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Gauley NRA, legislative agenda among Board concerns

The possibility of working toward creation of a Gauley River Canyon National Recreation Area was among the many issues discussed by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Board of Directors at its winter meeting. The board approved a recommendation by the River Conservation Committee to request federal legislation to create a Gauley River Canyon National Recreation Area. This represents the Conservancy's first federal initiative since the Cranberry Wilderness bill in the 1970s. Details of this request are provided in the story below.

The board also approved a legislative agenda which focuses mainly on clean-up of the Department of Energy bill passed in the last session. The conflict of interest provisions, the two-acre exemption for strip mines and the number of political appointments allowed under the legislation are among the areas which will receive special consideration by the Conservancy.

Other items on the legislative agenda are outlined in the accompanying story. The Conservancy will continue to oppose confirmation of Kenneth Faerber as DOE Commissioner until he resolves conflict of interest issues outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Appeal of the Reclamation Board's decision on the Panther State Forest case was approved by the

board. The Reclamation Board decided in December to allow New Windward Coal Company to operate a deep mine adjacent to the forest. The operation would require hauling coal through the forest which is an important recreation area in McDowell County.

Mining Committee chair John McFerrin was authorized to appeal this decision in Circuit Court.

No changes in the status of the Vickie Energy deep mine in the Monongahela National Forest or the Westmoreland Hominy Creek case were reported but the mining committee continues to monitor these projects.

According to the Public Lands Management Committee, the Monongahela National Forest Final Plan has been submitted to the regional forester in Milwaukee. It will probably be available in April.

Board members discussed a proposal by Agriculture Commissioner Gus Douglas to open up a 3,000-acre tract of Kanawha State Forest as a demonstration forest project.

This would require action by the West Virginia Legislature because Kanawha State Forest is protected from timbering due to its recreational value in the Valley. The Conservancy board decided to restate its position that there should be no timbering in Kanawha State Forest.

Publications Committee chair Skip Deegans said the fourth edition of the hiking guide will be sold out by next summer and that work is starting on the fifth edition. Updated trail information for the guide will be obtained from the Forest Service and the Sierra Club. The SC has entered an agreement with the Forest Service to inventory forest trails and this information will be available to the WHVC.

Jim Van Gundy, director-at-large, was appointed to investigate the possibility of producing a book of road trips in the highlands. Anyone interested in participating in such a project should contact Jim at the address in the roster.

John Purbaugh and Jim Van Gundy were appointed to head a committee to plan the Spring Review. Board members discussed and approved the idea of doing a flood clean-up project on the Saturday of the Review rather than having the usual outings.

The board also approved the Conservancy's 1986 budget, waived the organizational membership fee for the WV Public Interest Research Group and authorized president Larry George to decide on a trust agreement for managing Endowment Fund money.

Conservancy agenda for 1986 legislature set by Board

At its winter meeting in January, the WVHC Board of Directors adopted positions on a number of issues which will be considered by the West Virginia Legislature this session.

No real priorities were set because as Conservancy President Larry George said, "We have no great expectations for this legislative session." George will replace Perry Bryant as the Conservancy's Charleston lobbyist this session.

DOE Legislation

Changing certain provisions of the Department of Energy enabling legislation will be one issue which the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy will lobby for this session. The federal Office of Surface Mining approved the DOE bill on the condition that the state change the law in eight areas. Four main areas will receive the Conservancy's attention.

First, the Conservancy will push for conflict of interest provisions for the DOE Commissioner. The fact that OSM required Kenneth Faerber, nominee for DOE Commissioner, to resolve perceived conflicts indicates that conflict of interest provisions are

necessary in the bill.

Second, the challenge to the two-acre exemption for surface mining will have to be resolved by the Legislature and the Conservancy advocates exclusion of this exemption.

The Conservancy and other environmental groups were successful last summer in obtaining a court injunction prohibiting implementation of this exemption. The injunction was issued on the grounds that the necessary title amendment to the bill was not adopted.

Legislators must decide this session what to do with this section of the law.

Third, the Conservancy will lobby for a reduction in the number of political appointments allowed under the current DOE bill. Before passage of the bill, the Governor had six political appointments between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Mines. Now he has ten political appointments in the DOE and two in the DNR.

The Conservancy advocates giving civil service protection to the people who head the permits, enforcement, and health and safety sections within



the Mines and Minerals Division and the Oil and Gas Divisions. This would limit the number of political appointments to four in the DOE and two within the DNR.

Finally in legislation concerning the DOE bill, the Conservancy hopes to clarify the policy section of the bill relating to the purpose of the agency. WVHC contends that the protection of health, safety and the environment should be the basic function of such an agency not the promotion of the coal, oil and gas industries.

(See Legislature, Page 2)

WVHC proposes creation of a Gauley River NRA

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has recommended that the Gauley River Canyon and the lower Meadow River be designated by Congress as a National Recreation Area to be managed by the U.S. National Park Service.

This action was taken in response to a request from U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) for a Conservancy recommendation for protection and management of the Gauley River Canyon. The WVHC also requested that Rahall join other members of the West Virginia Congressional delegation to sponsor legislation designating a Gauley River NRA.

The canyon is a 26-mile stretch of the Gauley located in Nicholas and Fayette Counties between the Summersville dam and Swiss. It is nationally recognized for its challenging whitewater rafting and kayaking as well as its outstanding scenery and wilderness qualities.

Also included in the recommendation is a 4.5 mile stretch of the Meadow River between the Route 19 bridge and the confluence with the Gauley.

(See Gauley, Page 2)

Legislature (continued from page 1)

The Conservancy will also continue to oppose the nomination of Kenneth Faerber as Commissioner of DOE until he resolves all conflict of interest problems.

