



The Highlands Voice

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Kumbrabow vs WV Division of Forestry

No input, no plan, no trees

by Bill Ragette'

Joe Marshall was the one who started it all. He got Dan excited about it and Dan called me. Now lots of folks are angry about WV Division of Forestry's new plans for timbering in Kumbrabow State Forest.

Joe picked up my son, Hickory, and me early one Saturday in June east of Elkins. Weather reports indicated a 30% chance of rain, but Joe said if it rains anywhere it will rain at Kumbrabow. Right in the heart of West Virginia's rainy spot, the forest grows rapidly and lush where the soil has not been destroyed by fires or agriculture. Sure enough, the closer we got to the forest the wetter it got.

As we drove south out of Elkins on US 219 in the spectacular Tygart Valley we passed quite a few sawmills and secondary wood products industries as well as beautiful valley farms and homesteads. All the hills are forested. The ones to the east for the most part are in the publicly held Monongahela National Forest and to the west a huge extent of private land, much owned by the mills themselves.

The sign and road to Kumbrabow is easily missed - one of WV's best kept secrets. A 5 mile hardtop road winds up out of the valley past private (mostly timber company) uninhabited lands and Civil War Historical sites

disappearing under the forest. We parked at the Forest Headquarters and struck out across the main creek in the forest - Mill Creek. The sky kept spitting a bit but fortunately it hardly amounted to more than mists and clouds and kept us cool as we climbed the mountain trails to visit the site of the intended cut.

Hiking up to the Mill Ridge Trail we almost immediately came upon the tops and debris from the cut of 1991. I've never seen so many cherry trees or tops in one place. The tops were so thick that any off trail hiking would have been severely limited. Trees were cut right on the trail, although the prospectus for the cut had designated a 5 foot buffer. We are assured by WV Division of Forestry (WVDF) that there will be a 50' buffer this time around, unless of course they feel that the tree presents a hazard to hikers.

After the trail attained the ridge we came upon the first haul road. It was hard for me to believe, but every single tree along the road was banged up and shy of bark at its base. There were so many haul roads converging here that despite a sign for the hiking trail it would have been easy to take a wrong turn.

Further along we came to the first clearcut of the 91 'harvest'. Down below it was selectively cut, but here in a 30 acre 'opening' every last stick was down. The cut straddled the trail which at this point followed the ridge.

According to Joe, the other clearcut done in '91 also straddled the trail. One side of the mountain was extremely steep and the cut, at the bottom, had left a swampy looking area where sedges flourished, along the muddy haul road.

Upon circling round the cut and reaching its far corner we came to the near boundary of this new 150 acre cut. I had a sinking feeling even before Joe told me the location of this new cut. Maples, cherries and oaks larger than any I've seen out of protected old growth/wilderness areas in WV abounded. WVDF says that this is not a clearcut, that barely more than half of the trees' basal area will be taken. But I have a feeling that this will have to be all of the giants. The mists were rolling over the ridge between the trees. Silence and majesty accompanied the tendrils of clouds flowing through the woods. Down the mountain to the east where the bulk of the trees will be cut you could see huge trunks and tall tops amongst the understory and smaller trees. We later heard about the equally large Hickories way on down the slopes, near the bottom of the 'cut'.

We wandered along the ridge for an hour or so, stopping often to admire two or three closely spaced groves or small groves, wondering why the largest stand of trees in

the whole forest was being singled out for destruction. We looked long and hard for the 'overmature' and faltering trees that WVDF wanted to save from gypsy moth attack by cutting them down. David Lilly, WVDF District Forester, wrote in a letter to the three government agencies who were notified of the sale, "The need to work in this stand at this time is partially due to the anticipated arrival of the gypsy moth and to salvage a large portion of the overmature timber in the stand." These trees are only 80 years old or so (I'm a compulsive tree ring counter and the neighboring clearcut of '91 gave me lots of stumps to examine). Oaks have a life span of at least 200 years (in the Smokies there are trees 500 yrs+). These trees appeared to be quite vigorous still, showing very few signs of those old-growth characteristics I'm always on the look out for. Although there were a few fallen and decaying trees here and there, for the most part the forest floor was still barren of this important habitat. Some areas in the boundary of the cut had few trees over 12" and no oaks. I wondered what the excuse was to cut these cherry groves.

The Soapbox.

WVDF has really become an agency out of control. Even folks in the Division of Parks feel overwhelmed and helpless before WVDF's 'management practices. Despite claims to the contrary by David Lilly there is no public involvement. Except for a couple of government agencies, no one is even notified that the WVDF intends to make a cut. Any public input was from angered citizens writing letters in protest after the decision to cut had been made. No environmental assessment is made, no alternative management practices are considered. There is a plan for management of the state forests created in 1969 that supposedly considered the public's views, but as of press time I had not secured a copy. Considering how the WVDF operates at this time, I wonder how far reaching the public scoping process was. In the intervening 24 years, values have greatly changed. Certainly its time to open up the 'plan' for revision, to incorporate new information on the management and preservation of biodiversity, and to include a bit of the (see page 8)



Mists roll by one of the many giants within the boundary of the proposed timber cut on Mill Ridge in Kumbrabow State Forest.

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---from the heart of the mountains---

by Cindy Rank

"FIXING" THE FUND

With a birthday only three short months away, I often find my mind wandering over the half century of metamorphosis that has transformed a childhood innocent into this cynical adult.

I no longer fantasize about that dream of youth and promise of democracy that assume responsible people can reason together to arrive at reasonable solutions to common problems. In fact, I rarely accept anything at face value anymore, but rather find myself searching for the hidden agenda or underlying meaning, as though by instinct I realize that what goes on in the unseen subterranean maze of motives (usually power, money or politics) has more to do with the outcome of a particular endeavor than whatever other more visible elements of reason or principle can be brought to bear.

No doubt I am not alone in these perceptions, and needless to say I do have my more upbeat moments, but recent meetings that involve me (and WVHC because of our recent citizen complaints about various mine sites) seem to highlight the often flim-flam nature of things that trigger my more jaundiced world view.

At the risk of losing any of you who keep hoping these columns will become more positive, and at the risk of Bill tearing out his hair because I've turned this month's column into a full length article, allow me to ramble a bit about one of the many quagmires associated with our mining program.

Some of you may remember a news story that appeared in several newspapers across the state last August announcing the Governor's Stream Restoration Program, an initiative to address acid mine drainage. (—You know, that deadly metal-laden drainage from some mines that is best known in its bright orange phase and for its ability to kill fish and other stream life.)

The new program was to provide at least \$14 million in state and federal funds to treat and restore some of the 1,900 miles of W.V. streams that have been impacted by acid mine drainage (AMD) from abandoned mines. (Actually, it's closer to 3,000 miles if you include those streams that are affected by metals as well as low pH from those abandoned mines.) The program was to address those streams in the state "where money is not available for reclamation work."

Sounds great! ...especially at a time when the governor and state were under constant fire for deficiencies in the state regulatory program particularly with regard to matters of AMD. On face value it was a praiseworthy idea, a bright spot in an otherwise bleak picture.

But the picture blurs considerably a bit as the details of the program are examined more closely.

Federal monies are to come from the 10% Abandoned Mine Lands 'set aside' money that can be used to address water problems in areas affected by drainage from sites mined and abandoned prior to the 1977 Surface Mine Act (SMCRA). That sounds pretty good, because for years the allowable expenditure of AML funds didn't extend to the hundreds of water related problems at some of the old abandoned sites because there are too many emergency and other higher priority sites to deal with.

