered Seneca Rocks, and about 20 rafts drifted through the beautiful Trough, while those that resist organized activity communed with Nature in many other individual ways. Somewhere near 200 were served delicious barbecued chicken and about 100 attended the Saturday night dialog and exhibits. Only about 20 die hards were on hand for the Sunday morning workshop.

Friday night saw the arrival of some of the Board of Directors for a meeting called at the pavilion. Some of the major issues were discussed notably Otter Creek and Cranberry Backcountry resolutions. A resolution concerning the former was passed and appears elsewhere in this newsletter. While a decision on clear cutting practices was delayed for further study. Details of this matter were circulated to you recently.

The most interesting event of the weekend occurred when Mr. George Ours of Petersburg and Mr. George Trumbo from Onego presented the landowners' side of the NRA land acquisition methods for the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks area. In particularly eloquent statements, these men recounted the bumbling inefficiency in which the Forest Service began its land acquisition in 1965. In unemotional arguments, these men presented their predicaments and pointed out how conservationists unwittingly have created further problems for them. The next speaker was Tony Dorrell, Superintendent of the Monongahela National Forest. Stepping right into the middle of this controversy early last spring, the new superintendent found himself in a tough spot. Following the statements of Messrs. Ours and Trumbo, Mr. Dorrell's could only be diplomatic and perhaps to some, unsatisfactory. As one charged with carrying out government plans, he is obliged to execute them as messed up as they have already been made. Dorrell pointed out that by far most of the landowners had settled amicably and the audience was left with the impression that Dorrell would have liked to have been able to say to Seneca Rocks owner Mr. Buck Harper and others who have been treated unfairly "Let's forget all that has happened and start over," but his hands are tied. In earlier action at the Board meeting, Duquesne law professor Bob Broughton was designated to testify in behalf of Mr. Harper later this fall during condemnation proceedings in Elkins. During the lengthy discussion which followed, Vic Schmidt summed up the general conclusion that our present condemnation procedures are obsolete and fail to take

into account the special qualities of lands like Seneca Rocks.

Sunday morning witnessed the initiation of a new event, a Highlands Workshop. The two originally scheduled conferences on wild lands and scenic rivers were combined into one due to the poor attendance. Those that participated with an open mind became acquainted with other points of view and realized some of the underlying reasons for some of our problems. It was felt that such a discussion would be quite beneficial to a larger audience.

IMPRESSIONS: Why must everyone talk at once at the Board meetings? . . . An agenda committee would be a big help in preparing for such meetings . . . Pounds and pounds of shiny, new one inch roofing nails scattered all along the highway and parking lots . . . Many people enjoying, very few protecting . . . So much to do, so few to do it . . . Too much argument, not enough agreement . . . Special plaudits to Bob Harrigan for acting as general chairman for the affair, to Jim Moorman for organizing the workshop, to Marji Schmidt for such a great job of arranging the attractive members' exhibits and to the valuable services rendered by Max and Sona Smith at the Information Center (see below) while everyone else was "doing their thing." . . . A back of the gauntlet to the float trip outfitter who refused to let a pair of canoeists accompany the Trough party and to the Yellow Peril riders noisily in evidence during the workshop.

SUGGESTION FOR '70: In view of decreasing attendance and interest in the Highlands Review being held in the Seneca Rocks area and in view of the situation in Richwood, why not hold the Review in Richwood next year? The Cranberry Backcountry, Summit Lake, Big Rock, the Glades, and the Cranberry Mountain Visitor Center are only a few of the many local attractions. Let's have some discussion on this point.

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INFORMATION PLEASE

Acting as Dr. I.Q. at Mouth-of-Seneca during the Highlands Review were Max and Sona Smith. Stemming from a Smith idea from the previous year, this year's information "booth" was quite a production. Mr. and Mrs. James Breathed of Petersburg donated the use of their trailer which was conveniently located at the triangle in Mouth-of-Seneca. The Petersburg Garden Club "womanned" the booth and, according to Max, moved a mountain of literature on the Highlands, the Conservancy, and its affiliates.

Maps of the area's attractions were on display along with numerous brochures. Many people driving through stopped simply to see what was going on. Some of those who did this last year came back to take part in this year's activities. Max and Sona want to thank the Breatheds, the Petersburg Garden Club, Mary Rieffenberger, and Carolyn Killoran for all of their assistance.

