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FUNDS APPROVED FOR MINERALS IN DOLLY SODS
From Congressman John Slack

Washington, D. C. -- The House Appropriations Committee has approved funds to enable the U. S. Forest Service to begin acquisition of privately-held mineral rights in the Dolly Sods Area of the Monongahela National Forest, according to Congressman John Slack.

A highly-prized scenic area, Dolly Sods has been the focus of attention by conservationists who feared destruction of its unique qualities through surface mining of coal in sections where mineral rights are privately owned.

Located at the 4,000-foot elevation, Dolly Sods contains such a variety of scenic values, unusual vegetation, wilderness animals and birds that conservationists generally consider it irreplaceable.

The rising demand for coal recently raised the possibility of surface mining by private mineral rights owners, with almost total destruction of surface values. In March the Nature Conservancy, a private environmentalist group, obtained an option on the mineral rights to 15,617 acres of Dolly Sods for some \$600,000.

Immediately afterward Slack asked the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee headed by Congresswoman Julia Hansen of Washington, to approve funds to enable the Forest Service to purchase at least half of the option during the fiscal year beginning July 1, and today's committee approval came in response to his request.

The Dolly Sods funds are part of a total of \$29,655,000 approved by the committee for land acquisition by the Forest Service, and this total also includes \$1,000,000 for expansion of the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area in the Monongahela Forest.

"This is a very gratifying development," Slack said. "It gives me about as much personal satisfaction as anything I have done during my years in Congress. I think it points us in the right direction and sets us on a promising course. The only way we can be certain that outstanding areas like Dolly Sods will remain protected is through Federal ownership of the mineral rights privately held."

Slack also reported that funds had been approved by the committee to support the second year of a two-year minerals evaluation study of the entire Monongahela Forest for which he had first obtained Federal money last year.

The core drilling and geological evaluation is proceeding on schedule to develop a pattern of the materials underneath the surface of 183,000 acres of the forest, he said. A final report should be ready by June, 1973.

"The study has been greeted with encouragement on all sides," Slack said. "Some major business firms are core drilling on a cost-sharing basis with the Forest Service, and everyone interested in protecting the forest environment seems eager to establish the exact dimensions of what must be done."

"Once the minerals study reveals the size of the job, we will be able to program acquisition of mineral rights on a priority basis, giving first protection to the most valuable areas," he concluded.

* * *

MEADOW CREEK UNIT PLAN

On June 1 a summary of the draft management plan for the Meadow Creek Unit was mailed to interested parties. The plan is a 10 year proposed land use management plan for the unit. Here is what Forest Supervisor F. A. Dorrell had to say about the plan:

"The preliminary Meadow Creek plan was developed by a team of specialists in several resource fields. The planning team now needs your help again in the form of review comments on the entire plan summary, particularly on the wildlife management alternatives described on pages 23 and 24. Your thoughts will then be given consideration in the formulation of the final land use plan for the Meadow Creek Unit.

To be most useful to the planning team, your comments should be in written form. They can be either mailed to me at the address shown on the letterhead (Box 1231, Elkins, W. Va. 26241) by July 15, or presented at a public meeting at 7:30 P.M. on July 11, at the First Presbyterian Church in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. In either case, they will be given full and equal consideration."

One section of the appendix of the report summarizes suggestions made by the public and the F. S. reaction to each. Many recommendations were made concerning many phases of land use in the unit. There was one suggestion to place the entire sub-watershed in a Pioneer Zone. The F. S. analysis of this suggestion was that, "Pioneer areas must meet specific criteria based primarily on unique and/or outstanding characteristics and the absence of significant development. The Meadow Creek area does not meet these criteria."

The only place where alternatives are thrown out for public discussion is when wildlife management for the Laurel Run area is discussed. The Laurel Run Road (F. S. #375) and the Little Allegheny Trail (F. S. #668) are both open to motorized vehicles at the present time. The F. S. has come up with 3 wildlife management alternatives for the Laurel Run area:

Alternate A - Allow both the road and trail to remain open to public use of motor vehicles and manage the habitat primarily for squirrel. There would continue to be some use by deer and grouse, and probably turkey.

Alternative B - Close both the road and trail to all public access by motor vehicles and manage the habitat primarily for turkey and squirrel. Continued use to some degree by deer and grouse could be anticipated.

Alternative C - Allow both the road and trail to remain open to public use of motor vehicles and manage the habitat primarily for deer and grouse. There would probably be some use by turkey and/or squirrel.