State funds were to include Special Reclamation Fund monies and Mitigation Fund monies.

Special Reclamation monies are part of the W.V.'s bonding program and are to be used to reclaim sites mined and or forfeited/abandoned after the 1977 SMCRA where bond monies are insufficient to fully reclaim the site. Where post-act sites are part of the problem in a particular watershed, these funds might well be spent to meet the appropriate SMCRA standards for pH and metals at those sites, but such guidelines and requirements were not recognized in this new program.

Mitigation Fund monies are monies collected, to put it bluntly, from the sale of streams (\$200,000/ flowing acre of water) where in-stream ponds and fills are the only acceptable alternatives, especially in the steep mountain valleys of southern West Virginia where space is at a premium and huge mountain top removal strip mines are today's greatest value. In other words, as streams in the more desirable coal fields are sacrificed, monies from their 'sale' will be used to improve streams elsewhere, eg. monies from Mingo and McDowell can be used in Tucker and Randolph.

With extremely mixed feelings about the funding for the program, I move on to the watersheds that may be worked on. Readers of the VOICE these past two decades will recognize many of the names: the Blackwater, the Middle Fork, the North Branch of the Potomac, Dunlop Creek, Spruce Laurel Fork, Big Sandy, Upper Tygart, Manns and Meadow Creeks on the New, Muddy Creek on the Cheat...

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the need is great, and that something should be done in all of the watersheds. But reasonable discussions break down at the point when decisions have to be made about what technologies and what funding can appropriately be used at each individual location.

When the Stream Restoration Committee met last fall, there was little debate about the proposed projects on the Blackwater. The solutions and monies recommended were a mixed bag, but the group decided to pursue the various projects despite lingering questions about 1) the use of Mitigation monies at places in the state other than the areas where the stream sales were made, 2) the effectiveness of limestone drum treatments stations in AMD degraded streams (similar to the stations on the Cranberry and Otter Creek to treat acid rain problems), 3) who was to assume the long term maintenance costs of the limer, 4) the long term effectiveness of the "world's largest" experimental ALD (Anoxic Limestone Drain): 2,500-3,000 foot long, and 5) the standards to be required at any of the proposed re-mining sites.

At a recent meeting about the Middle Fork there was less agreement.

Is the Middle Fork worthy of consideration? Of course! It was a fine trout stream and fishery before it's demise at the hands of overwhelming amounts of AMD, and residents of the area from Cassity on to and including Andra State Park some 22 miles downstream would be ecstatic to have their lovely lively river restored. Besides, ...the Middle Fork seems to be the apple of the eye to several key people in the Stream Restoration effort.

But that is where the agreement ends. The who's and how's and when's of (see page 6)

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Letters

Enough Old Growth?

Voice Editor

I was glad to see Robert Stough writing again in the voice. He has a rare vision and he writes beautifully. Surely many of your readers have saved these valuable, mature, conscious-expanding ecological perspectives on big trees on public lands. I appreciate that so much, that I would not want to take any kind of contrary position. I do however submit the following.

The Monongahela does now have large patches of wilderness scattered throughout - with generous nearby "6.2" (buffer) areas that would be little disturbed. (The U.S.F.S. reported this to the WVHC a year ago at our weekend at Watoga St Pk) Is this not enough old growth reserve for this strategically located National Forest? It is after all a National Forest not a Park. We do have state parks nearby at Watoga, Babcock, Blackwater and Canaan and

Holly River - all for old growth.

I am amazed to see this is not much different than the position of the timber industry. I would not want to simply take the position of any clearly special interest group. Do we need a moratorium on logging to sift through these deliberations? Would it really take much time to do this? Could it be done quickly and decisively with full participation and satisfaction if there were a meaningful and expert help and staff dedicated to it? Would we need a moratorium then at all? Would we just need the moratorium on clearcutting? How does this relate to the Monongahela's now scheduled replanning?

Bob Stough has ably cast an important light on these questions. Thanks Bob.
Don Gasper, member

Stough Responds

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank Don Gasper for his kind words regarding my work. I am sure that he has a deep and abiding love for the Monongahela Forest, and has labored long and hard to protect it from degradation. Without that good work the Forest would certainly be worse off than it is today. However, he and I appear to have, in spite of his stated intention, different views concerning the preservation of old-growth wilderness.

In answer to Don's question about old-growth I do not feel that we have a sufficient amount, whatever that may be. Quite the contrary, I believe that there is now a terrible paucity of old-growth because of our past abuses, one that will certainly not be remedied by the maturation of currently protected areas, which are much too small and scattered to form true old-growth ecosystems in the highlands. Even if we include all the 6.2 management areas (which are at best only tenuously protected) there will still be many large holes in the Monongahela Forest which would be (and are now) given over to exploitation. Restoration of old-growth wilderness throughout the Appalachians can only happen by establishing large core areas linked by protected corridors and surrounded by mitigating buffer zones. Unless this occurs we will end up with what amounts to a few green islands in a sea of slaughter, which over time will become more and more genetically isolated and weakened. The example of the Cheat Mtn. Salamander found in the April Voice is a classic illustration of genetic degradation caused by insufficient wild habitat, and there are unfortunately many more species in similar straits, as well as undoubtedly more still that we do not even know about.

My support for a logging moratorium in the MNF is based solely on using that as a first step towards ending all resource exploitation in the Forest. Such a moratorium would of necessity have to be concurrent with similar steps in all the national forests in the Appalachian range. I really do not consider this to be politically feasible now or in the foreseeable future, but I nevertheless think it is on principle a worthy proposal deserving of support. What is probably more realistic is to demand an end to government-subsidized exploitation of all public lands. Without such welfare payments a

great deal of public land, especially in the mountains, would be effectively preserved for the present because fair-market competition would favor lower elevation and private lands. I realize that the transition from an economy based on subsidized exploitation to one that is truly equitable and sustainable will not be easy. However, such a transition must be made if we are to have any hope at all in achieving a harmonious balance between human activities and the wild Earth, without which ALL species and habitats will be ultimately impoverished.

I recognize that some folks may consider these views to be a kind of 'special interest', but I would argue that they are no more so than any other 'interest', unless of course we accept only strictly human concerns as legitimate. But does the fact that the plants and animals of the Forest have no cronies in the legislature or money in the banks or talk shows on television mean that they have no rights worthy of recognition? Do we really have the right to decide the fate of other species based solely upon our own 'needs'? That kind of homocentric thinking (which we are all guilty of to some degree) has brought us to the brink of planetary ecological collapse, and if one thing at least is clear about how we might avoid the abyss it is that we must adopt a biocentric perspective regarding our exploitation of the Earth, and thus take only what we really need, and if necessary control those 'needs' to bring them into accord with the whole community of beings. That is at the heart of my support for viable old-growth wilderness in the Monongahela Forest, and throughout the Appalachian Range. We cannot abrogate the rights of other species without also diminishing ourselves. We cannot deny freedom to other beings without also shackling ourselves. We cannot have a healthy society unless we have a healthy Earth, and specifically in our case a healthy Forest, which I believe requires large cores of old-growth wilderness free from slavery to humans.