**CLEARCUTTING AND THE GAULEY DISTRICT OR
LET'S NOT WIDEN OUR CREDIBILITY GAP**

Your frazzled editor has been listening and reading much about the horrid, nasty, awful practice of clearcutting for several months particularly in the Gauley Ranger District. Thinking that only an international plot to detree us could raise this much hell, he decided to look into it. His findings follow:

Clearcutting or even-aged management quite simply put is the harvest of all trees over 2" in diameter on a given patch of land. Of our commercially available hardwoods, only sugar maple and beech are shade-tolerant. Red and white oaks, yellow birch, white ash, and red maple are intermediate in their shade tolerance while yellow poplar, black cherry, paper birch, and black walnut all need full sunlight to regenerate and thrive - a condition that only clearcutting can provide. Hence this system of timber management and harvest is based upon scientific observations and not on making it easier for the timber man to do his job. If we want to perpetuate what we are famous for, namely an incredibly varied source of mixed hardwoods, then clearcutting seems to be just what the doc ordered.

But they are going to strip all of the trees off of our hills! Well let us take a look, sharpen our pencils and start figgerin'. Let's examine three recent timber sales and see how they are going to be cut according to contract agreements that will be enforced by the U.S. Forest Service.

<u>Area of Sale</u>	<u>Total Size in Acres</u>	<u>Acres to be Clearcut</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Adkins Rockhouse	1045	181	17.3
Mill Run and Twins	3450	900	26
Little Fork	3750	212	6

If we take a look at the Adkins Rockhouse sale in more detail we find that the area to be clearcut has been divided up into five separate plots of 15 to 80 (avg. 35) acres each. The maximum allowance for a plot is 100 acres and each plot over 20 acres must not be closer than 660 feet to an adjacent plot. The total area to be clearcut represents 17.3% of the total. This entire site will be re-examined in 10 years and another clearcut made in Adkins Rockhouse in 15 to 20 years. This will average out to be a clearcut of only 1%/year. There are 160,000 acres in the Gauley District of which only 1200 acres are allowed to be clearcut in a given year. To clearcut the entire district would take 130 years at this 1200 acre/year rate which is more than a safe margin when informed estimates calculate that it takes 80-100 years for a stand of timber to mature.

Below appear the actual clearcut acreages in the Gauley District for the last six fiscal years.

1964	860	
1965	1269	
1966	940	This averages out at 1142
1967	1447	acres/year. Note that there
1968	1372	is no general increase trend
1969	965	as has been claimed.

There has also been a similar acreage each year devoted to selective cutting.

Now before we leave this scene for a moment, pause to consider the Little Fork sale. Note that the clearcut area is only 6% of the total. This site will contain 237 acres that will be selectively cut, but by proper management procedures it should be clearcut. The reason it will not be clearcut is because the site is in view from Three Forks of Williams River, a popular camping and fishing spot. Please note that no conservation organization or chamber of commerce forced the Forest Service to do this which seems to indicate that esthetic values are indeed considered by this agency on their own volition.

If clearcutting is to be the major system of timber management it will mean that fewer roads will be needed in a given district as opposed to the network required for selective thinning. Fewer roads mean less soil erosion. It has been proven that clearcutting is beneficial to the production of habitat for deer and wild turkey. The only wildlife hardships would occur to den tree dwelling species such as squirrels and raccoons. In the first place an entire 80 acre plot would not be levelled in one day and secondly the maximum distance an animal would have to travel to find forest sanctuary would be only 330 feet. Old obvious den trees are spared since they are not good timber trees anyway.

In summation, I cannot find any evidence to substantiate the claims that the Forest Service is lousing up our timber, that clearcutting is a bad practice, or even that it should not be used as the major system of timber management in the Gauley District.

Where conservation organizations and the Forest Service will differ however, will be in regard to the management of the Cranberry Backcountry. Conservationists want this area to be managed as a Wilderness, but the Forest Service thinks that 53,000 acres is too big of an area to take out of timber production. The Forest Service doesn't believe that anyone other than some occasional hunters or their own surveyors actually penetrate the backcountry and use the trails (see August newsletter, p. 5). They think that of all of the people who use the area, over 90% never go further than 100 feet

from the Glades, trout streams, or campgrounds. They don't know of people like the Broughtons, Rodmans, and Schmidts whose trails have crisscrossed vast areas of West Virginia for years. They haven't heard of Charlie Carlson's Kanawha Trails Club who know the Backcountry as well as their back yards. Although the Forest Service certainly knows who Helen McGinnis is by this time, they probably do not appreciate how much she uses and improves such trails. The Forest Service is probably totally ignorant of the many trips made by comparative newcomers to the state such as Ray Weiss and Herb Eckert.

