



# The Highlands Voice

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## ThornwoodGate

### of Forest Service Lies

by Rick Landenberger  
intro by bill r

You all must be familiar by now with the Thornwood project on the Monongahela National Forest, the proposed 33 mile long gas pipeline and its 100 foot wide buffer strip that must be cleared and kept in grass. This pipeline would fragment a very wild and remote area of both the Monongahela and George Washington National Forests, opening them to increased gas well drilling.

Last month, after several years of preparation the Forest Service completed their Environmental Assessment (EA), in which they are required by law to determine (among other things) the environmental effects on various resources as a result of implementing their preferred alternative. They are required to fully disclose their methods, which should be consistent with contemporary and accepted standards as judged by peer review. Citizens have been given one month to appeal and comment on the decision.

Rick Landenberger, old growth aficionado and forestry student at WVU has written the following peice on his involvement in the Thornwood EA and the very interesting things he discovered about the Forest Service's agenda which places commercial use of the forest above all else, in this case even old growth trees and truth and honesty...

My original comments to the draft EA for the Thornwood pipeline, submitted during the public input process, were based on a walk through this particular area with the Forest Service last fall. In my response to the Forest Service's

request for input I wrote:

"My sense is that the three small patches (of hemlock/black birch/beech) are in fact remnants of the original forest. These albeit very small communities undoubtedly make a unique and poorly understood contribution to the second growth landscape. There is no question that even a single old tree increases habitat value in the second-growth forest, and these are in fact groups of older trees. My concern is that they will be replaced by an extremely common edge community typical of the Buffalo Lake recreation area and thus negatively alter beta and gamma diversity."

The Forest Service response:

"A field examination of this area was made in response to this concern. The three possible old-growth patches contained large diameter trees, primarily eastern hemlock, black birch, and American beech. Elements characteristic of old-growth, such as an abundance of large, standing dead or decadent trees and large, down and decaying woody material, were not prevalent in these patches. Increment cores taken on representa-



tive large diameter trees in these patches found them to be in the neighborhood of 80 years old. Thus, although large trees, they are second growth, not remnants of the original forest."

The Forest Service goes on to say:

In addition, it is noted that the conifer-hardwood mix observed along this portion of the pipeline route is present over the adjacent hillsides and ridges near Lake Buf-

falo. Clearing would impact less than two acres of forest that is typical of what is repeated in immediately adjacent areas".

I received the aforementioned comments in the mail last week, and decided I'd check up on the situation. For one thing, I found it very difficult to believe that numerous large (24"-28") hemlock, numerous large (22"-24") black birch, and numerous large

(20"-22") beech could grow to such proportions in 80 years or so, particularly considering their high elevation ridgetop location. Trees simply don't grow that large under those conditions. Any respectable forester would recognize this.

Here are the field notes from our tree sampling above Buffalo Lake campground, Greenbrier Ranger District, (see page 4)

## Mining as if the Earth Mattered ??????????

APRIL 1996 MINING MATTERS  
by Cindy Rank

It's April. -- Nearly May.

Spring is pushing ahead in its inevitable claim upon the earth despite the lingering cold and snow.

As the month long celebration of the 26th Anniversary of Earth Day winds down, it's fitting to step back and consider the big picture of what coal mining is doing to the earth here in West-By-God Virginia.

How do current activities in the coal fields measure up to the hopes and aspirations of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of the 1970's? i.e. How well do they protect existing water quality and quantity; reduce and eliminate pollution; and return the earth after mining to conditions as good as or better than

before mining?

What are the long-term cumulative impacts?

A look at just a few of the impacts of the past decade and a half of mining indicate that the same technologies that allow WV to maintain its rank as the second largest producer of black gold in the nation (a rating of some importance to industry in a state competing with Kentucky, Wyoming, etc.) are also inflicting serious long-term harmful impacts on the earth -- and on future generations of West Virginians.

### VALLEY FILLS

Though occasionally mentioned in VOICE articles, the extent of this phenomenon has yet to be laid out in total numbers of acres, or miles of streams that have been obliterated by mining practices now capable of turning 600 feet deep mountains upside down into the valleys nearby.

However, comments by Charles Gauvin, President and CEO of National Trout Unlimited, RE: Pennsylvania's new coal refuse disposal law provide a frightening hint of how large an impact these practices may have.

In referring to testimony by US Fish and Wildlife Service personnel in PA who are concerned about the cumulative impacts of valley fills that would be allowed by the new state law, Gauvin states that in WV, where valley fills have become common place, at least 67 miles of streams have been destroyed in the last three years alone.

WVHC has been involved in

discussions about instream treatment and fills for years -- on a policy level with state and federal agencies as well as on specific permit areas such as those at the Island Creek Tenmile operation in Upshur County.

Looking back, it's distressing to realize that from early on here in WV, huge valley fills have been considered inevitable and discussions therefore focus on the structure, design and stability of fills, and guidelines for mitigating the loss of streams (i.e. by building a lake here or setting up some treatment measures at some other damaged stream there) (see page 6)

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WVHC Spring Review - You Need It!