Finally I would like to thank Don also for furthering the discussion of these issues. Whatever our individual perspectives on the Forest may be I think we all share a strong desire to maintain and encourage its ecological integrity, which I hope we will not forget even when we don't all agree.
Sincerely,
Robert Stough

The Voice at Sea

To the WVHC Voice,

I finally received my copy of Mar '93 edition and I must admit I love to read about the mountain state while surrounded by sea water thousands of miles away. Robert Stough's letter reiterated, in a most candid, style the importance of saving old growth forest. His philosophy on this issue and enviro policy in general certainly cuts to the chase as fast as some bureaucrats go from activist to apologist immediately after election day.

Frank Young's letter to now V.P. Gore doesn't waste words. I think its amazing that we keep witnessing the same predictable behavior from Government. (I recently visited the WTI site last summer and I couldn't believe the shape of the Ohio River in that vicinity.) Terri Swearingen and the Tri-State Environmental Council should be warmly commended for their action against WTI - Wake up everybody! It

makes you want to go out and get arrested to expose the rampant hipocracy at the EPA. It sounds to me like a grand jury investigation is in order. That might give Clinton/Gore the way out they so desperately seek. Seems like everything must be politically correct these days.

I hope everyone is having a good time at the Spring Review '93. I'm missing it for the first time in four years - it is one of the sacrifices of working on a ship. So far I've missed the World Trade Center fiasco, the Waco stand-off/fiasco, the blizzard of '93 and the WV legislative session and now the Spring Review - Life just ain't fair. I appreciate all the hard work it takes to keep up the fight for "fair representation" by open democracy and grassroots in defense of the environment.
Sincerely,
John Christensen



Memorial Day Reflections

Dear Mrs. Rank,

Memorial Day 1993 has certainly been a sad one for me. For many years after World War II I felt we were building a truthful and generally an Honest America. I had faith in our circuit court judges that they would protect the constitutional rights, the property real estate rights of all our citizens, that they would faithfully enforce all the laws that were passed and put on the books.

Since 1982 I have had doubts if they are even trying on the upper part of the Little Kanawha River.

I will be 72 years old tomorrow June 1, 1993 and I hope all young members can see how sad one can be when they come down to the place like me where I will probably not be living when this one judge is a candidate again. So, make sure while you are young. I have not kept the faith with those friends of mine that died in combat to protect the federal and state constitutions.

I am not up to date enough even to know the things that were passed and signed into law, but I know we had some good things passed into law a few years ago. One I was happy about was to get all the old leaky gasoline and oil tanks removed. I was never

able to find any person that would act when they got the location of an old tank.

If we plan to get people to come to West Virginia to hunt and fish we have to be sure the animals have food. If we are over populated with deer and bear there will not be much small game or many birds that survive even in the woods. The deer walk all day and pick up every acorn that falls.

The power saw and bulldozer are making den trees for small game disappear. The Department of Agriculture wants to see the forest grow as a crop. Leaving some den trees is not part of the crop.

It seems to me we must go back to the basics. We have to get some of the rivers clean. I have hunted with people that drank the water right out of the Little Kanawha in Upshur County and they had no bad effects from it.

It makes me proud every time I see on T.V. or read about the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy taking a stand on the issues that may keep us alive tomorrow.

You have my support. Please try to keep up the good work.

Sincerely
A Webster County Taxpayer
on the Little Kanawha River.

Central Appalachian Wilderness in Perspective

by R. F. Mueller

Bob Mueller is a forest activist and Conservancy member living in Virginia. I first met Bob around 1988 at an Earth First! Rendezvous in the George Washington National Forest. He was bent over close to the ground attempting to identify a low growing herb, which we shortly keyed out as a *Chrysogonum*.

This article first appeared in *Wild Earth*.

The Monongahela National Forest lies in the strategic heart of the Appalachians. Including parts of the Valley and Ridge Province and the Allegheny Mountains and Plateau, it is the most promising bastion for wilderness recovery and big wilderness in the entire Central Appalachian region. Its 900,000 acres of federal lands could be doubled through acquisition of wildlands within and adjacent to the proclamation boundary. It has excellent connections to the million acre George Washington National Forest to the east and along the mountain ridges to Maryland and Pennsylvania State Forests. It is the best regional center and support for the ultimate recovery of biodiversity of rugged mountains and hills to the west and southwest.

The Monongahela has inspired several recent proposals for expanded wilderness, in particular Robert Stough's (1990) "Wilderness Manifesto" and Ed Lytwak's (1991) "The Monongahela Forest, An Alternative Vision." It is generally agreed among those who share this vision that we should finish, not with isolated wilderness tracts in otherwise hostile terrain, but with integrated preserves in which wilderness cores are linked by broad migration corridors and enveloped by buffer zones where only low impact human activities occur (footnote 1). Advocated particularly by Noss (1983, 1986), the wilderness/corridor system was adapted to the Appalachians by the writer (Mueller, 1985) and by Sayen (1987). Recently it has been elaborated for the George Washington National Forest (Mueller, 1991) and has been incorporated as an alternative in the pending plan for this forest.

Currently there are five areas, comprising 78,131 acres, designated as Wilder-

ness in the Monongahela: Cranberry 35,864 acres, Dolly Sods 10,215 acres, Laurel Fork North 6055 acres, Laurel Fork South 5997 acres and Otter Creek 20,000 acres. Several of these areas, in particular the Cranberry and Otter Creek, would lend themselves to immediate substantial expansion, each perhaps doubling in area. This would be especially easy for the Cranberry Wilderness since the adjacent Cranberry Back Country already has its roads closed to private vehicles. In answer to a recent inquiry, the Forest Service stated (letter, 6-3-91) that there is currently no roadless area review and evaluation (RARE) study of the Monongahela, and that no formal proposals for additional Wilderness have been made by citizens.

The Monongahela varies considerably in terrain and climate, with elevations ranging from less than 1000 feet above sea level near Petersburg, WV to 4862 feet on Spruce Knob. Precipitation increases more than 30 inches a year from east to west so that the linear, folded mountains of the Valley and Ridge Province lie in the rain shadow of the high Alleghenies. Mean temperatures in the region may vary 10 degrees F, with the lowest temperatures in high valleys where air drains from the peaks. These variations in climate have created habitat islands in which northern disjunct species formed small isolated populations. Such populations are vulnerable to genetic deterioration and stochastic effects. The importance of preserve size, connectivity and general design is obvious in these diverse but marginal ecosystems. The parent forest type of the Monongahela is mixed mesophytic and was derived from similar forests that have occupied the Appalachians and other world centers such as Europe and East Asia since Tertiary times (Braun, 1950). It shows its most characteristic development at elevations below 2500 feet and in the southern Monongahela. It is diverse with a number of species each of magnolias, oaks, hickories, walnuts, elms, birches, ashes, basswoods, maples, locusts and pines. There is also Tuliptree, Black Gum, Eastern Hemlock, Black Cherry, American Beech, and the type indicator Yellow Buckeye. American Chestnut, now stunted by disease, once was a major and impressive component. In a mature forest these

canopy trees tower over an equally complex understory of small trees and shrubs and an exceedingly rich ground cover of flowering plants, ferns, fungi, etc. On ascent to higher elevations southern species gradually drop out, and northern species such as Yellow Birch and Mountain Maple appear, and Sugar Maple, Beech and eastern Hemlock assume dominance. This is the Hemlock-White Pine-Northern Hardwood Forest of Braun. It has a distinctly norther quality in both woody and herbaceous flora and may appear identical to forests of the Adirondack foothills or New England. However it frequently contains traces of typically Southern and Central Appalachian species such as Frazer and Cucumber Magnolias and Black Locust. In some places Great Rhododendron forms heavy understory thickets, a feature uncharacteristic of the northern forests.