Scenic/conservation easements

The Conservancy will support the adoption of a uniform conservation easement act. This would allow companies and individuals who want to donate development rights to qualify for federal tax breaks.

Current common law restrictions require donation of real property in addition to donation of development rights to qualify for federal tax incentives. For example, Westvaco could not qualify for tax breaks for donating their timbering rights in the Gauley River Canyon unless they were also willing to donate some adjacent land.

Water rights

West Virginia has no statutory authority to regulate withdrawal of water from streams and rivers. The state operates on the common law principle of riparian rights which gives people along the river the right

to protect water quality and water quantity.

The Conservancy supports a bill which would more clearly define the ownership and use pattern of water in West Virginia. Specifically such a bill would establish the following: 1) That water belongs to the people and is to be held in public trust and used for their highest and best use, 2) Require DNR to conduct an inventory of consumptive water uses, 3) Require large water consumers to obtain a DNR permit, and 4) Provide the authority within DNR to specify who gets priority for water use in a drought.

DNR reorganization

The governor is expected to support a bill reorganizing the DNR and the Conservancy supports most of this bill's provisions. These include: 1) making the Hazardous Waste/Groundwater Section a division rather than a section within the Division of Water Resources, and 2) reducing the powers of the Water Resources Board by placing responsibility for rule making in the Director's hands.

100,000 acre Spruce Knob/Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area located in Pendleton County and managed by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Monongahela National Forest.

George said, "The 20-year record of the Spruce Knob/Seneca Rocks NRA has proven it an excellent management plan for accommodating natural resources conservation and commercial development. The Conservancy believes the same cooperative management concept can be successfully adapted to the Gauley River Canyon to protect one of the most outstanding wild rivers in the eastern United States."

The Conservancy worked for the 1965 designation of the Spruce Knob/Seneca Rocks NRA and was active during the early 1970s in protecting the Gauley River Canyon from inundation by a hydropower dam proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Gauley (continued from page 1)

Although the NPS studied the Gauley for inclusion in the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1983 and concluded that it qualified for such designation, the river was not recommended for this type of protection because of a lack of local interest.

In contrast to a federal Wild and Scenic River, an NRA can be managed to accommodate local recreation uses and economic development and its boundaries can be adjusted as necessary by Congress or the managing agency.

Conservancy President Larry George said NRA designation for the Gauley River Canyon offers greater flexibility in management and recreational development. It would also adequately protect the Canyon while providing reasonable access for commercial whitewater rafting and other uses.

West Virginia's only NRA is the

Volunteers needed-please help

Ski info to be added to hiking guide

The Publications Committee kicked off its drive to prepare a fifth edition of **Hiking Guide to Monongahela National Forest and Vicinity** at the WVHC winter meeting at Jackson's Mill. In addition to updated trail reports, an improved physical appearance with color photographs and additional graphics, a guide to cross country ski trails and touring centers in the national forest will be included.

To obtain accurate reports on the MNF trails, WVHC members are needed to gather information on trail conditions as they ski or hike. Taking a few minutes to complete a trail report from after each outing will speed the Conservancy toward its goal of publishing the fifth edition of the Guide this fall.

Sales of the Guide are one of WVHC's most important sources of revenue and without this revenue many of our conservation activities could be curtailed.

For more information on how you can help and for copies of trail report forms, contact Skip Deegans, Box 564, Lewisburg, WV 24901.

River committee monitoring Corps planning

The WVHC River Conservation Committee is seeking volunteers to assist in monitoring Congressional action and Corps of Engineers planning for major flood control reservoirs in the Greenbrier, Potomac and Cheat River Basins.

Recent flooding in these watersheds has renewed local interest in federal flood control projects. WVHC volunteers would be involved in analyzing proposals for major reservoirs and alternatives for structural and non-structural methods to ameliorate flood damage.

Interested individuals should contact River Conservation Committee Chair Ray Ratliff as noted in the roster.

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Help add ski
info to
Hiking Guide!

For details contact:
Skip Deegans
Box 564
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Streams slowly cleared of debris in flooded areas

Now that the initial shock of the November floods is over, federal agencies have started cleaning up and restoring the state's streams. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Soil Conservation Service are the primary agencies involved in stream rehabilitation.

The first stage of stream recovery work has been to stabilize and channelize the streambeds. Bulldozers have been used to push streams back toward their former channels.

Channels are being widened, deepened and cleared of obstructions. Miles of river bottom have been and are being reshaped.

The Corps has awarded 43 contracts in nine flood damaged counties for debris removal and stream clearing.

Studies are also being done by the Corps to determine the feasibility of flood control projects on the Greenbrier and Cheat Rivers to prevent future flood disasters of this magnitude.

Sen. Robert Byrd, D-WV, asked the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works to expedite a study of a flood control project on the Greenbrier River and to reactivate the Rowlesburg flood control project.

The Soil Conservation Service has started working on debris removal and channel restoration. Work started in Hardy County on the South Fork river and will continue on rivers and streams in other counties until March 31 when SCS expects to have all the debris removed and most streams restored to their channels.

Rivers scheduled for cleanup by the SCS in the next few months include the North Fork, South Branch, Cheat, South Fork, Patterson and New Creeks, Greenbrier, West Fork, and Tygart Valley.



Seneca Creek Campground covered with rubble. (MNF)

Greenbrier flood control draws support, opposition

Residents and leaders of Alderson and Marlinton are urging the Army Corps of Engineers and their congressional representatives to reactivate studies of the feasibility of a flood control structure on the Greenbrier River.

Both towns were hard hit by the November floods. All of the businesses and about 90 percent of the residences in Marlinton were affected. Most of the town is built in the flood plain of the Greenbrier River.

