



THE HIGHLANDS VOICE

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Published monthly by the W.Va. Highlands Conservancy

VOL. 19 NO. 1 JANUARY 1986

Plans made for streams' rehab

Ira Latimer, former director of West Virginia's Department of Natural Resources (1969-1977), has been appointed by Gov. Arch Moore as Environmental Coordinator for disaster recovery work being carried out by the Soil Conservation Service after the devastating floods last November.

The SCS, a federal agency which will be very active in stream recovery and restoration has received approximately \$40 million from the federal government for this work.

Latimer will work with all interested federal and state agencies, landowners, and others with an interest in debris removal, stream

restoration and other recovery work which could have an impact on the environment. He will provide written recommendations to the SCS about actions to be taken on each stretch of stream affected by the flood.

Complete estimates of actual damage sustained by West Virginia streams and rivers are not yet available. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has prepared a preliminary assessment of the damage but a copy has not yet been obtained for the *Voice*. This will be summarized in the next issue along with more information about stream restoration and recovery work.



Seneca Rocks Visitor Center Picnic Ground. Area was originally level and grassy. (MNF.)

Volunteers needed for:

Hiking guide, legislature and river monitoring

Hiking Guide Revision

The Conservancy plans to publish the fifth edition of the Hiking Guide to Monongahela National Forest next fall. The 226-page fourth edition will soon be sold out and is in need of substantial revision and updating.

The WVHC Publications Committee is asking for volunteers to:

- 1) hike trails within the MNF and report on conditions;
- 2) research trail records maintained by the U.S. Forest Service at Elkins, WV;

- 3) Enhance the Guide with cross-country skiing information; and
- 4) provide assistance with editing, layout, graphics, and copy.

Interested individuals should contact WVHC Publications Committee Chairman Skip Deegans as noted in the roster.

River Conservation

The WVHC River Conservation Committee is seeking volunteers to assist in the following projects:

- 1) monitor and participate in planning activities by federal and state agencies for the rehabilitation of streams damaged by the floods of November 4, 1985. Extensive in-

stream construction work is contemplated for such streams as the North Fork, Greenbrier, Shavers Fork, and Cheat Rivers.

2) monitor Congressional action and Corps of Engineers planning for major flood control reservoirs in the Greenbrier, Potomac and Cheat River Basins. The 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.

Legislature

The Conservancy needs volunteers to monitor, review and testify regarding a variety of legislation during the 1986 regular session of the West Virginia legislature. It is expected that revision of the Department of Energy bill, conservation easements and returnable container legislation will be the focus of our efforts.

Interested individuals should contact Vice-President for State Affairs Perry Bryant as noted in the roster.

Gauley development dismays ARCC

Officials of the American Rivers Conservation Council expressed dismay in the December issue of *American Rivers* at the development of roads along the Gauley River. They say a pattern of road building to improve access for commercial rafting companies is slowly degrading the wilderness quality which has distinguished the river.

When a study of the Gauley's potential for designation as a Wild and Scenic River was made there were only two direct access points on the lower part of the river. These were at the Summersville Dam and 26 miles downstream at the town of Swiss.

ARCC official Chris Brown says now access roads down to the riverbank are being constructed without an overall plan for a balance between access and preservation of the river's

extraordinary scenery. He contends that Wild and Scenic designation would have prevented such unplanned development.

Brown estimates that four roads have been upgraded or constructed in the past three years, giving most outfitters access at the river's edge. Some roads may be available to private boaters for a fee.

Although the 1984 study report called the river "among the most challenging whitewater rivers in the nation" offering "superb opportunities to fish, camp, hike, and view the scenery," the Gauley was not recommended for protection. The President cited a lack of local support and the fact that little land was in public ownership as reasons for recommending that the Gauley not be included in the system.

Voice gets new look What do you think?

Production of the *Voice* is slowing returning to normal after problems with the November floods and an extended holiday for the editor. Due to time restraints, this issue is shorter than usual.

You will also have noticed that it is on different paper than usual. We are making some changes in how the *Voice* is typeset and printed and this new paper may be part of the change.

Since it represents quite a departure from the usual look of the paper, I would appreciate hearing what you think of it.

Comments and suggestions about the content and appearance of the *Voice* are also requested. It is often difficult to know what Conservancy members are looking for in the paper and input is always greatly appreciated.