Above 3500 feet the northern mixed forest yields gradually to a Red Spruce montane forest of boreal appearance. In this forest circumpolar flowering plants such as *Oxalis montana* and *Coptis groenlandica* or Lycopods and mosses dominate the ground cover while shrubs are rare because of the dense shade. Formerly forest of this kind covered almost 50,000 acres in West Virginia. It is now recovering from the period of destructive logging and fires. Yet as mentioned previously, this forest is, in biological terms, island habitat.

Toward the east and coinciding roughly with the western edge of the Valley and Ridge Province, where conditions are drier than in the Alleghenies, there is a broad ecotone between the mixed mesophyte forest and more xeric oak-chestnut type forests of the George Washington National Forest.

Within the large tracts of these major forest types are a considerable number of restricted habitats such as glades (open wetlands or other openings), heath barrens, grass balds, shale barrens, caves and exposed cliffs and peaks. The wetland glades are complex and include sphagnum bogs with peat beds, fens, marshes and included shrub and forest swamps. Because of generally high elevations they are home to a wealth of northern species (note 2), some are common, such as cranberries, blueberries, viburnums, and hollies, and some are rare disjuncts like Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda glaucophylla*), Buckbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Scheuchzeria palustris. Many glades resulted in part from Beaver action and have extensive Speckled alder thickets as well as open water or derivative meadows and successional flora.

The high plateaus of the northern Monongahela and vicinity (Dolly Sods, Roaring Plains, etc.) are known for their extensive rocky heath barrens which resulted in part from post logging fires (Clarkson, 1966). Here in open terrain, wind-shaped "banner" Red Spruce rise among a northern flora that includes Trembling Aspen, Mountain Ash and Mountain Holly (*Nemopontus mucronata*) and characteristically a variety of Appalachian heaths such as Mountain Laurel, Minibush (*Menziesia pilosa*), Great Rhododendron, azaleas, huckleberries, etc. The northern components of the Monongahela may compromise as much as ten per cent of all native vascular plants of the Forest and a substantial number of these are at or near their southernmost stations and vulnerable to island effect. Associated northern fauna includes Northern Flying Squirrel, Varying Hare, Fisher and the southernmost breeding stations for

passerines such as the Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Purple Finch and others. The Canaan Valley (outlined by a dotted line in the map), a premier glade complex at 3200 ft elevation, contains 40 percent of West Virginia's wetlands. These glades host the southernmost breeding pairs of the Common Snipe as well as a disjunct Black Duck population. The Goshawk, a bird of remote northern forests and the Black Billed Magpie (*Pica pica*), a western bird, have nested there.

Shale barren flora, concentrated east of the Allegheny Front in the Valley and Ridge Province, are similar to those of the George Washington N.F. in species and adaptation to local hot, dry conditions. Even more restricted are the flora of certain isolated cliffs and peaks such as Panther Knob which boasts the only occurrence of Michaux's saxifrage as well as the coastal disjunct False Heather (*Hudsonia tomentosa*). Silvery Nailwort (*Paronychia argyrocoma*) is found only on Tuscarora quartzite, of which the most famous exposure is Seneca Rocks in the North Fork Mountains.

Native diversity and ecological integrity of the Monongahela have undergone considerable diminution since the arrival of Europeans and this trend continues. We can only wonder what rare endemics might have been lost through logging, fires and agricultural practices that destroyed the very soil of the region. It seems possible that some currently rare trees such as the Eastern Larch (now confined to the Cranesville Swamp north of the map area), Balsam Fir and Red Pine were more common in the original conifer forest which once dominated the higher elevations. Since the National Forests were established, extensive road building, clearcutting and other developments have diminished, extirpated or possibly extinguished a number of species. An example is the Canada Yew (*Taxus canadensis*), a northern evergreen shrub which was once common at high elevations but which has now been virtually eliminated by deer browsing. This is the pattern throughout this range and has been documented in detail by Alverson, Waller and Solheim (1988) in Wisconsin. In all probability, as in Wisconsin, a number of herbaceous plants are at risk from the same fate (note 3). The timbering and "game management" policies have led to this situation through the creation of abundant early successional vegetation and edge effects. In the absence of large predators, edge-dwelling species prey upon vulnerable and rare forest interior species.

Seemingly following the early example of Earth First! visionaries, Alverson et al proposed the creation of late successional habitat consisting of 50,000 to 100,000 acre preserves. This would have the effect of diminishing deer food and general edge effects. However they failed to stress the need for large predators. The creation of a number of wilderness preserves in this size range is, as we shall see, possible on the Monongahela. However this step should be regarded merely as a prelude to the complete rewilding of these forest with Cougars, Grey Wolves and other extirpated species.




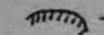



Proposed Wilderness Corridor System

The proposed system consists of 19 new Wilderness Areas and expansions of those already designated. These new and expanded wildernesses are defined by hatched solid