Perhaps the conservationists are partly at fault for not advertising their efforts more and letting the Forest Service know of their activities in these areas. The theme of the '69 Highlands Review seemed to be to establish dialog between parties of seemingly opposing views. Let conservation organizations sit down with Forest Service officials and discuss wilderness use made by our respective members instead of blindly demanding moratoria on timber harvests. Readers who would like to learn more about clearcutting may write the Monongahela Superintendent's office in Elkins for a free booklet, Forests for the Future. If you think this is propaganda seek out Norm Arsenault (4 Cherry St., Richwood, W. Va. 26261) as I have done and as I have suggested in our very first newsletter and have him explain just what, where, and how much timber is being harvested in the Gauley. Norm is a forester and a conservationist, but nobody's stooge. He wouldn't remain in the Forest Service's employ if there were any truth to the many rumors now circulating about clearcutting in the Gauley. Conservationists or anybody else observing what they believe to be abuses or unlawful practices by individual loggers are requested to notify the Forest Service and report the offenses. Anyone believing that they have cogent arguments against any of the above are invited to submit them to the editor. Hopefully we can resolve this issue and make it more clearcut (ouch!).

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A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

Announcement by the Administration that funds totalling \$761 million will be allocated for the production of two prototype SST aircraft unavoidably raises the question of how we decide on national priorities. The decision to proceed with the 300 passenger, 1800 supersonic transport appears to have been made for one principle reason - we "want to continue to lead the world in air transport," the Administration said.

The British-French "Concorde," a smaller and somewhat slower SST, has already flown as has a Soviet version. The American prototype is scheduled to fly late in 1972. It is felt, however, that airlines will hold off purchases and wait for America's SST because of its greater carrying capacity, longer range and higher speed,

and to preserve a favorable balance of payments in the international scene.

The form letter response of the Bureau of the Budget to any inquiry about expenditures for America's crucial environmental problems stresses inflation and the need for belt-tightening. The SST, and its more than three quarters of a billion cost, apparently would have no such influence on the inflationary economy.

It is pointed out that the SST will permit us to fly to Europe and to Tokyo in 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Wonderful! That's hardly more time than it takes millions of workers to commute to and from their jobs in the city. The problem of the sonic boom is dismissed with assurance that the SST will fly mostly across oceans and when over land will throttle down to subsonic speeds. Thus, the SST will mean little to the great mass of citizens who travel by air. It will, however, chip a few hours off the travel time of the jetset on their junkets to the Spas of Europe, the ski slopes of New Zealand, their safaris in Africa, and shopping trips to Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the same Administration has told us that there will be no new badly needed park and recreation areas for us stay-at-home clods. And, the major park and recreation development essential to environmental improvement in our crowded cities must wait until the Vietnam War is ended.

SST expenditures will protect the jobs of 25,000 employees of Boeing Aircraft, General Electric and numberless sub-contractors. We have no quarrel with that. However, it must be pointed out that construction of sewage treatment facilities, air pollution control devices, and a host of other production and service activities valued in environmental quality projects also protect and expand jobs.

Congress, in expanding and earmarking the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the programs it finances, established some national priorities, which is its constitutional prerogative. The Bureau of the Budget - that "super-Congress", as a ranking Republican representative called it - sets its own priorities, like the SST.

A WILDERNESS IS A WILDERNESS IS A WILDERNESS

There has been a little confusion concerning our various ad hoc committees working on wilderness problems. It (the work, not the confusion) began with Helen McGinnis' prodigious work on Dolly Sods and sort of grew from there. As early as May of this year George Langford called a meeting (see the second and third newsletter) from the general membership for anyone interested in wilderness preservation in the Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, and Cranberry areas. This meeting was held on the weekend of July 19-20 and another on August 23-24 although earlier meetings had been held among known interested parties. Membership on this committee is not fixed and to name everyone who has played a role in all of the work accomplished so far would be difficult. This is the committee the editor has been and will be calling the "wilderness committee."