Further downstream, Alderson and Ronceverte also suffered flood damage in November. Residents in these towns also are expected to support a flood control structure on the river.

Sen. Robert Byrd has requested that the Corps expedite a study of the feasibility of flood control on the Greenbrier. In the past year the agency has been investigating low level flood control options but flood victims want the possibility of a full-

fledged flood control structure to be studied.

The Corps has studied the Greenbrier for a possible dam for several years but no action has ever been taken. The site proposed in the past by the Corps for a major flood control structure is about five miles above Marlinton.

At public meetings in Alderson and Marlinton corps officials have said that the previous studies were dated and not specific enough to get a good idea of the feasibility of a major flood project.

No economic analysis, sociological analysis or environmental analysis has been carried out, corps officials said. A specific study of the river basin must be done before proposals can be made.

Options normally examined in a flood control study include small headwater dams, mainstream dams, a dry dam, local protection projects such as floodwalls or a combination of

these measures.

Studies have also investigated the possibility of constructing several smaller dams on tributaries of the Greenbrier for flood control purposes.

Although there is considerable public support for a comprehensive study, there is opposition to the idea of a mainstream dam. Upstream landowners and other concerned county residents organized shortly after the floods to oppose efforts to construct a dam on the river.

Called Friends of the Greenbrier River Basin, the group has about 300 members, mostly local residents. The loss of land and homes is the major reason for the opposition.

If a dam is built above Marlinton, residents of Cass, Cloverlick, Stony Bottom, Dunmore, Greenbank, and Arbovale would be affected in some way.

Sen. Byrd also asked the Corps of Engineers to reactivate the proposed

Rowlesburg Dam on Cheat River. This project was placed on the inactive list of corps projects in 1978 by the House of Representatives. The Senate did not deauthorize it and Byrd is opposing it taking this action.

Opposition to a mainstream dam on the Cheat River is widespread, according to Tucker County residents. Some people have suggested that three smaller watershed dams upstream from Parsons would be a viable alternative. Such dams would produce hydro power and help tourism without inundating too much land.

At its meeting in January, the WVHC board of directors took no position on the issue but agreed that the situation should be monitored so input can be offered when appropriate.

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TODAY**

EPA objects to Enoxy permit application

By John Purbaugh

In a December 24, 1985 letter, officials of Region III of the United States Environmental Protection Agency notified West Virginia Department of Natural Resources director Ron Potesta of its objection to DNR's proposed water pollution permit for a 717-acre Enoxy Coal Co. surface mine in southern Upshur County.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and several local landowners had requested EPA review of the permit, objecting to Enoxy's plans to fill two native brook trout streams with mine overburden and waste, and because the mine would produce long-term acid mine drainage.

EPA officials agreed on both points, objecting to the issuance of any permit unless "the two proposed valley fills and in-stream ponds are eliminated." EPA also required that "the reclamation bond be increased to an amount to provide for perpetual treatment of acid mine drainage which may develop."

Conservancy President Larry George said, "The EPA letter of objection means that DNR must conform its permit to the EPA conditions because the DNR water pollution permitting process is delegated by EPA which retains ultimate control in a situation such as this."

Thanks Perry!!!

Perry Bryant, executive director of West Virginia Citizen Action Group and the Conservancy's vice president for state affairs, will soon move to Morgantown and will no longer represent the Conservancy at the Legislature.

Perry has worked for CAG for five years and has been an asset to the Conservancy in its efforts to influence environmental legislation.

His new job is with the West Virginia Education Association. The Conservancy wishes him luck in all he does and hopes that he will remain an active member of our organization.

Conflicts of interest plague Faerber

Although Acting Energy Commissioner Kenneth Faerber was to complete sale of his remaining coal interests in January, his conflict of interest problems seem to be far from over.

In October, the federal Office of Surface Mining gave Faerber 90 days to sell his coal interests or be terminated as commissioner of the newly created state Department of Energy. Since that time Faerber has worked to sell his properties and by mid-January had lined up buyers.

Now, however, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has

said that under the federal Clean Water Act, Faerber will not be eligible for two years to issue National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits.

Every new coal mining operation requires a NPDES permit under the federal Clean Water Act.

The state Department of Natural Resources now issues these permits which are required for every new coal-mining operation. When the DOE was created the intention was to transfer this permit issuing procedure from DNR to DOE.

In a letter to DNR director Ron

Potesta an EPA official warned that under EPA rules the transfer of authority to issue NPDES permits could not be made if Faerber was the person to be issuing the permits.

EPA rules state that "no person or persons responsible for NPDES permitting may receive, either currently or during the previous two years, a significant portion of his income directly or indirectly from permit holders or applicants for a permit."

Faerber has criticized the EPA's position on the NPDES permit issue because he says they are unfairly questioning his position. He says that

ARCC pushes river funds, protection

Wild and Scenic designations for rivers in California, Colorado, Connecticut and Oregon are among the 1986 legislative priorities of the

American Rivers Conservation Council. In addition, ARCC will push for rivers funding and for a bill to extend public preference in hydropower relicensing.

President Regan's budget is not expected to request funds for river protection under the Land and Water Conservation Fund and will probably try again to zero out the National Park Service's State and Local River Conservation Technical Assistance

program. But ARCC says it has "very strong" support for the rivers assistance program in Congress and hopes to keep the funding at least at the \$1 million level.

Funds to purchase land or easements along rivers designated as Wild and Scenic have all but dried up in recent years. ARCC is working with other national conservation organizations to put critical river tracts high on the 1986 rivers spending agenda.



although DOE does plan to take over authority for the coal-mining aspects of the NPDES program from DNR, he may not be the one in charge of the program.