From the President

By Larry George

Plotting our future

The Conservancy will hold a special workshop Saturday, January 18 to offer members an opportunity to help plan our future. WVHC Senior Vice President Tom Michael is organizing this workshop to include officers, directors, and members in shaping our focus on issues, methods, financing, professional staff, goals and other questions of organizational management.

A necessary element of this workshop will be a review of our past activities to provide some insight into how we should focus our energies in the future. It is contemplated that the workshop will initially be

comprised of small working groups which will each focus on a specific area of Conservancy activity.

The goal is to develop a working mission plan and statement of purpose which will serve the Conservancy for the next several years. The workshop will precede the Winter meeting of the WVHC Board of Directors to be held Sunday, January 19. Both meetings will be at Jackson's Mill 4-H Camp at Weston.

Your input and participation are encouraged in this important effort. Please forward any inquiries or suggestions to Senior Vice President Tom Michael as noted in the roster.

New Membership Secretary

Conservancy Director-at-Large Adrienne Worthy accepted appointment as Membership Secretary and assumed her new duties January 1. Adrienne was elected to the Conservancy Board of Directors last fall and has been an active member for several years. She is married to Brian Farkas who previously served as editor of *The Highlands Voice*.

Adrienne is employed by the West Virginia Women's Commission and

was formerly Development Director for West Virginia Citizens Action Group in Charleston.

Adrienne's duties include maintaining our membership records and renewal system as well as other administrative responsibilities which are essential to the Conservancy's operation. Adrienne takes over from Chris Leichter who has done an excellent job as Membership Secretary and Executive Assistant during the last 18 months.

Van Gundy joins Board

Dr. James Van Gundy of Elkins was appointed to the Conservancy Board of Directors effective January 1 for the seat vacated by Adrienne Worthy. Jim is chairman of the Department of Environmental Studies at Davis & Elkins College in Elkins. He has served on a variety of

advisory committees in state government concerned with environmental issues and has been a Conservancy member for several years.

We are very pleased to have Jim on the Board and look forward to working with him.

CAG proposes tax breaks for clean air

State tax incentives to encourage companies to install pollution control devices were proposed by the West Virginia Citizen Action Group in September.

The proposed legislation would give two-year tax breaks to companies that voluntarily installed the best available control technologies, according to Perry Bryant, acting director of WV-CAG. Bryant said the organization was taking the unusual move of asking for tax breaks because companies were being asked to make major investments which would benefit everyone.

Bryant said he discussed the possibility with Delegate George Farley (D-Wood) who was not opposed to the idea but who said it may be difficult to achieve given the current economic conditions.

The incentives would encourage chemical companies to reduce emissions, produce new jobs, and protect the environment, Bryant said. The CAG suggestion results from what they call a miserable failure by federal regulators to limit toxic air emissions.

—reported in the *Charleston Gazette*, 9/25/85.

Chessie agrees to sell Thurmond depot

The Chessie System has agreed to sell the historic Thurmond depot building to the Park Service. Fears were expressed last summer about the future of the depot which is one of the most significant historic structures in the New River Gorge.

The Park Service wants to obtain and preserve the building on its original site. Safety considerations by the Chessie System stalled negotiations because the company wanted the building to be moved back from the tracks. Park Service officials contended that the historical value of the depot would be significantly diminished if it was moved.

A negotiated agreement now requires the Park Service to block off the entrances from the depot to the railroad tracks still in use.

—reported in the *Charleston Gazette*.

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HELP

To prepare a bigger and better fifth edition of the WVHC Hiking Guide to Monongahela National Forest, we need:

- *HIKERS-to prepare current trail reports
- *PHOTOGRAPHERS-to submit black-and-white and color photographs
- *GRAPHIC ARTISTS-to help with layout
- *CROSS COUNTRY SKIERS-to scout trails for a new section on skiing in the MNF

Contact: Skip Deegans, WVHC Publications Committee
Box 564, Lewisburg, WV 24901

VOICES

Coal operators make suggestions for 2-acre provision

To the Editor:

The October, 1985, edition of *The Highlands Voice* (vol. 18, no. 8) contained the article, "State won't fight injunction against two-acre exemption." Your article suggested that the WVHC and other groups oppose this DOE provision for reasons that, "it would do serious damage to West Virginia's reclamation program;" "it would encourage operators to sub-divide large mine sites;" and, "it would be more profitable to forfeit the bond than reclaim the site."