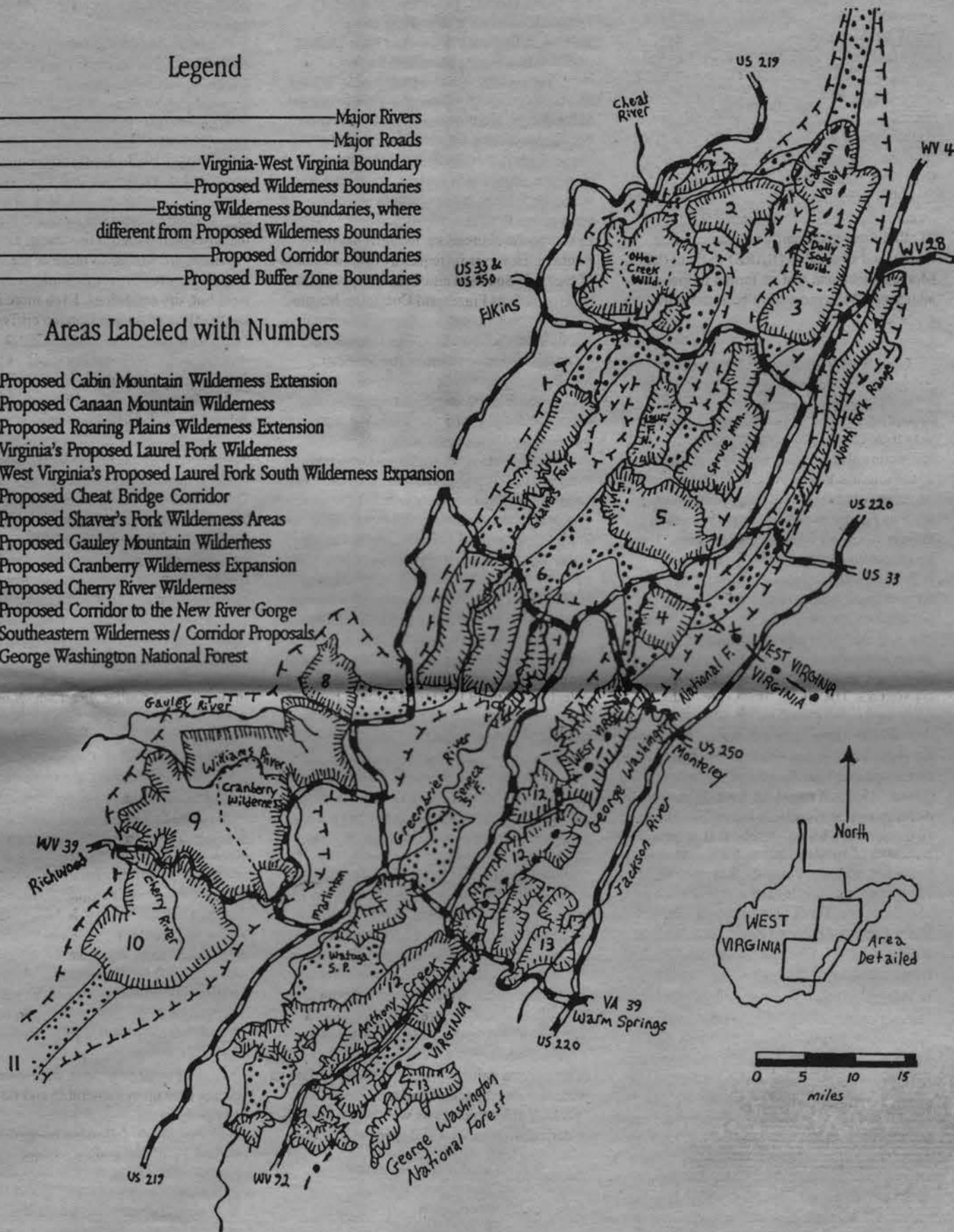
The Monongahela National Forest

Legend

-  Major Rivers
-  Major Roads
-  Virginia-West Virginia Boundary
-  Proposed Wilderness Boundaries
-  Existing Wilderness Boundaries, where different from Proposed Wilderness Boundaries
-  Proposed Corridor Boundaries
-  Proposed Buffer Zone Boundaries

Areas Labeled with Numbers

- 1.....Proposed Cabin Mountain Wilderness Extension
- 2.....Proposed Canaan Mountain Wilderness
- 3.....Proposed Roaring Plains Wilderness Extension
- 4.....Virginia's Proposed Laurel Fork Wilderness
- 5.....West Virginia's Proposed Laurel Fork South Wilderness Expansion
- 6.....Proposed Cheat Bridge Corridor
- 7.....Proposed Shaver's Fork Wilderness Areas
- 8.....Proposed Gauley Mountain Wilderness
- 9.....Proposed Cranberry Wilderness Expansion
- 10.....Proposed Cherry River Wilderness
- 11.....Proposed Corridor to the New River Gorge
- 12.....Southeastern Wilderness / Corridor Proposals
- 13.....George Washington National Forest



includes an extraordinary conjunction of habitats and biologic communities to be protected under the proposed system. The system would build on the Dolly Sods and Otter Creek Wildernesses, It would extend Dolly Sods along the heath barren plateau of Cabin Mountain and northwestward to include the extensive wetlands of the northern Canaan Valley, where a riverine complex forms and ecotone with recovering hardwood-conifer forest. Westward from the Canaan Valley a corridor extends along the Blackwater River (note 4), a beautiful stream darkened by natural organic pigments. This corridor connects to the Canaan Mountain block (2) and from there to the Otter Creek Wilderness which has been expanded to include the critical riparian zones along Glady Fork and an area west of the present boundary.

Southward a broad corridor lies along Laurel Fork and extends to a greatly expanded Laurel Fork North and South wilderness units. To the east a short corridor links the proposed Roaring Plains (3) and Spruce Mountain units.

East of the Allegheny Front in the scenically spectacular North Fork range of the Valley and Ridge Province a 30 mile Wilderness/Corridor unit extends from near Petersburg southwestward to the Virginia line where it joins the proposed Laurel Fork Wilderness of the George Washington National Forest (4). From there a seven mile wide corridor extends northward to the proposed 35,000 acre block of the expanded Laurel Fork South Wilderness centered on Blister Swamp (5). The latter is the site of a disjunct northern plant community including Balsam Fir (note 5) and which should be top priority for addition to the Forest. From this area a corridor extends to the vicinity of Cheat Bridge (6), a botanical region made famous by the endemic long stalked Holly (*Ilex collina*) and Asa Gray's botanical sweep. In this vicinity, at Blister Run, is one of the Planet's southernmost stands of Balsam Fir, which is here reproducing well because deer have abundant alternative browse. This corridor is designed to access tow large blocks of proposed wilderness southwest of Route 250 divided by a railway along Shavers Fork (7). Encompassing the recently acquired 40,000 acre Mower Tract addition to the Monongahela, these blocks straddle a number of peaks over 4500 feet in elevation.

From Cheat Mountain a corridor turns sharply west connecting it to the proposed Gauley Mountain Wilderness block (8) which is separated only by a powerline right of way from the largest possible wilderness in the forest, the 100,000 acre plus Cranberry Wilderness (9).

The Cranberry block and surroundings include a variety of forest ecosystems ranging from lush mixed mesophyte at lower elevations to pure spruce above 4000 ft. They are known for their abundant glades, as exemplified by the famous Cranberry Botanical Area which lies just outside the existing Cranberry Wilderness. Lying at 3400 ft elevation, it is home to many of the rare and disjunct flora and fauna previously mentioned. However in common with other areas, it no longer contains Canada Yew. As a result of deer browsing there is little or no Yew in the Yew mountains or along Yew Creek!

The Cranberry lies in the highest part of the dissected Allegheny Plateau, which has an extension southwestward of Route 39 in the Cherry River Drainage (10). (see page 7)

borders on the map. Linking corridors are shown by speckled solid borders and the enveloping buffer zones by hatched dotted borders. Existing wilderness areas are defined by thin dotted lines in places where their boundaries differ from the proposed wilderness areas. Some areas referred to in the text are indicated on the map by number labels.

The system is concentrated on National Forest tracts, but in certain critical areas is extended to private lands with the assumption that these will be purchased or protected in some other way. The criteria used in drawing boundaries of the three categories are based on existing land ownership, land use and ecologi-

cal imperatives. Thus while developed and inhabited areas are for the most part excluded, the extension of important natural features or ecosystems onto private wildlands necessitates that the latter be included. A notable example is the Dolly Sods Wilderness extension along Cabin Mountain(1), that encompasses the northern Canaan Valley and associated corridors and buffers, a design with an intent to protect form and purge ski condominium development which threaten the entire watershed.

The proposed Wilderness Areas would of course necessitate closure of a number of Forest System roads, examples being FR 19 on the

edge of the existing Dolly Sods Wilderness, FR 112 southwest of Spruce Knob and FR 86 along the Williams River.

Corridors would be managed in much the same way as wilderness, allowing the forest to revert to old growth under natural disturbance regimes as much as possible. As many corridor roads as possible would be closed, The standards of roads kept open would be scaled back, with reduced width, speed and break in forest canopy. Within the buffer zones land disturbing activities would be discouraged and existing developments phased out where possible.

The northern Monongahela and vicinity

WVHC Board Member Joins Environmental Institute

By Sly Olds

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy board member Frank Young was recently appointed to fill an unexpired term to the W.V.A. Environmental Institute (WVEI) board of directors. The Institute seeks to explore environmental issues facing West Virginia.