May 17, 18, 19

Elk River Touring Center

Public Lands Committee meeting Friday at 7 pm !!

see page 3 for the details



*---from the heart of the plateau---*

by John McFerrin

## Kick Back

### Take a Break

Isn't this great! It's no wonder that all manner of religions for all of recorded history have had all manner of celebrations to celebrate it! It's spring.

Here in Beckley it is only just beginning. The forsythia has a few flowers. One of our two big maples in the front yard has its first pale yellow-green leaves. The other's buds are just swelling. Out back the leaves on the cherry trees are erupting all over the place. The walnuts are playing things close to the vest. They aren't budging until they are sure this is the real thing, not one of those little warm spells sent to trick the gullible. The honey locust is a profusion of little green buds, soon to be a profusion of lacy green leaves.

In the garden the garlic is up. The rhubarb roots have sent up a peculiar pod which in a few days will unfurl itself into a huge leaf. Even my scandalous inattention to the strawberry patch last summer could not deter them. They are up.

We must have nesting cardinals and mockingbirds around somewhere. The male cardinal has been singing his head off and acting quite territorial. Two mockingbirds have been stuffing themselves on last winter's holly berries and being quite chummy. The purple finches are checking out the spot under the eaves on the back porch where they have nested the last two summers.

The fall may have its colors. People may line up from Marlinton to Elkins to watch the hills turn orange. Vermont may make a regular industry out of luring the New Yorkers for apple cider and leaf looking. But for my money, there is nothing that beats seeing the buds swell in the spring, welcoming the birds back, and watching the earth wake up.

In a couple of weeks will be soon enough to go back to fretting about the pulp mill, the Hughes River Dam, and all the other things that are worth worrying about. Just for today, however, I am not going to worry about any of that. It's spring.



*other uses for 'junk wood' - woodpecker food*

### Break's Over - Write this letter!!!

### Apple Grove Pulp and Paper - Just Go Away

Parsons and Whittemore is still waiting for the state environmental agencies to approve their Air Pollution permit to spew dioxin and stink. WV DEP granted them a permit to pollute the river. This permit is being contested in the courts. Meanwhile over 1,000 'environmental extremists' (to use Governor Gaston Caperton's words) turned out for a great Stop the Pulp Mill Rally on the Governor's lawn. Unfortunately Gaston was out of town that weekend.

Several citizen groups have just begun a "Just Go Away" postcard campaign. You can send your postcard to George F. Landegger, President, Parsons and Whittemore, INC., 4 International Drive, Ryebrook, NY 10537. Just one simple message - stay out of WV!!! For more information - Janet Fout (304) 522 0246. ❖

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# WVHC Spring Review - You Need It!!



by Frank Young

You need to make reservations NOW (TODAY) for the W. Va. Highlands Conservancy's Spring Review Festivities May 17, 18, and 19.

We will meet that weekend at the Elk River Touring Center, located on the headwaters of Elk River, beside U.S. Rt. 219, five miles south of W.Va. Rt. 56 at Snowshoe, 15 miles north of Marlinton.

The topic of focus that weekend will be dams. With the city of Marlinton and other Greenbrier River communities recently suffering through the second seriously heavy flood within a decade, renewed calls for an upstream dam or dams to provide protection from floods have surfaced. And along with these calls comes the concern of other folks who feel that some streams and rivers should be left free-flowing.

Want to learn more about this stream control policy debate and about how dams affect stream quality and water flow? Or do you just want to get out and enjoy the moun-

tains and mountain streams and hike, bike, canoe, cave, or even just loaf? Either way, we're putting together a weekend for you!

Most of us will probably arrive at the Elk River Center on Friday evening. No formal Friday evening meal is scheduled, but be assured that snacks, perhaps pizza or other vital staple will be available.

Then Saturday, after breakfast (included with your lodging) we will get together for various outings. A bag lunch of sandwich, granola bar and fruit will be available for \$5. We are planning a hike, cave trip, canoe trip, and bicycling (bicycle rentals available at the touring center- call 304-572-3771).

For information on the canoe outing call Sayre Rodman at 412-828-8983.

Accommodations at the Elk River Touring Center include: a five room farmhouse with three shared baths that sleeps from two to five people per room; two cabins- one sleeping six people and

the other sleeping eight and five private rooms, each with a private bath. These five totally private rooms will sleep from two to four people. The cost of from \$16.00 to \$37.50 per night per person (double occupancy) includes breakfast. The hot tub, located on the back porch of the farm house is included for all guests. The touring center was taking reservations for WVHC exclusively till May 1. From here on out you'll just have to call and find out about availability of room. For room reservations call 304-572-3771

Breakfast is available for 'walk-ins' and campers at \$5.50 per person.

There is no "campground" but tents are permitted - \$5 per night per person.

Saturday evening dinner will cost \$12.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children eleven and under. Choose from; (1) Linguini with grilled salmon and roasted asparagus- light cream sauce or (2) lemon herb chicken breast- fresh green beans, basmati rice pilaf. Both 1 &

2 served with mixed green salad, baked apple cranberry pie or chocolate strawberry layer cake, coffee, tea or lemonade.

Sunday will include the quarterly board of directors meeting from 9:30 a.m. until about 3:00 p.m. A Sunday lunch buffet: deli meats and cheeses, salad, fruit, homemade desserts, coffee, tea, lemonade for \$7.50 for adults and \$4.00 for children eleven and under. Add 6 percent sales tax and appropriate gratuity to the above meal rates.