In August a new ad hoc committee was formed to deal with the Cranberry Backcountry specifically. Founded by Jim Johnston, the committee consists of Zip Little, Keith Taylor, Charles Carlson, and the ubiquitous Helen McGinnis. Bill McNeel, a new member, has indicated he would like to help this group which serves as a reminder that both committees welcome new help. Don't wait to be asked - volunteer. This committee will be referred to as the "Cranberry Committee" for simplicity.

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WILL THERE BE A CHRISTMAS IN MT. STORM?

Alert Conservancy member Charles Morrison of Hagerstown, Maryland forwarded information concerning recent "developments" in the Panhandle. In August, reports were received from Christmas tree farms in the area that something was damaging and killing many of their trees. The damage began to show up after the first of two generating units of the Virginia Electric Power Company's (VEPCO) Stoney River plant near Mt. Storm. A third unit is also planned and each unit burns 5000 tons of coal a day!

A quick calculation with a pencil turns up some astonishing figures. If we assume the coal to bear 2% sulfur, there would be 2% x 15,000 or 300 tons of sulfur burnt per day. When the sulfur is oxidized to sulfur dioxide (two oxygens have approximately the same weight as one sulfur), we see that 600 tons of sulfur dioxide will be generated per day! Now not all of the sulfur will be converted to sulfur dioxide. Some will be converted to the trioxide form which is even more toxic and some will remain behind in the ash. We can be very liberal and reduce the above figure of 600 tons by 10%, but that still leaves us with a bodacious amount of air pollution right at the edge of Canaan Land.

What does VEPCO do with this power? It is converted to electrical energy and "wired" to east coast consumers. The major

cities of the eastern seaboard cannot tolerate anymore air pollution, so apparently they figure that if you burn 15,000 tons of coal per day in the West Virginny boondocks, nobody will care. Take a compass (dividers) and set it to equal say 20 miles. Next draw a circle with only a 20 mile radius around Mt. Storm and see what will be SO₂ed: Keyser, The Trough, Moorefield, Petersburg, Smokehole Caverns, Canaan Valley State Park, Blackwater Falls, Cathedral State Park, and of course Dolly Sods not to mention Deep Creek, Swallow Falls, and the Savage River in Maryland. What's that? You say that it will all be diluted by the fresh mountain air? Have you ever been to Luke, Md., home of the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company? For openers, take a look at the denuded mountain behind the mill and look for a green leaf if you can find one that has survived the noxious fumes. And the smell! You can smell the distinctive odor with your own little honker in Cumberland, Keyser, Fort Ashby, and points east. When the wind is from the east, you can even smell it in Morgantown!

Now getting back to the Christmas trees. Plant pathologists (tree doctors) were called in and the initial statements made by them were contradictory. The West Virginia Air Pollution Control Commission and the U.S. Public Health Service were also called in. An on-site meeting was held September 16-18 and the VEPCO sources were examined as well as the tree damage. Finally the assemblage made an overflight of the area. The PHS is currently making a report, but as of this writing (October 27), no statement has been made. The W.Va. Air Pollution Control Commission is holding off until the PHS statement is released.

Since this involves interstate matters the PHS could conceivably require abatement action. VEPCO has already been required to make changes in their stacks to handle the fly ash which at one time created a terrible problem. This is pretty much under control at present or at least much reduced.

The exact cause of the damage has not yet been determined. This does not mean that no one cares, however. In addition to the previously mentioned agencies, plant experts from the Universities of Maryland, West Virginia, and Penn State are studying the damage. In addition, personnel from the U.S. Forest Service's Experiment Station at Delaware, Ohio have been involved. Because of this, the Department of Agriculture has funded a study of the problem, so people do care. Yes Virginia, (or Maryland) there is a Santa Claus.

In discussing the matter with conservationist and air pollution damage expert Charles Baer, we learned that the addition of the third plant in Canaan Valley will not only begin to show effects on vegetation in Canaan Valley, but also Dolly Sods. One of the reasons that a firm statement cannot be made on the current damage is due to the unnatural amount of ozone that is also in the area and the experts cannot locate its source. Dr. Baer points out that such air pollution sources as VEPCO's are only a signal of what is to come, unless . . . ?