Similarly, *The Charleston Gazette* (Friday, November 15, 1985) quoted WVHC President Larry George, in opposition to this provision. "... In Kentucky... large groups of relatives put their mines adjacent to each other. Suddenly you've got a 30 or 40 acre surface mine exempt from the requirement..." In this same article, Becky Cain, President of the League of Women Voters (of West Virginia), stated, "you can do a lot of damage on two acres. Streams that are polluted on less than two acres are still polluted."

In response to such concerns, the Tri-State Coal Operators Association has researched and presented a proposal to the interim sub-committee on coal mining, which we feel is a workable solution for bridging this environment-industry gap. Instead of simply criticizing others' ideas, we find it more productive to provide reasonable alternatives that should appeal to either side of such a controversy.

Let me remind your readers that coal operators are concerned West Virginians. They are comprised of some of the heartiest sportsmen, hunters and fishermen, and have a sincere love of land surpassed by none. They likewise understand that there must be great consideration given the delicate balance and relationship of industry and environment.

The Tri-State Coal Operators Association believes that it is feasible to make the two-acre land tract provision (it is not an exemption) a viable, economical and environmentally positive provision. We acknowledge that regulations abuse hurts all operators and the environment. The lack of permitting control in such states as Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia has resulted in the "string of pearls" dilemma, abusing the two-acre land tract provision. Many DOE and DNR officials will attest, however, that this problem stems from poor recording procedure and poor enforcement. The small coal operators in West Virginia simply need a legal, economical way to get small coal blocks (two-acre) and protect the environment with limited hassles in permitting and enforcement.

Drainage control is necessary and must meet NPDES requirements, but does not necessarily require a pond where pumping or other forms of control would more than adequately meet these requirements. The prescribed 30-day permitting period would be of great assistance, but to enhance the success of the approval process, both the

applicant and processing agency would benefit from a shortened (2-3 page) standard application to file in conjunction with appropriate maps and required blasting plan.

Control of the "string of pearls" abuses experienced in other states can be attained by requiring small operators to visibly stake the two-acre tract for the duration of the mining project. To enhance environmental compliance, adjacent tracts may not be re-mined until the permitted tract is reclaimed, seeded, mulched and established.

To enhance the economics of mining two-acre tracts, the \$5,000 bond per acre would be reimbursable after one growing season when proper reclamation has been established, or reduce such bond to \$1,000 per acre, reimbursable after three growing seasons in reclamation. We contend that proper reclamation can be established in one growing season. Certainly, if it is not established in three growing seasons, it never will be.

The OSM will not exempt temporary spoil placement areas from the two-acre permitted area. While the OSM may exempt all haul roads from the area, we suggest that, while existing haul roads would constitute no land displacement, their exemption may be justified.

These recommendations provide a balance of industry and ecology — at no cost to the State of West Virginia. —Robert J. Allen, Director
Tri-State Coal Operators Assoc.

New bottle bill to be introduced in 1986 Legislature

So you're tired of seeing those bottles and cans along the side of the road, or maybe you just lost another cow because it ingested another carelessly discarded beverage container in your field, or are your county commissioners frantically searching for an expensive new landfill site because the present one is choked with recyclable beverage containers, or are you an unemployed glass factory worker, coal miner, glass sand quarry worker, or a truck driver wondering why nobody is doing anything?

Well, the WV Public Interest Research Group at West Virginia University has written a container deposit bill which will be introduced, and has received support from

several delegates, at the 1986 WV Legislative session. The experience of the container deposit law in other states has been to result in a net increase in jobs, a significant decrease in roadside litter, as well as a decrease in the amount of waste ending up in landfills. All of this is accomplished by adding a 5 cent deposit on each beverage container or 10 cents on plastic containers which is then refunded to the consumer when the container is returned to any business selling that product.

A container deposit law is NOT a new tax on any state industry or on the consumers. All it asks is that consumers return their beverage containers to the store or a

redemption center on their next shopping trip. The law is also an excellent method of controlling state costs.

State Highways Commissioner Bill Ritchie said in the May 30, 1985 edition of *The Charleston Daily Mail* that "his department spends about \$1.5 million a year picking up debris," and "he would like the Legislature to consider a bottle bill aimed at curbing litter along the state's roadways."