Those desiring fancier accommodations (indoor pool, sauna, etc.) may call the inn at Snowshoe at 304-572-2900. It is located five miles north of the touring center near the junction of Rt. 219 and state Rt. 66, at the bottom of Snowshoe Road.

The discussion about dams will actually be two programs. On Saturday afternoon, at about 2:30 p.m., those who are back from outings may attend a panel discussion about dams in general and dam(s) on the Greenbrier river and/

or on its' tributaries, particularly. Then at about 7 or 8 p.m., Brian Long, assistant chief with the Dam Safety Section of the W.Va. office of water resources, will give us an informational presentation with basic information about dams, their design, and how they work. This will be followed by a question and answer session.

Music and other merrymaking will follow (please bring musical instruments and cheer).

For further information contact: Frank Young 304-372-3945 (home) or 304-372-9329 (work) (fax 372-3946) or call Richard diPretoro at 304-296-8963 (fax 296-8623) or email: Richard\_diPretoro@wnpb.wvnet.edu

\*Note- Elk River Touring Center will hold rooms for WVHC members and guests only until May 1. Please make your room reservations and bicycle rentals directly with them soon by calling 304-572-3771. For best rates, and for our count, be sure and tell them that you are with WVHC Spring Review.

## Central Appalachian Ecological Integrity Forum

*This report is from the Harrison County ECO groups newsletter. WVHC was also a cosponsor of this Forum. Unfortunately I was not able to make the conference, but we are lucky that Bruce went and wrote this following report...*

ECO member Bruce Edinger attended an Ecological Integrity Forum (Appalachian Restoration Campaign) in Harrisonburg, Virginia January 26-28 and reports that it presented a unique opportunity for activists to express how science is needed to document environmental decline and an opportunity for scientists to present cur-

rent findings and learn how they can become more effective advocates for the environment.

The conference was partly sponsored by the Wildlands Project, which wants to establish large bioreserves where human disturbance is at a minimum. The Central Appalachians are a good place to do this.

There were several presentations by nationally recognized researchers, including Sam Droege reporting on the decline of neotropical migratory birds, partly because of forest fragmentation but also from loss of specialized habitats, such as bottomland forests,

which are being taken over by people.

Dr. Jeff Waldon of VPI is involved in large-scale mapping of the habitats of all of Virginia. These maps will be made available to everyone and will help organizations have good data to argue for the conservation of high quality habitat.

Dr. Linda Butler, an entomologist at WVU, reported on several long-term studies concerning collateral damage to insects when various insecticides for gypsy moth are sprayed. She found that even the biological insecticides such as bacterium B.t. often reduce the

populations of insects that are not targeted.

The conference provided ample opportunity to network with activists and scientists with similar research interests. Adam Polinski described the current status of Alamco and the vulnerability of the other side of the Cooper's

Rock State Forest overlook to logging, gas development and major building.

Anyone interested in more specific information on the conference or a copy of the proceedings or summary of the conference should contact Bruce Edinger, 782-2109.

## Appalachian Conservancy

*This piece is also from ECOLines newsletter from those crazy activists in Harrison County.*

At our last ECO meeting, Steve Hollenhorst and Judy Rodd outlined how land trusts work and encouraged ECO members to consider forming their own land trust. Currently, land trusts in conjunction with conservation easements are the fastest growing land preservation program in the US. The Appalachian Conservancy is the statewide land trust in West Virginia.

Here's how the program work. You, the landowner sell or donate the right of development of your property to the Appalachian Conservancy. They execute an agreement with you and specify what restrictions are placed on your property; such a prohibition

against commercial and residential real estate development. These restrictions are written into the Deed and cannot be changed by anyone. Your property is permanently protected against development and the Conservancy serves as the enforcing agent for these restrictions or conservation easements.

According to Steve Hollenhorst, landowners can also take a deduction for their conservation easement to the Appalachian Conservancy. The deduction is the difference in your appraised value before and after the conservation easement. Conservation easements also make farm land more affordable to young farmers and help lower future estate taxes.

The Harrison County Farm Bureau acknowledges that conservation easement are a good idea,

but current level of compensation is too low for most farmers. Both the Farm Bureau and the Appalachian Conservancy would like to see a statewide funding program to by development rights from farmers so farm land will stay farm land. ECO is very supportive of land trusts and conservation easements and encourage landowners to consider donation of a conservation easement. For more info, contact the Appalachian Conservancy, Rt. 5 Box 140, Morgantown, WV 26505 or phone 293-3721 Ext. 2446.



## HIGHWAY FROM HELL

The NEPA process for Corridor H, the proposed four lane highway through the wild heart of West Virginia, is drawing to a close with the printing of the environmental impact statement (EIS).

If you were a commentator on the supplemental draft EIS, you should be on their list and getting a copy. If not, and you would like a copy and/or more info. from them - call Ben Hark or Norris Angus at WVDOT (304) 558-2885 or David Leighow of the Federal Highway

Administration at (304) 347-5329.