The Institute's board of directors is composed of three members from each of five categories of groups of individuals: (i) Environmental Organizations (ii) Business and Industry (iii) Regulators and Governmental Organizations (iv) Elected Officials and (v) Non-Affiliated individuals; with a total of fifteen board members.

Frank attended his first WVEI board meeting on May 17th. His first observation was that none of the elected official representatives on the board attended. Those elected officials include W.V.A. House of Delegates Speaker Chuck Chambers and House of Delegates member Bonnie Brown. Congressman Alan Mollohan, whose term on the board expired in 1992, is expected to accept re-appointment.

Frank realizes that discussing environmental issues across a table with industry, regulatory and elected officials is different from environmental group outings and WVHC board meetings. "They have their agenda and I have mine" he says. But he realizes, too, that one of the objectives of the Institute is the development of policy and programs which recognize that complex issues involving the environment should be openly and objectively debated and resolved.

In that regard, Frank proposed in that May 17th meeting that recently proposed changes in water quality standards for discharges into rivers and streams be a topic of study and enlightenment by the Institute. This suggestion was favorably received by the WVEI board. In fact, Frank is now part of a WVEI sub-committee which met early in June to recommend a project for WVEI study and

perhaps an eventual policy statement. Three items of study were recommended by the subcommittee including water quality standards, air quality regulations and land use planning, particularly land use related to highway development.

It is not certain what might result from the Institute's "study project". The board members feel that the Institute might conduct public "seminars" and other informational meetings, perhaps eventually leading to an Institute sponsored "paper" on one of the above topics.

Such a "paper" might at first glance seem rather meaningless. But realizing that the Institute's board is made up of various representatives, including those from both industry and environmental advocacy groups, such a study and resulting policy statements (if an agreed-upon statement can in fact be reached) could have a significant impact upon those elected and appointed officials in policy and rule making positions.

"For some time I have been concerned that we meet as environmentalists and provide mutual support to each other, and that's important," said Frank, adding "but I often think that there should be more to it than that."

Frank says that he heard from industry representatives at that first meeting that they often feel the same way. "They meet and grumble about what we're saying, just like we do about them," he said. "It seems that each side wastes a lot of resources just grumbling about what the other is saying and doing," Frank adds.

Does that mean that environmentalists might compromise away their ideals in a forum such as the W.V.A. Environmental Institute? "NO!" says Frank without hesitation. "If you see me doing that, demand that I step out as an environmental representative." He says "I see the W.V.A. Environmental Institute as a forum

One fact that probably every West Virginian knows, yet almost no one else realizes, is that ours is the only state located totally within the Appalachian Region.

As I attend various conferences around the country, one of my greatest dreads is that the attendees break down into regions to discuss common environmental concerns. On more than a few occasions, when my fears become reality, I ended up scurrying around asking people, "Where might West Virginia fit in?"

The reactions that I received were never varied; a kindly smile evaporating into a blank stare. Knowing through experience, I asked more questions, "great lakes with Ohio? Mid-Atlantic with Pennsylvania and Maryland? Southeast with Tennessee and Virginia?"

Each scenario that I proposed had a certain logic and illogic to it. West Virginia has things in common with our neighboring states but the only real commonality is with a region- The Appalachian region.

Stretching from western New York state down to Northern Georgia and Alabama, the Appalachian regions of each state have much in common, all but one of the states produce coal; only two are not Oil and Gas producers. Each of the states has had mountainous areas targeted for waste disposal sites originating in eastern metropolitan areas. Each of the states is struggling with protecting maturing hardwood forests from over harvesting. Each of the states has experienced a type of environmental/

for industry, regulators, environmentalists, and elected officials to educate each other directly on our respective responsibilities, problems, ideals and mistrusts. Then perhaps we can arrive at some 'common ground' or at least some agreed-upon statements of principle that may be of value to decision makers and our respective advocacy groups."

economic blackmail that plays one poor region against another.

Increased environmental regulations and mineral taxation in West Virginia directly affect the competitiveness of the low-sulfur coal industry in Kentucky and Southern Virginia. A less stringent dioxin standard in Maryland or Kentucky provides the impetus for West Virginia to lower its water quality standards to attract industry. A strong solid waste law in West Virginia makes Kentucky and Tennessee more vulnerable to large out of state garbage proposals.

The world discusses a global economy. Industry consistently argues against increased environmental regulations because of the sensitivity of the market place. I believe that there is a common environmental strategy to be developed for Appalachia. Such a strategy would focus on the concerns and needs of a regional economy. The logical starting place is the only state that is completely within Appalachia.

The benefits of a loose-knit network of Appalachian environmental groups are many. Coordination on Federal legislation, evening the playing field on coalfield regulations and severance tax, coordinated National Forest policies and information sharing on new legislation are all possibilities. Similar meetings have occurred in the past on individual environmental issues, however holistic regional approach with on going communication is needed. I'd love to get feedback on the merits and potential pitfalls of organizing this Pan-Appalachian environmental coalition. So please give me a call, and share thoughts and groups which could be included. Perhaps, this coalition could become the catalyst for the proposed Wilderness corridor system.

Norm Steenstra

Apologies to Joan Sims, unacknowledged author of the article on mining regulations in last month's Voice.

from the heart of the mountains

(continued from page 2) the basic problem and possible solutions muddle the picture on the Middle Fork.

Whereas in the Blackwater the sources of acid are many, scattered throughout the watershed, and fairly old with few if any responsible parties likely to be in existence today, the picture is quite different in the Middle Fork.

Most of the acid problem in the Middle Fork (nearly 95% of it) emanates from two distinct sites on one tributary, Cassity Fork. Most of that drainage is from the Kittle Flats site which is the subject of a citizen complaint filed by WVHC in December 1991. The complaint prompted cessation orders and civil penalties which are currently under review by an administrative law judge for the Department of the Interior Office of Hearings and Appeals as part of an appeal by the company.

In the complaint WVHC asserts that the LaRosa Fuel Company was improperly released from its liability in exchange for \$115,000 in 1983, and in doubling the size of the disturbed area substantially increased the amount of AMD draining from the site which, in turn, significantly increased the damage to the ground and surface waters in the area. The occasional fish kills that previous mining at

Kittle Flats inflicted on a couple miles of the Middle Fork was increased, so that now the lower 24 miles of the Middle Fork no longer support fish populations; Audra State Park is devoid of fish; Tygart Lake has an additional acid source; groundwater supplies for the Cassity community are destroyed.

Further, the complaint insists that given the regulatory history at Kittle Flats, La Rosa Fuel (a company still actively mining in W.V.) should and does still stand liable for full reclamation of the Kittle Flats area, including chemical treatment of water, if necessary, to maintain effluent limits and water quality standards.

In a nutshell, the solution to most of the AMD problem on the Middle Fork is clear: there is a viable company that is still responsible for fixing the major part of the problem, i.e. for doing whatever is necessary on-site at Kittle Flats to restore water quality at whatever the cost. If that company can't afford the cost, then the company's right to mine anywhere else must be revoked, and the State through the Special Reclamation Fund must assume full and total responsibility to restore drainage from the site to meet effluent limits and water quality standards. If the highly overrated and woefully underfunded state bonding system is

inadequate to accomplish this, then the assessment from industry must be increased so that the Fund can foot the bill. This is what the bonding system is all about, this is what both federal and state law require.