Bills dealing with hydropower relicensing are also being considered by both the House and the Senate and are supported by the ARCC. The Senate bill specifies that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission must require "adequate protection and mitigation for fish and wildlife" resources and requires that FERC consider any comprehensive plan prepared by federal or state agencies.

Outdoors Commission begins recreation study

The chairman of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors has charged group members with identifying supply of and demand for recreation opportunities in the U.S. and with making recommendations for reconciling the differences between supply and demand.

The Commission succeeds the Outdoor Recreation Resource Review Commission of the early 1960s. ORRRC made recommendations which in many ways laid the foundations for the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the National Trails Act, and the Wilderness Act.

Commission leaders spent the last eight or nine months selecting staff and identifying goals. It began holding hearings last October and is expected to issue a final report by December 1986.

Tennessee's governor, Lamar Alexander, is the Commission's chairman and has identified three major tasks.

First the commission will determine the kinds of outdoor recreation Americans want now and will want in the future. Second, they will investigate what resources are available to meet these needs.

Finally the commission will evaluate the differences between the supply and demand found

and make recommendations to ensure that Americans have adequate recreational opportunities in the future.

The political makeup of the new Commission is such that its recommendations will probably lean more heavily on the private sector's contribution to recreation. It could, however, have a far reaching impact just as the first commission did.

For information on dates and opportunities to comment on recreation supply and demand, contact: President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, 1111 20th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Telephone tree established for WVHC lobbying

To more effectively inform individual state legislators of the Conservancy's position on certain issues, a telephone tree will be developed for this session. Linda Cooper Elkinton is organizing the tree and requests the cooperation of all members in this important effort.

The telephone tree will inform Conservancy members when bills of in-

terest are up for a vote in the Legislature. Members will be briefed on the bill and requested to write or call their legislators immediately with their opinions.

Linda will organize the tree by sending members lists of three or four other members in their area to call when they receive the initial call from Charleston.

"This is a very powerful way to influence legislation," she said. "If we reach 2-300 people and they all contact their legislators, we can have an impact on the bills passed."

Anyone who does not want or is unable to be involved in the telephone tree should tell the person who calls them so they will not be called again.

Check out the WVHC Bookshelf

The following conservation and wildlife books are available from the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. Order your copies by sending check or money order and the order form below to:

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
P.O. Box 506
Fairmont, WV 26555

★ *Care of the Wild* Jordan and Hughes

This is an excellent guide to home emergency care for wild animals. It is available in both hard and soft cover editions.

★ *Hiking Guide to Monongahela National Forest and Vicinity* West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

An invaluable guide for hikers, this book includes trail descriptions and topographical maps for more than 200 trails in the Monongahela National Forest. The Dolly Sods Wilderness, Allegheny Trail and the Greenbrier River Trail are included.

★ *A Citizens Guide to River Conservation* Diamant, Eugster, and Duerksen

A how-to manual for people who want to help in the fight to save rivers and streams from development and pollution.

WVHC BOOK ORDER FORM

Please send me the following books:

_____ *Care of the Wild*, \$8.95 paperback
\$13.95 hardback

_____ *Guide to Monongahela National Forest and Vicinity*, \$8.95

_____ *A Citizen's Guide to River Conservation*, \$7.95

Add \$1.50 for postage and handling (except when ordering just the hiking guide) and make check out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

Total Enclosed _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Return this form to WVHC, P.O. Box 506, Fairmont, WV 26555.

Snakes: don't hurt them and they won't hurt you

By Ed Lytwak

The early May day was sunny and warm. The climb up the Green Mountain Trail, as always was steep and rocky. Once at the top, exertion and sweat gave way to excited anticipation of the Otter Creek forest yielding another spectacular view, from one of its "secret" rock cliffs. And this one was so close to the trail and so easy to get to, I thought as we walked through the open maple and birch forest. The rhody and laurel which framed the rocks even yielded an easy pathway to the vista.

What a view! The sweep of McGowan Mountain. There, that must be Turkey Run. Look at that fine old forest on top of Turkey Ridge. You can even see a little upstream toward where Moore Run comes down. And that big ridge behind must be the high part of McGowan Mountain.

It wasn't very loud, but the grating, scraping sound struck a chord. A split second and eyes adjusted to the rocks to the left. Distance: thirty feet and closing fast. The long black timber rattler was crawling directly toward us!

Flattened in the crawling motion, the viper's body seemed immensely large. That moment of recognition reaches beyond consciousness to a realm of being larger than life, emotive rather than

conceptual. The story would often be retold around campfires of days to come. It was larger than a king cobra (which sometime reach lengths of twenty feet), it had eyes that glowed like hot coals, its fangs were like two long white daggers, and its body was thicker than a fire hose. Some experiences cannot be measured by reason.

Actually the timber rattler, by our best estimate, was a bit over four feet. It was crawling toward us because we happened to be in line with

"Perhaps it's time to call a truce with our fears. Just because we are afraid of something does not mean we have to destroy it."

its favorite hiding place in the rocks. Once there, it crawled inside the rocky den, barely visible, to quietly pass the cool spring night. Since we had already pitched our tents near the rocks, we decided to declare a "truce" and spend the night there anyway. There were regular rattler recon checks but the big fellow remained coiled in its den throughout the night.

Once the morning sun had warmed the air, "big daddy" slithered out to bask in the sun and gather its strength. Still sluggish from the night's chill it

posed no threat. The rattlers that you see really present no problem, it's the ones you don't see that can be dangerous. Anyway I have this understanding with rattlesnakes. They don't bother me and I don't bother them. That's the way "they" like it.