Corridor H Alternatives is in the process of examining options for legal action and is working to raise money to continue the battle. Please help! This organization - made up totally of volunteers - is projecting court costs to the tune of \$50,000. All donations and fundraising assistance sincerely appreciated!!

For more information call Bonni McKeown at (304) 874-3887 or Hugh Rogers at (304) 636-2662.

## Nongame Wildlife Weekend

The thirteenth nongame wildlife weekend will be held at Blackwater Falls State Park, June 7, 8 and 9, 1996. This event is sponsored by the Nongame Wildlife and Natural Heritage Program, Wildlife Resources Section of WV DNR. Everyone is invited. There is no better way to learn all the glorious details of the 99% of WV critters that are not game. Walks and talks will be given on butterflies, wetlands, mushrooms, salamanders, owls, birds, snakes, spiders, fish, raptors, mammals, caves, Canaan valley, Cranesville swamp, cathedral old growth...For more information contact Karen Eye, WV DNR, PO Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241 or call them at (304) 636-0245. Last date to make reservations (if its not already filled up) is May 27, 1996.



# ThornwoodGate



(from page 1) April 6, 1996, in response to comments in the decision notice and finding of no significant impact (fonsi) for the Thornwood gas pipeline project. Persons involved:

Don Landenberger, Ph.D. (population biology, Univ. Calif. at Santa Barbara)

Rick Landenberger (M.S. Forest Resource Management, SUNY - College of Env. Sci. and Forestry)

**Chronology of events:**

Arrived at 8:45 am and hiked from Buffalo Lake recreation area/campground across Buffalo Run and up the south-facing steep toe-slope to the ridge. Tree #1, our first sample, was taken where the ridge abruptly drops off and forms the aforementioned toe-slope before leveling out at the bench terrace above the Buffalo Run flood plain. This area was within the pipeline project right of way, and a video tape record was taken here. Basal area was not recorded.

Sample area #1 is located at the nose of the ridge, at ridge-center, and just beyond and above the abrupt break described previously. Sample trees # 2, 3, 4, and 5 were measured for diameter, cored, and the site was video taped. We found no evidence of any of these large tree having been previously cored. Basal area sampled from the center of plot #2 was 160 square feet/acre. Windthrow mounds, many large trees, and standing dead trees are evident in this location. The forest is very dense with little understory, as one would expect in a patch dominated by hemlock. The black birch have the extremely furrowed, deeply cut and exfoliating bark characteristic of very old age for this particular species. This is an unusual grouping of trees in the Monongahela national forest or elsewhere in West Virginia. I have, however, visited sites similar to this in upstate New York, in the Catskills and southern Adirondacks.

Sample location #2 is located

just up the ridge, about 150 ft. beyond location #1. Many large trees exist at this location also, but the forest is more open compared to location #1 and the estimated basal area of 100 sq. ft/acre reflects this. Only two trees were measured and cored here, but again both were obviously dominant although neither had been cored prior to our visit. At this point we began to wonder at the absence of coring given the forest service statement in response to my comments.

Sample location #3 is different from the previous two locations, and has several large beech, hemlock, black birch, and black cherry. Cherry is the most abundant species at the perimeter of this area and consequently well represented in our 160 sq. ft basal area. Several large, intact (non-rotten) beech and black birch exist at this site, as well as several large hemlock. The only two trees that had been cored previously were our sample trees # 9 and 10 (hemlock and beech respectively) We also video taped the previous core-hole. Our oldest trees were sampled here.

White ash, sugar maple, and oak appear on the periphery of location #3, between our sampled trees and the ridgetop. At the top we considered other options for additional information gathering, and decided to examine a large, well developed hemlock group lying east along the ridge.

To reach this area we traversed a beautiful hardwood "cove" with very steep slopes (45- 50 degrees of 100% at the top) bordering the ridge-top site of the pipeline. Many large red/scarlet oak, basswood, sugar maple, and white ashe are scattered throughout this area, with very large hemlock in groups to the northeast. We noted species composition and old growth attributes, including many standing snags, windthrown mounds, gaps, numerous age classes, very large trees, and an interesting mix



of red spruce, mountain magnolia, red/scarlet oak, basswood, black birch, and ashe. Groups of 30-40" hemlocks exist in patches scattered throughout, with the most well developed groups to the east.

These trees appear to be in good physical condition, indicated by their intact, well-rounded crowns and no signs of wind damage. This site differs from the ridge-top location in many respects, including overstory species composition, density, soil type, and physiographic setting (edge of a "cove"). No doubt the understory species also differ; this area should be sampled as soon as the spring ephemerals begin to bloom, as should the ridgetop site (Botrychium spp. exists near the base of the toe slope below the ridge).

We zigzagged back and forth through this area and worked our way down to Buffalo Run. Near the bottom is an old road or grade on the northern side of the small run that drains the area. It terminates at the point where the slope abruptly decreases. At this location the forest type changes abruptly to 8-10" yellow birch, black birch, and red maple, and all the large trees drop out. I would guess that these forest type changes indicate that the area burned following logging.

Upon returning home we sanded the increment cores, reviewed the video tape, and rewrote our field notes. I sent an e-mail message to Forest Service personnel including Tom Demeo, Steve Chandler, and Linda Tracy late on Saturday night but for some reason it wasn't mailed until I logged into the network at 7:30 on Sunday morning. The data was reviewed again on Sunday morning, and is provided in the accompanying table.