Reasonable (although admittedly difficult) as that may sound, the solutions discussed by the Stream Restoration Committee for the Middle Fork fall far short of those expectations.

Efforts on-site will be limited to installing passive treatment systems only, i.e. Anoxic Limestone Drains and wetlands, without regard for meeting effluent limits and water quality standards especially for metals. There are no plans to use chemical treatment if the passive systems fail of don't go far enough.

Off-site there are plans in the works for using the main stem of the Middle Fork for additional treatment. The theory is that since the Middle Fork is already one of our lightly buffered streams and is also being affected by acid rain, a liming station like the ones at Otter Creek and Cranberry could be installed to help with that problem while at the same time adding alkalinity to the stream to help neutralize even further whatever acid will still be flowing from the Kittle Flats area as Cassity Fork hits the main stem. Once again, there is no real plan to deal with metals such as

aluminum or manganese, and of course a liming station above Cassity will require a dam to be built in the main Middle Fork, (unlike the Blackwater on Beaver Creek, where there is already a dam in existence).

I can hear my local politicians now! "Why Cindy, you should be happy the state's going to fix the Middle Fork!" ...Other members of the Restoration Committee have certainly told me that.

-- Well now, maybe these things will fix part of the problem in the Middle Fork; and they should definitely help fix the image of the state regulatory agency that has come to be identified with dead fish floating in bottles of orange metal-laden water. And surely, industry should be happy for the opportunity to whitewash some of their less than admirable screwups without digging deeper into their pockets to come up with additional money to do more. And some state politicians might breath a sigh of relief to know that a few of the hundred or so post-act Kittle Flats type sites that haunt them occasionally can be fixed a little without their political careers suffering a lot from the political heat, which would result from extracting more money from industry to truly fix the Special Reclamation Fund.

So why is it that this cynical adult has the creepy feeling that the fix is in?

Wild Monongahela

(cont'd from page 5) excess of 50,000 acres, this block consists entirely of private land within the proclamation boundary and is threatened by proposed coal-fired power plants, mines and transmission lines. It is imperative that it be protected, preferably by addition to the Forest.

From the Cherry River block a broad corridor (11) has been extended open-endedly toward the New River Gorge. With their buffer zones, these areas have a potential of more than 200,000 acres of wildlands divided by only one major highway

Southeast of the Cranberry-Cherry River complex and the Greenbrier River a salient (12) of the Monongahela extends 30 miles along the Virginia State line in the transition zone between mixed mesophyte and oak-chestnut forest to the east. Most of this forest which, as along Anthony Creek, contains rich mixed mesophyte stands, has been incorporated into nine newly proposed Wilderness Areas. One of these areas, north of Route 39, includes part of the George Washington National Forest (13) and thus forges a wilderness link towards the east.

Summary and Course of Action

The Monongahela National Forest and the highlands of which it forms a part have impressive ecological credentials. In many Eastern Forests biodiversity tends to be cryptic, concealed to the untrained eye in the apparent uniformity of lush deciduous foliage. But in this region diversity is resplendent in contrasting deciduous forest, conifer, glade and other facies that attract an equally diverse fauna. But all this is under threat or actual assault by the perpetrators of an endless variety of despoliation schemes. Heading the list is road building with the worst being the infamous "Corridor H" proposal to split the northern part of the Forest with a mountain-consuming interstate highway. Road building is closely followed in destruction by power plant and transmission

line schemes, one of which would defile the here-proposed Cherry River Wilderness south of Route 39 as well as the Cranberry Wilderness. Other threats come from ongoing ski condominium development, particularly on Cabin Mountain and the Canaan Valley. Finally, forming an ever present backdrop of steady degradation are the misdirected U.S. Forest Service and State management practices. These multiple debasements not only impact the highlands but are in many ways transmitted to remote habitats, from the tropics to the arctic, through their effects on migrating species. Only ecological restoration and restructuring based on large wilderness can mitigate this deterioration.

A Wilderness/Corridor System as fully developed as this would of necessity be integrated with the regional human culture in a bioregional model (Lytwak, 1991). Perhaps the best known example of such integration in practice, albeit in its initial stage, is Guanacaste National Park in Costa Rica. As conceived by the biologist Daniel Janzen (Allen, 1988) the primary mission at Guanacaste is the restoration of a tract of tropical dry forest but serving the secondary function of a "living classroom" with the intimate involvement of local human inhabitants in its day to day operations. Thus an ecological dimension is given to schooling and employment. Although human cultures in West Virginia and Costa Rica are not directly comparable, they are - like modern cultures everywhere - severed from their ecological roots and generally ignorant of the impact of the machine culture on nature. Consequently the Monongahela Preserve may with equal justification serve as a living classroom. Such a system, consisting of large blocks of unfragmented habitat tending toward maturity and approximating the natural disturbance regimes, presents unusual opportunities for scientific baselines against which to measure anthropogenic degradation.

Although the ultimate justification for a Wilderness/Corridor System must be ecological, economic concerns also need to be addressed if the system is to succeed. As in Guanacaste example, employment opportunities would be created for local inhabitants. Some of this employment would be ecological restoration; while more would result from accommodating and guiding tourists, students, scientists and other research personnel. New business and employment would be created by privatization and moving concentrated recreation facilities, such as developed campsites and water recreation from public to private lands. Zoning regulations would maintain standards comparable to the public facilities vacated or supplanted.

What Wilderness Proponents are Doing

They are writing letters to:
Supervisor, Monongahela National Forest
 200 Sycamore St., Elkins, WV 26241
Governor Gaston Caperton, State Capitol
 Charleston, West Virginia 25305
Congresspersons, US House of Reps.
 Washington, DC 20515
Senators, US Senate Building
 Washington, DC 20510

They are insisting that the Monongahela National Forest be planned as a Wilderness/Corridor System to restore and protect its biodiversity and evolutionary potential and to allow for the migration of species as required by global warming. They are telling the Governor to scrap any Corridor H highway and to ban mineral development in the region.

Acknowledgments

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Footnotes

- 1) As pointed out by Jeff Elliot (Manuscript), even the Wilderness/Corridor System has severe inadequacies and may fail its assigned function. Continuous wilderness may be the only successful scheme!
- 2) A useful guide here is *Flora of West Virginia* (second edition) by Strausbaugh and Core (1977).
- 3) Monongahela foresters find the Yew situation embarrassing and have failed to list it as a sensitive species in their Forest Plans even though it is far more sensitive than most that they do list!
- 4) Unfortunately the immediate vicinity of this stream, which is owned by the Monongahela Power Company, is being severely degraded by ORV bubbas.
- 5) This community, which is severely degraded by deer browsing, clearly reveals the population dynamics of changing White-tailed Deer and Beaver occupancy during the last hundred years.