The rattlesnake will only strike as a last resort. In all cases it will seek to avoid encounters with humans if at all possible. I once met an old timer, hiking along the Huckleberry Trail.

"You boys seen any snakes," he asked.

"No, we haven't," I replied.

Pointing inside his coat, he continued, "It's illegal but I have a pistol and I'm looking to shoot some snakes. My Aunt Minnie Mae had a pearl handled .22 pistol and she could shoot the head right off a snake." Picturesque but a sadly typical attitude.

Perhaps it's time to call a truce with our fears. Just because we are afraid of something does not mean we have to destroy it. Much less our right to destroy something for our own amusement. Old attitudes are hard to change, especially when they grow out of strong emotions. We can, however, control our fears through understanding.

Rationally, snakes, rather than a threat, represent an important part of the natural ecological balance.

Snakes in the Highlands - how common, how dangerous?

By Bob Stough

Whenever I tell a story about wandering in the Allegheny Mountains to the uninitiated, sooner or later (usually sooner) people want to know: what about snakes? However irrational this fear may be, it is nevertheless quite real, and seems largely born out of a misunderstanding of the numbers and habits of the snakes in the West Virginia highlands.

First, snakes are primarily tropical creatures, and the numbers of individuals and diversity of species are limited by the northern character of the highlands. The result is that you are not likely to see many, if any, snakes anywhere in the mountains unless you seek them out.

Moreover, should a chance encounter occur, the odds are heavily in your favor that you will see one of the nonvenomous species that inhabit the region. These range from relatively large species such as the black racers and rat snakes, to the smaller ones such as ring-necked snakes and the exquisite little green snakes. None is capable of doing serious harm to anyone and many are strikingly beautiful creatures which are well adapted to surviving and reproducing in an eastern mountain environment.

But of course such things may also be said about the northern copperhead and timber rattlesnake, the two venomous species found in the central Appalachians. Both of these, especially the rattlesnakes, are potentially capable of delivering life-threatening bites, so they are certainly worthy of respect if encountered.

Encountering a poisonous snake, however, is an uncommon thing in the West Virginia highlands. While both species are holding their own in the wilderness areas, they are not abundant and are naturally shy creatures which hardly seek to confront other creatures many times their size.

Poisonous snakes possess venom not primarily for defense but for food gathering; that is, to make it quicker and less risky for them to capture and subdue their prey. Snake venom is a

highly complex peptide enzyme that is not quickly replaced by the snake once depleted, thus most poisonous snakes are reluctant to expend their poison for defense, because without it they may go hungry.

So the snake that you see presents virtually no danger if you **leave it alone**. The real danger, such as it is, lies with the snake that you do not see and are unwary enough to nudge or step on. The rule of thumb in potential snake habitations is to tread heavily (snakes "hear" by feeling vibrations) and watch where you step, every step.

If you give a snake the chance to escape, it will probably do so. What constitutes prime venomous snake habitat in the highlands are rock outcroppings and boulder fields on the mountain tops and slopes, rotting logs, sawdust piles, and streamside niches in the valleys. Rock formations in particular are favored homes for timber rattlesnakes, and all sizeable formations at any altitude between April and October must be considered suspect, especially those in out-of-the-way places. It is worth stating, however, that even in known snake habitats, snakes are not often seen.

I have a particular fondness for the sorts of outcroppings which experts agree are likely to harbor venomous snakes. But I have frequented such places for many years and can count the number of rattlesnakes I have seen on one hand with fingers to spare.

But what if, against all odds, you or a member of your group gets bitten? **Do not panic.** This is the first, last, and a part of every rule in between. Even if you are bitten by a large rattlesnake, your chances for survival are good. Panicky behavior will not only substantially increase absorption of venom but it is likely to make first aid more difficult.

So stay calm. It is possible that even though you are sure you have been bitten by a poisonous snake it may not have injected any venom. So-called "dry bites" are not uncommon



Rocky outcrops such as these in the Cranberry Wilderness are primary places to find rattlesnakes.
Photo by Ed Lytwak

and are probably the result of the snake's unwillingness to use its venom for self-defense. If you do not experience any discomfort within 5-10 minutes then rest easy and treat the bite like any simple puncture wound.

If poison has been injected the victim will quickly experience intense burning pain followed by rapid and severe swelling of the bitten area. If this happens, one should apply a constricting band a few inches above the bite and tighten this just enough to restrict subcutaneous lymphatic flow. It is the lymph system that is the primary circulatory agent for snake venom.

Then try to remove as much as the venom as safely possible. This may be done best by employing one of the new suction-syringe devices sold as the "Extractor" rather than the old rubber suction cups. The older devices not only develop much less suction but also require cuts to be made through the fang holes. This "cut-and-suck" method is good in theory but has seldom proven itself in the field. It can easily result in the

cutting of a nerve or artery and the infliction of a more serious injury than the snake bite itself.

Following these initial first-aid treatments, the victim should be transported as quickly as possible to the nearest medical facility. It is important that the victim is kept quiet and calm through the whole process.

Having said all this, I must reiterate that it has been the purpose of this article to dissolve some of the fear surrounding snakes in the highlands. They are not only beautiful and surprisingly gentle animals but they also certainly have as much right to the space they call home as we have to ours.

I have detailed the proper treatment for snakebite only because it seems prudent to do so from time to time, not because it is knowledge that is likely ever to be needed even by the careless. If you have to worry about something you would be better off to use the energy worrying about driving to and from the trailhead. We are in more relative danger on the public roads than from the snakes in the Appalachian wilderness.