On Sunday April 17 at 7:30 am I sent the following e-mail message to Tom Demeo, Steve Chandler, and Linda Tracy (recall that Tom is the forest ecologist,

Steve is the assistant forest planner, and Linda is the pipeline project EA leader). I did this because it is my intention to keep the Forest Service informed of my findings, methods, etc.

>"I had the opportunity to return to the ridge above buffalo lake today, for several reasons but primarily to core and age the trees that I mentioned in my Thornwood project comments (see f-31, comment #27 and response). I sampled twelve large trees w/in the right of way, and although I've only aged five of them so far, they are conservatively estimated as follows:

- >#6 (28" tsuga) 138+ yrs.
- >#7 (21.5" tsuga) 106+ yrs.
- >#9 (22.6" tsuga that someone had already cored) 130+ yrs.
- >#10 (21.6" fagus that someone had already cored) 204+ yrs.
- >#11 (21.8" fagus) 160+ yrs.
- >#12 (21.1" fagus) 175+ yrs.

The black birch are also quite old; one is in excess of 22" and might be older than the 21.6" beech. Another black birch of 20.2" had heart-rot but still has intact growth rings of approximately 170 yrs.

I haven't gotten to the remaining trees yet but will get to them tomorrow. I don't know what to think about this besides the obvious; we have a major discrepancy in our respective data. for myself, I've counted each sample twice, as has someone else. there's little doubt (in my mind, anyway) that my data are correct, and of course the trees are still there and can be cored again if need be. I also checked on adjacent ridges and although there are undoubtedly addition remnant patches, they are by no means the same as those on the right of way as stated in the EA.

You're certainly welcome to view/measure/otherwise examine my data if you'd like. i can mail the board in which they're mount-

ed down to you if you're interested; I've video taped all the trees and sample plots and it would be easy to return to each specific location. from what i can tell so far it looks like there are release dates around 1910, but these will have to be cross-dated and verified. I'll let you know what i find.

rick landenberger

On Monday morning Tom Demeo replied:

From: Thomas E. DeMeo:R09F21A

Date: ## 04/08/96 10:22 ##

Rick, thanks for your note. Fortunately Linda had the foresight to save some of the cores they took; I am reviewing them today. I would like to meet with you at your convenience to go over your data. Could I look at your cores after class on Wednesday? Also, Linda and I are planning another trip to the site. You are welcome to come along. We are planning on this Friday (April 12); let me know if you can make it.

Regards, td.

I replied that although I appreciated the offer, I had been to the site twice at this point and could no longer afford the 250 mile round trip that a third visit would require. Tom, the forest ecologist responsible for old-growth or "mature habitat" assessment on the Monongahela had not yet visited the site.

In the meantime, Tom reviewed the three cores that the Forest Service had taken. It turns out they counted only the single, incomplete, broken core, and disregarded the two intact cores of trees which I had also sampled (table 1). Their incomplete core was aged at 73 years old, and apparently they had extrapolated from this to the entire stand (!) Meanwhile, they had disregarded the other two intact cores that just happened to be immediately adjacent to the broken, incomplete, (see page 8)

Tree data from Thornwood pipeline section (28) above Buffalo Lake

sample	species	dbh	age	- other
1	b. lenta	20.2	200+	
2	b. lenta	15.0	148+	- basal area for area 1 was 160 sq. ft./acre
3	t. canadensis	14.1		- increment incomplete
4	b. lenta	24.8	200+	
5	b. lenta	23.0	137+	
6	t. canadensis	28.0	138+	- basal area for area 2 was 100 sq. ft./acre
7	t. canadensis	21.5	106+	
8	b. lenta	22.0	152+	- basal area for area 3 was 160 sq. ft./acre
9	t. canadensis	22.6	130+	- previously cored
10	f. grandifolia	21.6	204+	- previously cored
11	f. grandifolia	21.8	160+	
12	f. grandifolia	21.1	175+	



# Monongahela Quarterly & Ragette's Quips



The new Quarterly has just arrived. Call Kate Goodrich (304-636-1800) for your own copy.

**Cheat Ranger District 478-3251  
PO Box 368, Parsons, WV 26287**

The cheat ranger district office, according to the Mon Quarterly, is too busy with timber sales and grazing allotments and has to put trail work off the table - hmmm

**(A) - Bear Heaven Project Area (#13.001)**

This was listed in the last Mon Quarterly as ready to go, but delays due to loss of staff, and problems with Indian Run and Location Project have put this on the back burner. Vegetation Management (timber sales), wildlife habitat management (create openings-clearcuts), range management (grazing allotments), road construction/reconstruction, trail reconstruction. NFMA now, NEPA (that's us) November 1996, Comments due December 1996, Decision April 1997

Contact - Jim Knibbs

**(B) - Indian Run (#13.007) - UP FOR COMMENT SOON!!**

Vegetation Management (timbers sales), wildlife habitat management (create openings-clearcuts), road construction/reconstruction, stream structures.