July 4, 1972, Blackwater Falls - Hundreds of visitors turned away disappointed during the long, holiday weekend when smog prevented the sightseers from catching a glimpse of the spectacular falls.

December 25, 1975, Keyser - Keyser families faced with live Christmas tree shortages for several years have been gradually converting to artificial aluminum trees. Most families require three such trees over the holiday season or else completely enclose the tree in cellophane due to the corrosive effects of the atmosphere. There is however, plenty of electricity available for the variegated strings of light used to decorate the metallic forest.

October 10-11, 1984, Dolly Rocks - The 20th annual Highlands Weekend Review was held this past weekend. Resolutions were passed requesting the U.S. Quarry Service to prohibit intensive rock busting and gravel production in and around the area of Bear Rocks. One of the few remaining areas in the eastern U.S. not covered with concrete, the Bear Rocks area shows what the earth looked like before it was covered with tree and plant pollution. A highlight of the weekend occurred when a small moss was seen growing from a crack of an otherwise unblemished rock. A quick thinking Boy Scout promptly gassed the offensive intruder with his SO₂ extinguisher.

OTTER CREEK - VALLEY OF OPPORTUNITY

So titled is the attractive brochure prepared by Vic Schmidt and other members of the very effective Wilderness Committee. The booklet reviews the assets of the Otter Creek area and includes descriptive treatments of all of the trails in the area. It presents the Conservancy's case for desiring special management for this area and also warns of the impending (real, not imagined) threats to Otter Creek. With very well-made maps, the booklet is more than a guide for the outdoorsman since it also contains a management proposal for the area.

This proposal would be inexpensive for the government to implement as well as beneficial to local residents, yet would insure preservation of the wilderness qualities of Otter Creek. Boundaries near the Otter Creek Basin have been designated where timber sales should be prohibited. The next step would be to get Congress to designate the area a wilderness according to the Wilderness Act of 1964. Most of the land is Federally owned, but mineral rights may have to be purchased. No families would have to be displaced as there are no farms or homes involved and no jobs would be lost as the land is currently unproductive in any aspect. The proposal would involve only 10% of National Forest lands in Tucker County and only 5% of that in Randolph thus leaving vast acreages available for intensive timber management. Hunting and fishing could continue in this area subject to the usual state DNR regulations but motor scooters, trail bikes, etc. would be prohibited. Is it too much to ask to set aside a token here and there of all that is left of the great wilderness heritage that was once America's? It is necessary that every single square inch be multiple-used?

The Highlands Conservancy passed a resolution based on this study and follows this article. I think Vic (5336 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15232) may have more copies of the Otter Creek

guide to distribute. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you were unable to get one at the Highlands Review. The efforts of the Wilderness Committee are to be vigorously applauded. Their hours of study and conscientious efforts have resulted in a constructive plan of action of benefit to all, upon which the Conservancy as a whole could take positive action based on understanding. This is certainly what is needed in the Cranberry rather than allowing ourselves to be pushed into negative, although well-meaning, actions that would be not only untenable, but would also destroy the Conservancy's credibility as an effective organization.

RESOLUTION

Whereas the area known as the Otter Creek watershed is a complete unpolluted and roadless watershed and a potential ecological study area and qualifies as wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964, and

Whereas only a few small statutory wilderness areas exist east of the Mississippi River,

Therefore the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy resolves to request the U.S. Forest Service to take all possible steps to protect the Otter Creek watershed as a roadless wilderness; specifically, to extend the McGowan Mountain Road no farther than its present termination and to keep the existing road closed to public motor vehicles, to make no further timber sales within the Otter Creek watershed, to establish the Otter Creek watershed as an administrative Scenic Area or Pioneer Zone, and to involve citizen groups in future planning for the area.

It is further resolved that copies of this statement shall be sent to the Supervisor of Monongahela National Forest, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Governor of West Virginia, the Director of the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, and the West Virginia Congressional Delegation.

Passed by the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy at Mouth of Seneca, W. Va. on October 12, 1969

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ABOUT THE "VOICE"

All unsigned articles in the Highlands Voice are those of the editor and represent his views which are not necessarily those of the Conservancy. Sources of other material are credited where known. Anyone caring to have articles placed in the Voice are invited to contribute.