Silver Ribbons at Red Creek

By Allen de Hart

We were the first hiking team into the Dolly Sods Wilderness Area after the flood of November 4, 1985. Our primary purpose was to assess the damage to all the hiking trails. For maximum coverage our team of eight would begin at Red Creek Campground and split into pairs at connecting trails from the Red Creek Trail.

Dense fog cloaked the forest when we left at dawn. The earth was water-saturated. At the first Red Creek crossing we unpacked our work waders, an insulated item we knew we would need in the cold November waters. Large mounds of rocks and broken trees divided Left Fork at its confluence with Red Creek, a passage that was rock-hopped. Three gray deer watched us cross and black-capped chickadees met us on the west bank.

Richard Davis, one of three botanists with us, and Vance Collum took the Breathed Mountain Trail and the Stonecoal Trail. It was Davis' first time in the Sods. Later that night he expressed his excitement, "I thought I had gone to Canada . . . there was fir, spruce, sphagnum, muskegs, beavers, a trail of water, and bone-chilling fog."

About four miles into the canyon, Alvin Edwards and I paired off to hike the Rocky Point Trail, the Dunkenberg Trail and other connecting trails. As we passed the "Bear Castle," 1.2 miles into the

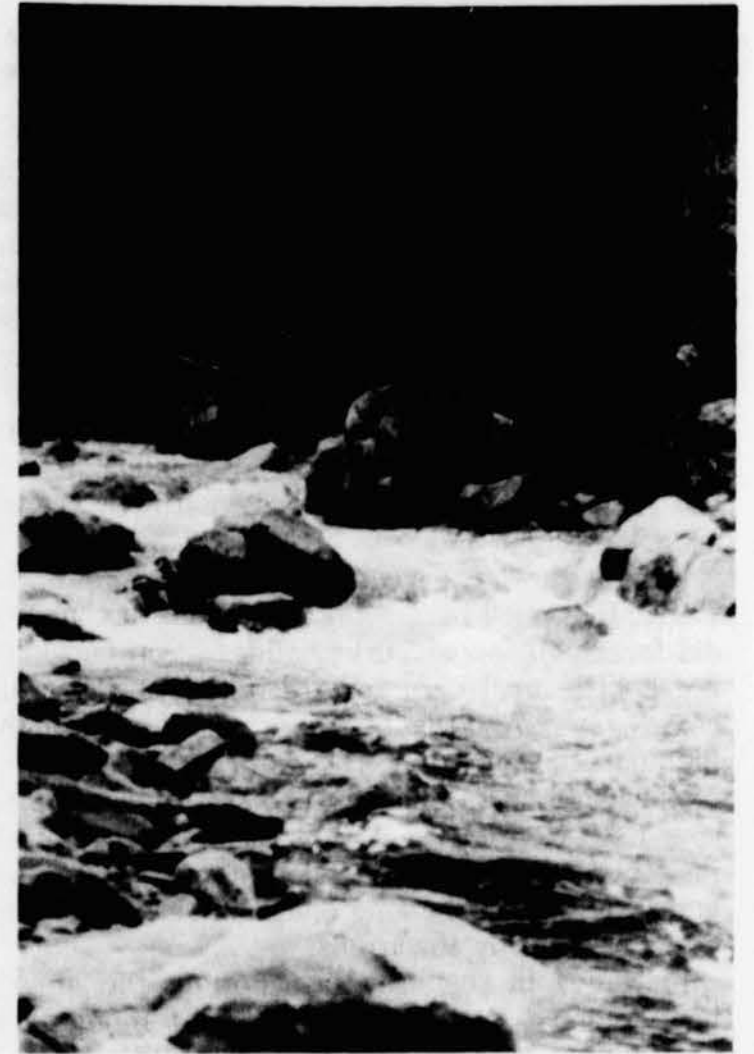
route, Nature put on an incredible show. The fog began to lift: there was curtain scene after curtain scene of the grandeur around us. We could see the Red Creek Trail through the bleached deciduous forest. Splashing tributaries fell from the drenched Rohrbaugh Plains. Alvin called them "silver ribbons."

With the rising of the fog, the sound of turbulence was heard from the Stonecoal Gorge to our right. The fog lifted higher and higher and clung only to the Roaring Plains. And for one fleeting moment the sun's rays made the entire canyon an awesome icy masterpiece without ice. We ascended higher on the sandstone to absorb the beauty. Every tree and stone sparkled and gleamed.

Darkness came before we reached the Laneville bridge. Each had a report, but all were talking at once, about the beaver already rebuilding its dam . . . washed out sections of the trails, such as at High Water Trail . . . bear tracks . . . cascades . . . a mauve mud from a landslide.

We drove up forest road 75 to pick up our hikers at the Rohrbaugh Trail. The fog, thick and cold, sank on us again. Don West in his *A Land of Plenty* has said it best for us . . . "it was where the sky folded its hem around the tree tops."

Tomorrow we would begin at the Boar's Nest. A weather report was for snow!



Red Creek Trail crossing of Red Creek at Fisher Spring Run Trail. Allen de Hart

-Publications- Amphibians, reptiles focus of new book

Amphibians and Reptiles in West Virginia is the title of a new book to be published soon by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

Written by Dr. Bayard Green, a retired Marshall University biology professor, and Dr. Thomas K. Pauley, a biology professor at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, the book will be the first comprehensive account of the 85 species of amphibians and reptiles known to live in West Virginia.

Information about distribution, habitat, seasonal activities and life history data will accompany color photographs which will help identify different species.

The authors also plan a section about the collection and care of specimens, both living and dead.

Dr. Green is one of the foremost authorities on amphibians and reptiles in the state.

Fish book compiled

Information collected from studies of the distribution of West Virginia fishes will be published as "The Fishes of West Virginia" after the last field season in 1987, according to the Nongame News.