NFMA now - almost completed; NEPA Environmental Assessment due any day, Contact - Jim Knibbs

**(C) - Location Project Area (#13.004) - UP FOR COMMENT SOON!!**

Vegetation Management (timbers sales), wildlife habitat management (create openings-clearcuts), road construction/reconstruction, trail reconstruction. NFMA now; NEPA Scoping May 1996, Comments due June 1996, Contact - Jim Knibbs

**Trail reconstruction Projects -**

The following trail projects have been put on hold because the Forest Service is too busy doing timber sales to have the time to do the NEPA analysis. - Blackwater trail (#16.102, #13.009) - Canaan Mountain trails

(#16.202, #161.03)

Contact - Carol Rucker

**(D) - Grazing allotments -** Watchford/Vickers Allotment Plan in McGowan Mountain (#16.104) and in Fernow (#18.001) - revisit grazing permit for a minimum of 40 cows. NFMA has been completed. NEPA Scoping June 1996. Comments due July 1996.

Contact - Carol Rucker

**(E) - Queens Allotment -** McGowan Mountain (#16.104)

This area was a grazing allotment that is no longer being used. The options being considered are to maintain existing openings and/or create additional wetland areas for wildlife. NFMA underway. NEPA scoping to start in June 1996. Contact Terry Evans \*\*\*\*\*

**Gauley Ranger District 846 - 2695  
PO Box 110, Richwood, WV 26261  
NEW PROJECTS**

**(R) - Jerryville Project Area -** You'll notice the decision date for this is June 19. It sounds like the decision is already made, but damn it they have to go through all this public review stuff first...The Jerryville Project Area includes about 1300 acres of National Forest land east of Cowen, WV. Proposed actions include thinning on 307 acres, cutting vines on 47 acres, designation 67 acres as mature habitat, and constructing .85 mile of roads.

Contact Lewis Blodgett

Decision date June 19, 1996

**(F) - Gauley Project Area (#261.01)**

"The Gauley Project Area is on the western edge of the district just south of Cowen. The area will be evaluated for various projects that will help achieve the desired future condition. Currently there is no public access to the area." Of course the reason they want to acquire access is not for the public to access this area but to implement the following 'management practices' - Vegetation Management (timbers sales), wildlife habitat management (create openings-clearcuts), road construction/reconstruction, trail reconstruction. NFMA now, NEPA to

begin soon; Decision 1996

Contact - Bill Schiffer.

**(S) - Round Mountain (OA# 26.111) and Spruce Run Area (OA# 26.110)**

Currently in the NFMA stage (this is where all the decisions are made before public involvement). "These areas are on the southeast part of the district just west of Hillsboro, WV and contain about 4,200 acres of National Forest land. Types of projects that might be proposed include roads, timber harvest, wildlife openings, water-holes, planting for wildlife and trails.

**(T) - Miles Knob Project Area (Frosty Gap OA 26.109)**

In NFMA now. "This area is north of State Highway 39/55 across the Falls of Hills Creek and contains about 5,000 acres of national Forest land." This area is also a 6.1 area and the folks in the FS will consider the following types of projects - roads, timber harvest, wildlife openings, water-holes, planting for wildlife and trails. Decision date 1997. Contact Bill Schiffer

OLD PROJECTS

**(G) - Little Fork Project Area (#22.002) -** Adjacent to Cranberry Wilderness!!!

Vegetation Management (timbers sales), wildlife habitat management (create openings-clearcuts), road construction/reconstruction "Projects WILL include closing several existing roads, timber harvesting, road construction and reconstruction, and creating openings for wildlife."

Due to all the flak the FS received on this, the project has been dropped in priority, as it will be much easier for the FS to serve their masters in the timber industry by cutting elsewhere. Decision date is still listed as 1996 - so pay attention!!

**Kennison Mountain Cranberry River Connector Trail - South Fork Trail -**

This trail has been built with 1.2 miles of new trail and the use of another 1 mile of old woodland road. The trail connects Kennison Mountain trail #244 to FS Road #102 across from the Cow Pasture Trail #253.

**Greenbrier Ranger #56 3335**

**PO Box 67, Bartow, WV 24920**

**(H) - Frank Mountain (#36.117)**

Timber Sales - clearcuts. "enhancing age-class distribution"

Scoping comments due now. Environmental Assessment (EA) will be out for comments December 1995. Decision - May 10, 1996.

Contact - Ed Clutter

**(I) - Stewart Run (#36.118) (formerly Upper Tygart Valley)** "Timber sale to improve age-class distribution..."

Timber sale-Wildlife Habitat Improvement - clearcuts. Scoping ended October 1995, EA out for review early March 1996. Decision - November 1996. Contact - Laura Hise

**(J) - Burner Settlement (#33.006) - UP FOR COMMENT NOW!!!**

Timber Sale/Wildlife Habitat Improvement - to improve age class distribution (AND provide high quality hardwood trees for lumber and veneer...) NFMA now, NEPA by December, EA out for review early March

1996. Decision - late 1996 Contact - Scott Wells

**(U) Smoke Camp (#36.116)**

Timber Sale/Wildlife Habitat Improvement - i.e. timber cuts, clearcuts, thinning, two stage cuts... Scoping starts July 12 1996. Decision March 15, 1997. Contact Jerry Larson \*\*\*\*\*