Bob Burrell, Editor
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WITH THE AFFILIATES

W. Va. Wildwater Association - The W. Va. WWA is pleased to announce publication of their new river guide A Canoeist's Guide to the Whitewater Rivers of West Virginia. Covering 20 of the state's best whitewater streams the guide offers detailed geographic and individual canoeing descriptions for each river to aid the paddler. The book is filled with many other tidbits of information, the most important being perhaps, detailed instructions for locating the appropriate put in and take out points in the West Virginia "backcountry." Copies may be obtained from Richard Harmon, Rt. 1, Box 95, Ravenswood, W. Va. 26164 or from the editor at \$2.50 each plus 10¢ mailing.

Mountain Club of Maryland - An attractive brochure was received from one of our most distant affiliates describing their objectives and listing their activities for the coming winter. Their object is to facilitate for its members and friends the enjoyment of the out-of-doors, particularly the mountain regions accessible to Baltimore.

They extend a cordial welcome to guests on all trips listed on their schedule. Interested parties should contact the club at 3712 Chesholm Road, Baltimore, Md. 21216.

They had scheduled a hike into Otter Creek September 21 and the Highlands Review Activities were also listed. Future trips into West Virginia include the Sleepy Creek Mountain area on November 2 and a C and O Canal trip near Shepherdstown on November 8. The club is quite active on the Appalachian Trail and does considerable trail and shelter maintenance.

Such brochures or information from our other affiliates would be welcomed so that we may inform the membership at large about your purposes and activities.

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NO STRIPPERS AT GRANDVIEW

Denial of an appeal by the Royal Sparks Mining Company seeking to mine coal next to Grandview State Park was announced September 10.

The Reclamation Board of Review based the decision on the aesthetic value of Grandview State Park, and said that slopes on which Sparks wanted to mine coal are steeper than the rules of the Department of Natural Resources allows under the 1967 strip mining act.

The appeal of the refusal of the strip mining permit was the first under the 1967 law.

Director T. R. Samsell said the "key to the case was the aesthetic value" of Grandview State Park in Raleigh County.

Sparks wanted to strip mine the slope across the canyon in Fayette County.

"I am greatly pleased with the board's decision to uphold my refusal to issue the permit," Samsell said.

Samsell said the board notification to him said the five-man group concluded that "the grandeur and attractiveness of Grandview State Park would be adversely affected if surface mining as proposed by the appellant is permitted."

Samsell said the mining company could appeal the board's denial through circuit court.

Another appeal of a refusal of a Sparks strip mining permit was rejected when presented to the State Supreme Court for a hearing last year, Samsell said.

The resources department case was presented to the board by Frank Ellison, a deputy attorney general.

UPI Release

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POTOMAC VALLEY TEST FACILITY

If we had had the foresight a few years ago to establish the Potomac Valley Test Facility, several recent national problems could have been handled more satisfactorily. An example was the problem of what to do with a large supply of unwanted poison gas in Colorado. The Army proposed to ship it by train to the East Coast and then to dump it at sea off the coast of New Jersey. Had the Potomac Valley Test Facility been in existence, several containers of the gas could have been dropped into the Potomac River, between the White House and the Pentagon, from an altitude calculated to give the impact velocity expected at sea bottom. Dropping a few containers into the Potomac River would have given congressmen, Army officials, and other interested persons an opportunity to observe at first hand whether the containers survived unharmed, and if they did not, the rate of leakage of the gas and its effects on the neighboring flora and fauna. Nothing quite takes the place of direct, personal experience in evaluating an event and its consequences. The nation's central decision makers should not be denied this experience.

More recently, the Edgewood Arsenal and Fort McClellan have suspended open-air testing of nerve gas until a team of scientists can determine whether such tests are as free from danger as they are reputed to be. The National Academy of Sciences, which is frequently asked to advise the government on difficult technical matters, has

its headquarters in Washington. Also nearby are the National Bureau of Standards, the Food and Drug Administration, and other agencies that can provide much technical information and relevant expertise. If open-air tests of nerve gas were conducted in or near Washington, representatives of appropriate agencies and of interested congressional committees could easily obtain the firsthand information which they will no doubt wish to have in evaluating the possible hazards of testing such gases in or near inhabited areas.