The book will be the first of its kind in the state and will include a general overview and history of the drainage systems in West Virginia. Historical records of fishes found in the state and a dichotomous key for identifying fish will also be part of the book.

In addition information on distribution and habitat will be included. This will be enhanced by line drawings, a distributional map, and a brief discussion of the biology and habitat of each species collected in the field surveys.

Last year, the second field season of the study, investigators sampled fish in the Coal River drainage system and smaller tributaries of the Ohio.

Naturalists to meet at Pipestem in April

The Association of Interpretive Naturalists (AIN) of Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia will meet April 27-30 at Pipestem State Park.

Co-sponsored by AIN, the National Park Service and the state Department of Commerce, the meeting is open to all with an interest in the education and promotion of a greater

understanding and appreciation of our relationship to the environs of the past, present and future.

Two days of classes will focus on such diverse topics as stress management, oral history as an interpretive and research tool, and interpersonal communications. Overviews of Pipestem State Park, the West

Virginia State Park System and the New River Gorge National River will be presented.

Special outdoor field trips are planned to allow participants to explore the New River and the southern West Virginia countryside.

A registration fee of \$40 must be paid by March 27; otherwise a late fee will be charged.

For further information contact Gene Cox, New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 1189, Oak Hill, WV 25901 or call 304/465-0508. A brochure with registration information, schedule of sessions and lodging information is available.

Conference looks at hydropower

"American's Small Hydro Future: Implications for our Rivers" is the theme for the 11th Annual National Conference on Rivers. The conference, sponsored by the American Rivers Conservation Council and the Environmental Policy Institute will be April 4-6 in Washington, D.C.

Conference participants will focus on the continuing dilemma which hydropower poses for environmentalists: how to both support this clean, cheap energy source and see

that the nation's streams remain viable as fisheries, wildlife habitat, and recreational areas. Agency personnel, national conservation groups, and citizen activists will present possible solutions.

More than 24 workshops will cover topics such as local case studies, national energy policy, instream flow, river protection opportunities, and national water policy. For more information, contact ARCC, 322 4th Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

**Come to the
Spring Review
May 2-4
Camp Pioneer**

Spring Review


May 2-4 are the dates of the 1986 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's Spring Review, so mark your calendars now.

The weekend event will be at Camp Pioneer near Elkins and will include the usual review-type activities, speakers, outings, and square dancing.

John Purbaugh who is helping plan the review said he hopes the outings will include a work hike to help repair flood damage in the national forest and possibly a fly fishing day school by some Trout Unlimited members.

Details of the planned activities, lodging and meal arrangements, and registration information will be advertised in the *Voice* as it becomes available.

A brochure with all the necessary information will also be sent to all Conservancy members sometime in April.



NATURE SKOOL

A comprehensive program of hands-on nature/wildlife education and fun for children, ages 3-10.

**WVHC
Spring Review
MAY 2-4**

\$2/hour

NEWS BRIEFS

(Editor's note: Each month I publish a News Briefs page summarizing relevant news stories from newspapers around the state. It is hard, however, for one person (me) to have access to all the different papers. Therefore, help is needed!!! If you regularly read a local newspaper, including the Charleston ones, and would be willing to clip out articles about environmental issues or other topics of interest to Conservancy members I would like to hear from you.

Please send any contributions or questions to me at the address listed in the roster. Be sure to write the date and name of the newspaper on the clipping. Thanks!!!)

Carbide to continue emission reductions

Union Carbide Corporation will continue its voluntary effort to reduce emissions in the Kanawha Valley despite the recent doubling of the corporation's debt. Carbide promised in October to reduce emissions of air pollutants at all its facilities by at least 30 percent per year for the next three years.

Since October, however, Carbide has sold its most profitable division and doubled its debt, leading environmentalists to wonder if the commitment to reduce emissions will continue.

The company spent \$220 million in 1985 on environmental and safety measures but planned expenditures for 1986 have not been finalized. The number of audits to check emissions levels in the valley was increased in 1985 and another increase is expected for 1986.

A Carbide official said air emissions of 20 or more pollutants at the company's installations have decreased by 79 percent since December 1984. In 1981 the Air Pollution Control Commission found that Carbide's Institute plant discharged more than 300 tons of known or suspected carcinogens into the air.

Fulfillment of Carbide's commitment to continue reducing emissions will have a significant effect on the overall effort to clean up the valley according to local environmentalists.

—reported in *The Charleston Gazette*, 1/21/86.

Decline in spruce growth found in WV

A study published in the current issue of a British botanical journal documents a decline in the growth rate of spruce trees in West Virginia.

Two biology professors, one from Fairmont State College and one from Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge, Virginia, began investigating the growth rates of high elevation spruce and fir about four years ago.

Looking at trees in southwestern Virginia and in West Virginia, they found a noticeable reduction in growth over the past 20 years.

The researchers do not directly attribute the growth reduction to a single factor, suggesting, instead, a combination of climatic disturbances. Drought, air pollution and acid deposition are possible causes but a definite link between acid rain and reduced rates of tree growth cannot be made from the data gathered.

The article does suggest that acid rain could be a contributing factor. It also points out that the growth reduction pattern has been consistent for almost two decades with no indication that the trees are starting to recover; after most droughts, trees regain their normal growth rates fairly quickly.

—reported in *The Charleston Gazette*, 1/26/86.

Westvaco donates shale barrens to TNC

A 153-acre tract of West Virginia shale barrens was donated to the Nature Conservancy by Westvaco Corporation in October 1985.

Known as the Slaty Mountain Shale Barren, the area is the most significant privately owned shale barren plant community in the world, according to TNC. It is located in Monroe County near the community of Sweet Springs.