**Marlinton Ranger District**

**799-4334**

**PO Box 210, Marlinton, WV 24954  
NEW PROJECTS**

**(V) - Lockridge Mountain Timber Analysis (Knapp Creek - #46.108, Rimel #46.115)**

Timber harvesting analysis to regenerate hard mast tree species (we better do something quick the white oaks won't last more than 300 more years) Proposed projects will likely include Timber Harvest, Timber Harvest, Timber Harvests, and you guessed it Timber harvests also road construction herbicide spraying, tree planting?? Scoping starts May 96

Comments due by June 1996

Contact James Heinle

OLD PROJECTS

**(K) - Props run (#46.101) Rocky Point (#46.103)**

East Gauley Mountain Timber Analysis - "Timber harvest to regenerate hard mast trees" Those naughty degenerate trees will be treated to clearcuts, and various other vegetation management schemes to restore their rapidly deteriorating mast producing abilities. Also expect more roads, herbicide spraying, burning. Proposed Action Statement due out any time now. Over 15,000,000 Board feet will be cut from Gauley Mountain. Even the steepest terrain will suffer cuts, because now they have helicopter logging in the Monongahela!!! Decision - any day now

Appeals - you bet!!!

Contact James Heinle

It's interesting to note that the EA and comment period for the Timber analysis is finished, but no EA for the following two projects that are for the same area as above. Why does timber get priority over recreation on watershed restoration, you might ask?

**(K) - East Gauley Mountain Trail Analysis**

An analysis of three specific areas that have potential for development as recreation trails. These include the Props Run Grade, The Chimney Rock Grade and an area near the intersection of Forest Road 24 & Highway 219. Proposed action statement available now. Contact Tim Henry

**(K) - East Gauley Mountain Watershed Restoration Analysis**

An analysis to consider construction of water-bars and other erosion control measures on abandoned railroad grades, old roads, and other sources of sediment. Proposed action statement available now. Contact James Heinle

**Potomac Ranger District 257 4488  
HC 59 Box 240**

**Petersburg, WV 26847**

**NEW PROJECTS**

**(W) - Red Creek Plains Project Area (#56.102)**

Timber harvest, clearcuts, thinning, wildlife openings (which serendipitously means Timber cuts). Scoping starts 9/96; Decision date 3/97

Contact Julie Fosbender

**(L) - Smith Mountain Project Area (#53.002)**

This is the new big timber sale/road construction for the Potomac District. Analysis began in December. Scoping to start April 1996. Comments due May '96 with a decision expected in September. Call Sara Schell for more info.

OLD PROJECTS

**(M) - Red Creek Stables Outfitter Guide**

Red Creek Stables, near Laneville wants a permit to provide horses and guide services in the Flat Rock Run area and into the area north of Dolly Sods. Actually they have been doing this for a number of years, but the forest service finally admitted they need a permit for this commercial activity. Areas involved include Weiss Knob (#53.001), Dolly Sods Scenic Area (#58.031), Red Creek (#56.102), and the Flat Rock Roaring Plains (#56.203). Outfitter has submitted a revised application; The Forest Service is in the process of mapping the proposed trails

**(N) - Seneca Rock Outfitters Guide -**

Generally the same deal a permit for commercial guides to use Seneca Rocks (#57.001). Temporary permits have been issued. The Forest Service is monitoring use and damage done before proceeding with a decision to continue a permitting system for commercial guides. Contact Sara Schell

**(O) - Osceola Project Area (#53.009)**

Timber Mining, Road Construction. Decision date is April 1996. Contact Sara Schell

**(P) - Spruce Mountain East Road Extension (#53.006)**

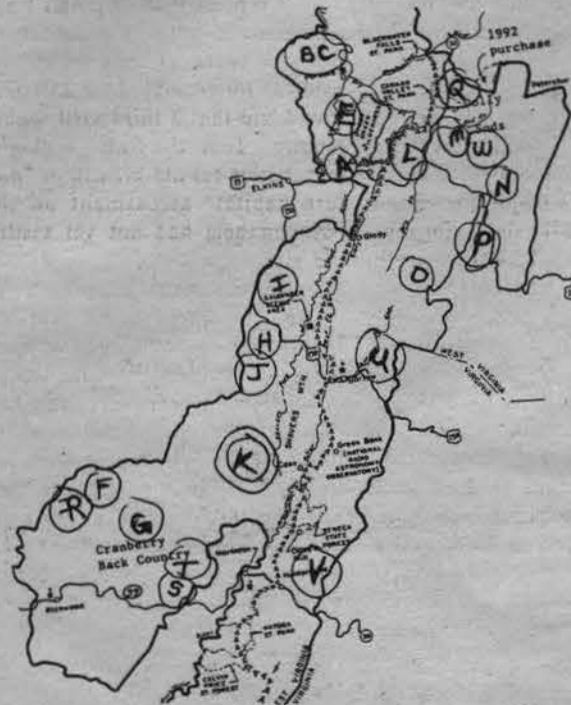
This is a strange bird. Evidently the timber decision is signed sealed and delivered (1991), but now the FS wants to build an entirely different road to access the timber. The road will be a new construction and will go north from Spruce Knob into the Brushy Run Drainage. The freddies say they will not revisit the timber cut decision, but it seems to me that this new wrinkle will change the cumulative impacts and they may be forced to redo the Environmental assessment of the projects. Scoping, Comments done. Decision date - May 1996.