In the grove of the oldest trees in the Stillwell OA - soon to be a clearcut

National Forest Timber (from Stillwell OA) for Sale - Cheap

Monongahela National Forest, Spice Run Timber Sale, located in Tract 354, Marlinton Ranger District, Pocahontas County, West Virginia. Sealed bids will be received by the District Ranger, Marlinton... at 10:00 A.M. July 14th for an estimated 902,000 board feet (BF) of sawtimber and 1,627 cords of Pulpwood marked or otherwise designated for cutting. The estimated volume by species product and the minimum acceptable bid rates are 5,000 BF White Pine, Hemlock sawtimber at \$4.41 per thousand BF; 90,000 BF Red and Sugar Maple at \$40.65 per thousand BF; 15,000 BF Yellow and Black Birch Sawtimber at \$6 per thousand BF; 53,000 BF Hickory sawtimber at \$25.48 per thousand BF; 53,000 BF Yellow Poplar and Cucumber Magnolia at \$23.41 per thousand BF; 35,000 BF White Oak at \$102.12 per thousand BF; 155,000 BF of Chestnut and Scarlet Oak at \$51.31 per thousand BF; 496,000 BF Red and Black Oak at \$249.6 per thousand BF; 206 cords mixed conifer pulpwood at \$1.59 per cord; 1,421 cords of mixed hardwood pulpwood at \$3.28 per cord. Sale contains Specified Roads with an estimated construction costs of \$77,756.87. Bidders qualifying as "Small Business Concerns may elect to build permanent roads.

Brushy Mountain OA to Cost Taxpayers Plenty

Brushy Mountain OA is the sister OA to the now infamous Stillwell OA, lying on and around Brushy Mountain a few miles to the east of Stillwell. It contains 6,229 acres of National Forest Land. Projects include;

Clearcut harvest* 123 acres, shelterwood harvest* (a form of clearcut) 58 acres, two age harvest* 187 acres, thin harvest* 171 acres, spray herbicide on 93 acres of striped maple, fell residual trees on 191 acres, 36 acre clearcut harvest* (to create a permanent savannah), \$200,000 worth of roads (not for public use)...

Here's the data from the Forest Service's own Environmental Assessment (page 69)...

total cost	\$361,453
timber revenues	\$234,154
Dollars to counties	\$58,539
Total cost to Taxpayers	\$185,838

The Forest Service will say that part of the loss pays for that great infrastructure we need so badly (roads in the woods). When all costs are considered (overhead, long term maintenance) the costs to us will even be higher, and we lose the trees to boot.

*How do they get away with calling it a harvest? Who planted, weeded, cared for the 'crop'? Mining might be a better term.

Volunteers need help fighting ORVs

The following is from a great bunch of folks near Parkersburg. They helped us at the legislature, now we can help them and help ourselves by getting petitions signed and letters written in support of banning ORVs from public land. Petitions are available from the address below.

The Volunteers, from Wood County, WV are fighting the final battle concerning off-road-vehicle use on WV public lands.

We have in our county park, Mountwood, 20 miles of ORV trails, leased for a \$750 annual fee. The Mountwood Park board president is also president of the WV Off-Highway-Vehicle Association. He has appointed

a committee to "resolve the ORV controversy" at Mountwood Park.

West Virginia public lands are still safe from ORV abuse, because with the solidarity and persistence of environmentally concerned organizations and individuals, S.B. 269 was killed.

Now we can prohibit ORV's on all WV public lands.

We ask for letters of endorsement from all concerned groups and individuals, supporting the Volunteers' efforts to remove the ORVS trails at Mountwood. Volunteers - PO Box 71, Walker, WV 26180



Three year old clearcut adjacent to proposed 150 acre cut

Kumbrabow - Please!!!!

(from page 1) democratic practices that allow citizens of the state some say in how our publicly owned lands are managed.

According to the Supervisor of Calvin Price State Forest the last cut there was approximately 800,000 Board Feet back in '86/'87. Seneca State Forest has had but 250,000 BF cut in the last ten years. If this cockeyed cut really proceeds, then Kumbrabow will have delivered over 2,000,000 in just 4 years. I wonder why they are picking on Kumbrabow? Is it because its the closest forest to the WVDF district office and easier to get to? Or do they really want to cut down the biggest trees before people start investigating just exactly WVDF is doing to forests that belong to all West Virginians, now and in the future.

What you can do. Write or call (leave a message for) the Governor (Governor Gaston Caperton, State Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305 - (304) 558-2000) either requesting that the sale be stopped altogether or until the public can have an open discussion on how we should treat our biggest trees. Ask for a moratorium on logging on State Forests until public involvement in State Forests is equal to that on National Forests. No more secret deals between WVDF and industry. No more rushed sales slipping by before people can examine the full effects of our actions. But please do it today, the Division of Forestry is trying to speed this sale up an offer it for bids as soon as possible, probably in mid or early July. For more information call me at 824-3571 or Joe Marshall at 636-9555.

Endangered Specie of the month

The Allegheny Woodrat is a subspecies of the Eastern Woodrat that once occupied an area from Tennessee to New York, but now is rapidly heading towards extinction. It has already become extirpated from several states in its range and in other states many populations have disappeared, mainly in the last 10 to 20 years. It is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Only one population remains in New Jersey. At least a 100 sites in Northern Virginia no longer support the rat. Although it appears to be doing better in the southern part of its range, there is a great concern about the future of the species.

The fact that no one has pinpointed the cause of its decline is cause for alarm. Destruction of habitat by coal and limestone strip mining and outright killing of the rats by humans seems to be playing a part. Human disturbance of nests via spelunking is also deleterious, but scientists are focusing on three other factors.

Some studies have shown a significant loss of individuals where the acorn supply has dropped due to gypsy moth infestations. The rat needs rocky sites with caves or overhangs for its home. These areas, typically, are higher up and have poorer soil. Oak trees growing in this marginal area are much more effected by defoliation. Acorn production has been shown to completely stop in certain locations for several years after the original infestation.

Other investigators has focused on a parasite (Raccoon Roundworm) carried by raccoons. "Although the worm is rarely fatal to raccoons, infestation can cause cerebrosplinal nematodiasis in other species and has caused

declines in some populations." Population drop has also occurred in some areas after particularly hard winters. Rats failed to make any comeback even after the winters improved.

The Allegheny woodrat resembles the Norway rat, but has a hairy not scaly tail, naked ears and longer, softer fur. The rat prefers extensive rocky areas in the higher elevations, with caves, tumbled boulders, talus slopes or outcrops with deep crevices. They try to avoid humans, but will occasionally inhabit abandoned buildings. They feed on many types of vegetation, fruits, seeds, and nuts which they must also store for winter. The rats need to eat 5% of their body weight in dry matter daily.

The woodrat is solitary and unsociable, often fighting each other when they come in contact. Each lives alone in their house except when breeding and raising young. They are active at night preferring the dark of the moon and cloudy nights, though researchers have reported a great variation between individuals in their habits. Females begin reproducing at less than a year old and produce several litters a year. Woodrats may live up to three years.

Besides their houses of leaves, sticks and other debris, the rats also build middens; piles of sticks and trash, often including rags, metal, bones, glass and other 'packrat' items near their homes. They also have a separate outhouse area, which may be used communally. Predators of woodrats include owls, skunks, weasels, foxes, raccoons, bobcats and large snakes.

This information comes from a paper by Sam J. Norris, a copy of which was provided by the WV Natural Heritage Program.



Eastern woodrat
Neotoma floridana

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Membership Benefits

- * 1 year subscription to the Highlands Voice
 - * Special meetings with workshops and speakers
 - * Representation through WVHC efforts to monitor legislative and agency activity
- The WVHC, at age 26, is the oldest environmental group in West Virginia. The Conservancy has been influential in protecting and preserving WV's natural heritage. Your support will help WVHC to continue its efforts.