The acquisition of a shale barren has been a high priority for the Conservancy's West Virginia Chapter and was one of the targets for the Natural Areas Campaign. Shale barrens are restrictive plant communities occurring only in eastern West Virginia, western Virginia, and a small part of Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Of 17 plant species considered to be endemic to the harsh shale barren sites, 11 are known to occur on Slaty Mountain. These include Kate's Mountain Clover, shale barren onion, yellow buckwheat, and shale barren evening primrose.

—reported in the *Nature Conservancy Newsletter*, Fall 1985.

Study shows concern for environment

Results of a study released in early January by the National Institute for Chemical Studies indicate that Kanawha Valley residents feel they have neither a sound economy nor a safe environment.

The study was conducted to see whether valley residents were more concerned with environmental or economic problems. Forty-eight of the 806 people surveyed said a cleaner environment was their top priority while thirty-one percent said economic prosperity was their top priority. Twenty percent said they were not sure.

People under 45 years of age were more likely to place more value on a cleaner environment while older people favored an improved economy.

In general the survey found that Kanawha Valley residents exhibit good will toward chemical companies based on contributions to their community and the belief that these industries have attempted to reduce pollution. Most people, however, question industry commitment to reduce health hazards and do not trust them as information sources.

Another finding was that residents of the Kanawha Valley are more informed about chemical issues than most people in the nation.

—reported in *The Charleston Gazette*, 1/21/86.

DNR builds liming device in Cranberry

Construction of an acid water neutralization station using a new liming device on the Dogway Fork of the Cranberry River will begin this year.

The station will be built by the Department of Natural Resources and financed in part by a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In conjunction with another treatment station which the DNR hopes to build at the headwaters of the Cranberry, this new facility will have the capability to restore the Cranberry's 25 miles to year-round trout fishing.

The liming device was developed through a cooperative program involving the DNR wildlife division and the college of engineering at West Virginia University. It uses limestone aggregate that is ground inside rotary drums and fed into the stream for a storage bin. Automatic adjustments are made to compensate for changes in stream level.

Prototypes of the new device have been used on Otter Creek for the past two years and have proved to be very efficient in neutralizing stream acidity.

DNR officials plan to have the station operational by early spring of 1987.

—reported in *The Charleston Gazette*, 12/27/85.

Flood relief to be legislative priority

Measures to help West Virginia recover from the flood of 1985 will receive priority from lawmakers during the 1986 session, but most legislators are not sure what steps to take in preventing similar future disasters.

Finding money to help victims is seen by many legislators as one of the state's biggest jobs. It could cost the state \$300 million to match federal funds spent in recovery efforts.

Most legislators say they don't know what state government should do to prevent future flood disasters. Some thought construction of flood walls would be helpful while others said the state should increase soil conservation efforts and create small watersheds.

Delegate Sarah Neal, D-Greenbrier, said the state needed to listen to proposals and suggestions from the Army Corps of Engineers. The senate majority leader agreed, proposing that the state work with the Corps to develop a network of watershed projects.

Other legislators suggested that not much could be done to prevent "500" year floods.

—reported in *The Beckley Register/Herald*, 1/9/86.

License issued for Penobscot dam

Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission voted 4-3 last September to issue Great Northern Paper Company a license to build a dam on the West Branch of the Penobscot River.

Tough conditions were set for the license, however. The company is required to develop a plan for modernizing its five older plants and clarify the implications this will have on employment in the area.

A thorough audit of energy use by the company must be conducted. Environmentalists claim that the company could use energy more efficiently and negate the need for the new dam.

Finally the LURC retained authority over dam safety issues because of concerns over the adequacy of the company's studies.

Despite these tough conditions, the Penobscot Coalition to Save the West Branch will file an appeal of the decision in state Superior Court.

Other opposition includes a motion filed by the national rivers coalition with the Federal Regulatory Commission arguing that FERC must prepare a Comprehensive Plan for the river before issuing a license.

—reported in *American Rivers*, Dec. 1985.

DEADLINE FOR MARCH VOICE

FEBRUARY 28

Send contributions to Deborah Smith

See address in roster

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Why join WVHC?

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a private, non-profit environmental organization started in 1969. Its objectives are "to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation - including both preservation and wise use - and appreciation of the scenic, historic, open space, wilderness, and outdoor recreation resources of and related to West Virginia, and especially the Highlands Region . . ."

Members include people and organizations diverse in their personal interests and professions but united by a common interest. Most WVHC member are West Virginians but many live outside the state.

The Highlands Voice, a monthly

8-page newspaper, is sent to all Conservancy members. It is filled with environmental news on topics of interest and concern to members as well as articles about trips and outings.

The Conservancy sponsors two special weekends each year. These are usually at some scenic spot in the highlands and feature speakers, outings and board meetings.

Your contribution to WVHC is tax deductible and joining is as simple as filling out this form and returning it to the office in Charleston.

Join today and become part of an active organization dedicated to preserving West Virginia's natural resources.

Yes, I'd like to support the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and receive **The Highlands Voice**. Please accept my membership in the category I have checked.

INDIVIDUAL

- \$15 regular
- \$25 family
- \$30 associate
- \$50 sustaining
- \$12 senior citizen/student

ORGANIZATIONAL

- \$50 regular
- \$100 associate
- \$200 sustaining

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Make checks payable to: West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Mail to: Suite 201, 1206 Virginia St., E., Charleston, WV 25301

Membership Benefits

- 1-year subscription to **The Highlands Voice**
- Special meetings with workshops and speakers
- representation through WVHC's efforts to monitor legislative activity.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible. Please keep this for your records.

Date _____

Amount _____

Check number _____