I feel that Alternative B should be given strong support. Too many of the roads in our National Forest are open to the mechanical monsters which are detrimental to people, fish, game and water quality. I hope that you will either write to Supervisor Dorrell and/or attend the public meeting on July 11 to support Alternative B.

* * *

MORE ON MEADOW CREEK

June 15, 1972

Dear Tony:

Thank you for sending me the draft management plan for the Meadow Creek planning unit of the Monongahela National Forest.

This plan is a disaster in one respect: it exposes the utter failure of the Forest Service to provide continuity in management of wild areas.

In a letter to Miss Helen McGinnis of Pittsburgh, Pa., dated April 24, 1970, Jack Weissling of your office listed the Anthony Creek and Meadow Creek Pioneer Study Units, totalling 3,294 acres, as areas "where commercial timber sales are currently excluded". I also have a map on which Jack marked the location of these two and other Pioneer Study Units as well.

---The draft management plan for the Meadow Creek Unit utterly fails to mention that part of that unit (all land draining into Lake Sherwood) is currently a Pioneer Study Area. The plan states only that no land in the planning unit qualifies for "Pioneer Zone" status. The plan instead proposes timber operations and construction of temporary haul roads aimed towards altering the wildlife population of this formerly inviolate (since circa 1935) area.

The cavalier attitude toward your administratively "protected" areas underscores the need for Congressional action to place significant amounts of the remaining wild, roadless lands in the East in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

---Please consider the alternative omitted by the draft management plan for the Meadow Creek Unit: that the existing Pioneer Study Unit be affirmed as the best and highest use of that portion of the Meadow Creek Drainage lying above Lake Sherwood. I would personally like to see specific reasons why this alternative was so flagrantly dismissed.

Yours truly,

George Langford

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DAVIS PROJECT
By Helen McGinnis

The controversy over the proposed Davis Project has quieted down temporarily. In January the three electric utilities involved in the project released a bulky set of "Testimonies" and "Exhibits" to the Federal Power Commission and the intervenors in the application for a license, including the Highlands Conservancy. The set contains a number of reports of specialists and power company personnel who will testify on behalf of the utilities. Company spokesmen reiterate their opinion that creating a 7,200 acre reservoir in the northern and central Canaan Valley and a 600 acre upper reservoir at the headwaters of Red Creek in the Dolly Sods would be the best way to insure orderly development of the area and enhance its environment. Alternate methods of producing peaking power, including units fueled by coal, oil, or gas are outlined. This study concludes that the pumped storage method, powered by base-load plants fueled with low cost coal, is the cheapest method, although there is reason to believe that gas turbines could be almost as economical, especially if adequate pollution control equipment were added to the coal plants.

Another report outlines several alternate sites for a comparable sized pumped storage impoundments elsewhere in the area serviced by the utilities. (Basic requirement: low and high reservoir sites close together in undeveloped area) Again, the Davis site is found to be the most economical. Many, if not all, of the alternative sites would be objectionable to environmentalists, an inherent problem of pumped storage. Most attractive from the economic standpoint are two alternates that would use the same upper reservoir on Cabin Mountain but would flood less than 900 acres in the Canaan Valley. These alternatives are attractive to those who are more or less resigned to the project in some form or other or favor it mainly as a means of raising tax revenue for Tucker County. Most of the northern Canaan with its interesting plant communities and valuable wildlife habitat could be left undisturbed, and pressure for development in the Valley might lessen. The small lower reservoir would make the possibility of a coal or nuclear powered plant in the Canaan sometime in the future very remote.

The utilities have not waited for the FPC license to begin field work on the project. Beginning in the winter of 1969-70 and continuing through last fall, there has been intensive geologic exploration on Cabin Mountain at the proposed upper reservoir and on the west slope of the Mountain. Temporary jeep roads, three deep trenches more than ten feet deep and up to 100 feet long, small impoundments and artesian wells have been dug, and the mountainside is scarred with badly eroded, hastily built roads built for core sampling. A former jeep road that ran around the northeast side of the Valley has been bulldozed two lanes wide and awaits paving. A side branch leads off through the remote upper Stony River watershed into the Red Creek drainage. Fortunately, it is gated to the public.

Land in the southern Canaan is selling for as much as \$5,000 per acre, partly in anticipation of the reservoir, although the nearby golf course and ski slopes in Canaan Valley State Park certainly help. With its notoriously poor drainage and consequent sewage disposal problems, zoning is recognized as a necessity. Meetings toward this end have been held in Davis and the Canaan.