A container deposit law would require additional people to handle containers at stores and distributorships, truckers to transport containers, and through tax relief for WV industries encourage the reopening of glass

plants to manufacture beverage containers in our state. At present, no beverage containers are manufactured for use in West Virginia — we wish to change this and put WV workers back to work. This would necessitate greater glass sand production from the eastern part of our state and potentially an increased need for coal for melting glass and generating electricity.

If you want additional information about this bill which would improve the job situation in our state and make it a less littered, please contact us at: WV-PIRG, WVU Mountainlair-SOW, Morgan town, WV 26505. —Ron Bird, Jr., Gregory E. Tieman, Legislative Coordinators, WVU-PIRG.

A hike in the land of blue crayfish and skullcaps

by Allen de Hart

Before hiking and camping for a week in the scenic Otter Creek Wilderness I spend a day hiking the 9.5 miles from the Condon Run parking area of Stuart Memorial Drive to the Fernow Experimental Forest. My hiking companion was Gary Stainback and a fellow hiker, Scott Saunders, picked us up at Big Springs Gap.

Spur trails and side roads always attract my interest, particularly if they harbor unusual sounds. The first we took was a spur road to the Otter Creek Fishing Water Improvement Station. Here, limestone is ground to neutralize the stream acid and improve fishing quality.

After a mile on the Otter Creek Trail which was lined with great laurel, we encountered the Yellow Creek Trail. This was more than a spur and we would hike it and its adjoining trails later.

Down river we entered a heavy stand of hemlock and red spruce. At two miles, a short spur on the right led to an excellent grassy campsite on the creek bank.

Soon after leaving the Mylius Trail we stopped abruptly. At our feet were light and royal blue crayfish (blue from a genetic color phase). They waved their plastic-looking claws as if for attention.

Across the creek at the Moore Run Trail, we were reminded of logging history by the sight of a spruce impaled with an old narrow gauge rail. Nearby was an inviting spur trail to Devil's Gulch, an impenetrable rhododendron coppice and dark hollow. Legend has it that anyone who tries to find its headwaters never returns.

We were mesmerized by the naturally sculptured sections of Pothole Falls, and talked about it until we reached a site of an old logging camp, Camp Two.

After a short distance, we left the Otter Creek Trail and began a 1-mile ascent on Big Springs Gap Trail, the Cheat Ranger District's preferred north access route to the Otter Creek Trail. We followed a rocky drain where the stream appeared and disappeared on its subterranean route.



Waterfall near the mouth of Devil's Gulch in the Otter Creek Wilderness. Photo by Allen de Hart.

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DEC INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT ESSENTIAL, WISE SAYS

DEC HIKING, CANOEING, KITES MAKE WEEKEND FUN FOR ALL

MEMBERSHIP

DEC NEW DIRECTORS CHOSEN

MAY WE'RE GROWING... SLOWLY

JUNE MEMBERS ASKED TO HELP IN MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

OCT WHY JOIN WVHC

DEC IF YOU CAN WRITE, ORGANIZE OR JUST WORK, WVHC NEEDS YOU

MISC.

JAN THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF HYDROELECTRICITY

FEB CONSERVATION GROUPS JOIN FORCES IN FORUM

FEB NSS SCHEDULES CAVE MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

MAR GYPSY MOTH SPREAD

MAR THE WILDERNESS DEBATE

MAR ARCEAUX TO HEAD AG'S ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION

MAR VOLUNTEERS NAMED TO COMMITTEES

MAY PUBLIC STAYS TOUGH ON POLLUTION

MAY GEORGE NAMED TO COAL COUNCIL

JUNE DANGERS OF LAWN CARE CHEMICALS OUTLINED IN NEW BOOKLET

JUNE DNR WILDLIFE CALENDAR READY

JUNE EPA MEETS ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

JUNE CONTINUED COOPERATION ESSENTIAL, ALBRIGHT SAYS

JUNE WILDERNESS SUGGESTIONS MADE

JULY NATURAL HISTORY GUIDES AVAILABLE

JULY WOODCOCK PRINTS FOR SALE BY CONSERVANCY

JULY ENVIRONMENTALISTS EXPRESS OPINIONS IN WVU SURVEY

JULY HARPER FERRY PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION

(To be continued in February issue)