Another use of the Potomac Valley Test Facility would be in conducting studies of the sonic boom. Sonic boom tests have already been carried out in several parts of the country, but the test sites have been remote from Washington, and there is still considerable disagreement over the extent of the disturbance and the willingness of the public to accept repeated sonic booms. Again, firsthand information would be useful to the decision makers. If repeated tests were conducted over Washington, members of Congress and officials of responsible Executive agencies could observe the effects on babies, pets, the sick and the elderly, on classrooms and conferences, and also on window panes and other fragile objects. They could learn for themselves just how much or little disturbance repeated sonic booms produce at various times of day and night.

From an editorial in Science, 165: (3897), 1969.

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COMING EVENTS

Ray Weiss is leading a backpacking hike up the Seneca Creek Trail on November 8th. This will be a 15 mile overnight hike into the Seneca Creek backcountry. There will be a stop at the 15 foot mini-spectacular Falls of Seneca and for those hardy swimmers among you some time will be allotted for swimming at the base of the falls. We will hike to the new Forest Service primitive campground at Judy Springs and stay overnight there as this will be about half-way. We will then return by way of the Little Allegheny Mountain Trail, thus making a circle route to return to our starting point. Plan on wearing appropriate footwear for fording the creek and for the cold weather that can be expected. Temperatures at night will be in the 20° range so plan on a warm sleeping bag and heavy clothing for early morning. Meet at the Seneca Campground (1 mile off U.S. 33 near the village of Onego) at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, November 8th. Please notify Ray if you are planning to go at: 1230 Eastern Avenue, Morgantown, W. Va. 26505. Those who want to, may go down Friday night and camp overnight at the Seneca Campground.

Hikes are planned for the middle of January on snowshoes in both the Balckwater Falls State Park backcountry and on the Dolly Sods. These will both be overnight Saturday and Sunday affairs. Dates and meeting places will be announced in future newsletters. Here's your chance to see how beautiful this country is in winter and how easily you can freeze to death in the wilds of the National Forest.

FROM THE CONSERVATIONIST'S BOOKSHELF

"It is important to understand the limits of the present proposals [dams in the Grand Canyon]. None of the actual structures would lie inside the National Park. Not quite. And the dams would not, as some overeager objectors seem to have suggested, "flood out" Grand Canyon. (Unfortunately, the cult of conservation can blind a man almost as effectively as can the cult of engineering.) If the dams and the tunnel were built, in fact, the Canyon would not, from the Rim, look so very different." Colin Fletcher, from The Man Who Walked Through Time, 1967, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Ed. - Isn't this what Interior Secretary Hickel had in mind when he uttered his infamous quote, something about "conservation for conservation's sake"? Let us not be blinded in our zeal to protect the deteriorating environment from recognizing all of the facts regarding a particular issue.

Bob Burrell, Editor
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READING ASSIGNMENT

Be sure to see the November issue of Esquire. It contains an extremely thought-provoking article by popular entertainer and formidable conservationist Arthur Godfrey. He presents the intriguing idea that man should be placed on the "most endangered species" lists.

The

Highlands Voice

SENECA ROCKS

Vol. 1, No. 6

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

December 1969

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

The old adage that an ill wind blows no good is possibly not true in West Virginia where the ill wind of air pollution is blowing up a storm of public indignation which may some day provide us with an air pollution law which works.

Item: At a recent meeting in Vienna, mayors of the small communities in the Ohio valley were very critical of industrial air pollution and the lack of cooperation from both company and State officials in attacking this problem. The incidence of tuberculosis and related respiratory diseases in the Ohio valley is one of the highest in the nation.

Item: Housewives and mothers recently picketed the Monongahela Power Company's generating plant at Albright. Independent investigators from West Virginia University reported many months ago that the smoke abatement equipment at Albright was almost totally ineffective. The ladies, who fear for the health of their children, could have extended their picket line to the generating plant at Willow Island on the Ohio River and to the Virginia Electric Power Company's plant on Stoney River in the Highlands.

Item: The Union Carbide Corporation which bills itself in national advertising as the "discovery company" has eighteen plants in West Virginia none of which has yet discovered a means of controlling their heavy air pollution. Pick one of their plants, any plant; their chemical works in South Charleston, their metallurgical plant in Alloy, their carbon plant in Clarksburg. Without exception these plants are real leaders in their respective communities in the production of air pollution.

Conditions in West Virginia's air are becoming worse and the public-be-damned attitude of industry more obvious. Hopefully, the time is not far off when the voting public will tell it to industry the way it was told to strip mining: "Clean up or shut down."

TOM KING