The FPC still hasn't scheduled hearings on the utilities application for a license. Apparently a court decision handed down in Greene County, New York, is holding up the agency. It was ruled then that the FPC must prepare its own environmental impact statements, not pass on those prepared by the companies applying for licenses.

The applicants for the Davis Project estimate they must begin construction this year if they expect to begin operation in 1976. If a license is granted this year, the 7,200 acres in the Canaan will be cleared of trees and brush next year. It will take two years for the reservoir to fill because a minimum flow must be maintained on the Blackwater River.

If you would like to explore this interesting area before it is denuded and flooded, see a copy of the Dolly Sods guide (\$1.10 from Carolyn Killoran, 407 Circle Drive, Hurricane, W. Va. 25526). It includes maps of the Canaan Valley. Warning: not for people who dislike getting their feet wet!

* * *

OTTER CREEK CORE DRILLING

By Helen McGinnis

When Federal Judge Robert E. Maxwell granted an injunction to the Highlands Conservancy in August, 1970, against the Island Creek Coal Company and the U. S. Forest Service forbidding both to construct roads in the Otter Creek basin, the issue wasn't the right of Island Creek to take core samples of the coal that it owns, but rather the method by which they were doing it. One mile of muddy road lined with uprooted trees, plus a couple of small ponds for holding water, had already been bulldozed into the basin when the first preliminary injunction was handed down. Judge Maxwell ordered lawyers representing the Conservancy and the coal company to get together to agree on a method of sampling that didn't require roads. Pack horses and helicopters were two alternatives for getting the heavy core drill rigs to five sites with the basin. In December, 1971, Island Creek announced that horses were the choice. Work began almost immediately in early January. An old road starting at the Showalter Farm just northeast of the basin was reopened to the boundary of national forest land, and the drill rigs brought there by truck. Here they were taken apart and loaded onto a specially designed litter-shaped platform suspended between two draft horses. Mules perhaps would have been preferable, but they have all but vanished from this part of the country. A commercial riding stable at Deep Creek Lake is renting Island Creek riding horses and several teams of draft horses.

A team can carry 800 pounds at a time on the platform, and it takes nine trips to transport an entire rig. Once at the drilling site, it must be reassembled. The work is hard on the horses, and they must have a day or more of rest after completing a round trip. When I first met the crew in late April, the team was standing almost knee-deep in mud. The ground is frequently rocky, and the horses are constantly losing shoes.

In late May drilling was still in progress, with two rigs set up on Green Mountain and another on the east side of McGowan Mountain above Devils Gulch. None of the sites is more than eight miles from Parsons as the crow flies, but round trip commuting time from Green Mountain by horseback and jeep is seven hours. Camp has been set up along the trail, and the men on the job spend several days at a time in the wilderness. Two crews are involved: one responsible for disassembling and assembling the rigs and building the trails to the drill sites, the other for drilling the samples.

Is it worth it? The Green Mountain Trail isn't pleasant walking these days, but no worse than a number of trails heavily used by pack stock in the West. Once operations finish, it will quickly recover. The fallen trees along the bulldozed road will remain for years, and the road itself will be an invitation for continued vehicular use of the Otter Creek basin. The crews have done a fine job on the side trails leading from the main trail to the three sites on Green Mountain. They are just "one lane" wide, and it's hard to find spots where trees or branches have been cut.

The Highlands Conservancy owes a debt of gratitude to the lawyers -- Jim Moorman, Fred Anderson, Willis Shay, and their assistants -- and to the others who have managed to keep the Otter Creek wilderness intact -- for the time being. If Island Creek decides to mine the coal under Otter Creek, another chapter will begin.

Two years ago, before the road issue came up, Jim and Fred prepared a petition and appeal asking the Forest Service to suspend the plans for logging and road building in Otter Creek announced in January 1970, and to designate Otter Creek a "new study area" so that its wilderness qualifications could be studied. This appeal was submitted in turn, and rejected, by the Supervisor of the Monongahela National Forest, the Regional Forester, and the Chief. This spring Secretary of Agriculture Butz turned down the appeal on the ground that the Conservancy was prematurely challenging its new multiple use plan for Otter Creek, which should be announced this summer.

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PUBLIC MEETINGS ON WILD AREAS
A Letter From Tony Dorrell

Several weeks ago, the Forest Service asked the public for help in evaluating ways for preserving and managing National Forest lands for wild land values.

We wanted to know how the National Forest System in the East could help meet the needs of the people which the National Wilderness Preservation System answers in the West. At that time, we offered an array of alternatives for classifying and protecting Eastern National Forest wild lands which included the following:

Legislative Action

1. An amendment or supplement to the Wilderness Act of 1964.
2. New basic legislation.
3. Individual legislation.

Administrative Action

1. Forest Service Unit Plans.
2. Classification by the Secretary of Agriculture.
3. Presidential Executive Order.

The public provided us with many good responses to our first request. At the risk of wearing out our welcome, we are again asking for help. We would like any additional specific comments you might have on the above alternatives. We also now need additional help in developing criteria for identification, and criteria for direction for management of these areas. We have listed a range of possible alternatives for criteria of identification and for direction for management of wild land areas. We are attaching this list as an aid in preparing your response. There are many approaches and many alternatives to consider and what we offer here certainly need not be considered a complete list. These criteria could easily apply regardless of which alternative for classifying and protecting National Forest wild lands is finally selected.

As you may be aware, Congressional legislation bills, H.R. 14392 and Senate 3225, have been introduced to establish a system of wild land areas within the lands of the National Forest System. Your replies to our request for assistance can form the basis when we are asked to comment on these bills. We want our comments to be based on public review.

During the last two weeks of July, the Forest Service will conduct listening sessions at selected locations in the East and South. The Monongahela National Forest will conduct sessions at Elkins, W. Va., YMCA Auditorium, July 25, 7:30 P.M., and at Charleston, W. Va., House of Delegates Chamber, State Capitol, July 26, 7:30 P.M. We hope you can be there and give us your ideas orally and/or in writing. If you are unable to attend this session, please send us your ideas in writing by July 26, 1972.

We appreciated your help in the past and hope that you can help us this time also.

* * *

wild water WEST VIRGINIA

A PADDLER'S GUIDE TO THE WHITE WATER RIVERS OF THE MOUNTAIN STATE

BY BOB BURRELL AND PAUL DAVIDSON

West Virginia is blest with more white water rivers than any state in the eastern United States and the Mountain State is "rapidly" becoming known as the white water capital of the East. Two adopted West Virginians provide a fresh insight into the nature of these rivers and have undertaken to write a comprehensive guide to all of the state's significant wild water. Over 1,500 miles of challenging rivers are carefully described from the white water boater's viewpoint.

The guide is also a unique travel guide to the state known for its scenic wonders. Scenery and points of interest are described where such points are connected with rivers. Unlike most travel books, this guide attempts to tell the whole truth and if some areas are an environmental disgrace, it says so. In so doing, it is hoped that the guide will serve as a reference to some of the great unspoiled areas of the state together with a challenge for all to help keep them that way and that it will also serve as an additional challenge to clean up those abused rivers.

The rivers are arranged into nine chapters according to key watersheds or basins. Each chapter is prefaced by a regional introduction which points out the history, scenic attractions, economics, natural history, and environmental threats for each area. Detailed information is provided for white water paddlers for each river which carefully explains put in and take out access points, general hydrologic characteristics, key rapids, danger points and difficulties, and other characteristics helpful in planning a trip on each river. Included are a general introduction to the guide, a glossary, an explanation of the white water difficulty rating system, and a special note on how to find your way around the Mountain State. Specific and general references are also included.

Although written primarily for the sport boater, the guide will also appeal to anyone interested in the West Virginia out of doors or the environmental assets and problems of the state. The authors write with a sense of humor, an enthusiastic relish for their task, and indignant outrage at environmental abuse, so the book should appeal to the general reader as well.

Approximately 180 pages. Maps. Paperback. \$5.00 Plus 25¢ for postage and handling

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HECHLER RAPS ROWLESBURG DAM

Rep. Ken Hechler, D-W. Va., went on record Monday as opposing construction of the Rowlesburg Dam on the Cheat River saying the project is unsafe to area residents.

"This project threatens to flood a large, productive section of Tucker County and ruin the beautiful Cheat River - one of the few remaining wild rivers in the Eastern United States," Hechler said.

Hechler, a staunch advocate of conservation and environmental protection, said the dam "would destroy the small communities of St. George and Holly Meadows, erode the tax base of Tucker County, create unsightly mud flats and damage one of the most scenic areas of West Virginia."

The West Virginia Democrat told the House appropriations subcommittee on public works a good way to save \$143 million would be to eliminate the project.

The dam already has taken \$2.54 million by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in design and planning, he said. Hechler's remark came when \$200, 000 was sought for additional studies on the proposed dam.

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