Contact Richard VanderNoot.

**(Q) - Timberline Ski Area/Salamander Run (Weiss Knob #53.001).**

Evidently the ski run the freddies gave to timberline on Cabin Mountain actually does impact the population of Cheat Mountain salamander living there. But don't worry they are going to study it some more and see if they can find some way to have their skiing and their salamanders too! Scoping over. Decision expected by 9/96.

Contact Richard VanderNoot. Call em up today!!





# Mining as if the Earth Mattered ??????????



(from page 1) rather than on evaluating the cumulative impact of the pros and cons of the actual filling of stream after stream.

How refreshing it is to hear someone in an official capacity question the very notion of extensive burying of streams, and the basic right and wrongness of something we have become so blasé about here in WV.

Whether a cold water fishery person like Gauvin, or a bass and muskie lover, or hiker or biker who wades in or muses beside, or just someone who lives in a hollow and depends on that tiny creek to quench the farm or family thirst for daily sustenance and peace of mind, each of us should be concerned about the long term cumulative impact of the many permits that allow the filling of streams.

The nationwide effect on stream ecosystems; the drastic alteration of local and regional hydrology; the impact on the rural and independent lifestyle of many mountain communities -- are but a few of some important concerns that are all-too-often trivialized, overlooked, avoided or excused during the permitting process, well before the activities begin and before the damage occurs.

-- Even today, as the Army Corps of Engineers and other federal and state agencies consider plans for refuse fills for the proposed CONSOL Wolfpen Knob Development operation on the Clay-Braxton County line near Duck and Servia to the east of Interstate 79, little attention is being given to these serious and long-term cumulative impacts of new mining in that area, and little information is forthcoming from the company as to how extensive their plans are for mining in that pristine section of the Elk River.

## GROUNDWATER

In northern WV the cumulative impact of extensive deep mining is beginning to make itself known with the closing of many of the big CONSOL deep mines. Pumping that kept the mines dry and safe for workers is now being discontinued and the giant web of interconnected tunnels and shafts is filling with water.

In an area where there once were many relatively small isolated perched aquifers, one large underground void is about to become a groundwater lake that roughly encompasses the area between the Monongahela River on the East and the Ohio River on the North and West. What happens when all that iron and acid laden water that has been pumped to the surface and treated for years now fills that vast expanse?

The theory is that flooding the mines will prevent oxygen from entering the void, thus preventing the oxidation of the hot acid and iron producing coal surfaces. --But, will all this water be content to remain in the old mine shafts? Or will it burst out somewhere, following the path of least resistance through some fissure, some thin outcrop, some old punch mine? Where will all this new water appear - in whose backyards - in whose ground water wells? What hillsides will blow out? What streams polluted?

In southern WV the disruption to ground water regimes go hand in hand with the inversion of whole mountains and the filling of valleys that alter forever the flow of water into and through the newly created landscape. Where and when new hydrologic regimes will be re-established is anyone's guess.

The bitter pill of the coal exemption granted in exchange for

the passage of the 1990 W.V. Groundwater Protection Act is about to dissolve in the throats of many of us who reluctantly swallowed the pill in the first place.

The assumption behind that exemption was that the Clean Water Act and the Surface Mine Act already require all that we could realistically expect or require from an industry which, by the very nature of its activity, is engaged in ripping apart the earth itself.

However, political pressures as well as the advanced technologies of the '90's that allow for long-wall deep mining and the not-so-surface mining of mountains have stretched the limits of those laws to the benefit of industry and the detriment of the earth.

All the tums in the world and all the limestone fines in Germany Valley will hardly be enough to deal with the problems that await us.

## STREAMS

Thousands of miles of patriotic red, white and blue/black iron, aluminum, manganese and coal laden streams in WV and PA are garnering the attention of the new cleanup artists of the 21st century. Earth Day '96 and other celebrations this year sing the praises of innovative artificial life support systems being installed in and around the dead and dying acid streams of northern WV and elsewhere.

Built and sold like the cars of today (i.e., designed to last a decade but sold as the answer to all ones dreams for the future) these panaceas are but temporary fixes promoting false hopes.

For industry, a life span of even twenty years for these passive treatment systems may well be enough to lull agencies and the

public into thinking mining in acid prone areas might be possible after all. But, as these ticking time bombs are installed across the state in old and new mine sites, the inevitable need for cleanup is once again being passed on to future generations.

The cumulative impact of current sources of acid mine drainage is onerous, but the impact of massive numbers of short lived passive systems waiting to fail a generation from now is far more sinister.

## VEGETATION

Though we don't often focus on revegetation in these mining reports, let us not forget the trees and other plants during this Earth Day musing.

Will hardwood forests ever return to southern WV? Or to any of the acid laden backfills of the north? Do the timber-rich coal barons (or is it coal-rich timber barons) of today seriously believe in the sustainability of the upside down mountains of Nicholas, Mingo, Logan or Clay? or the acid producing mountains of Preston, Marion or Upshur?

When one considers how many square miles of WV have already been and will be mined in the future, the idea of long-term sustainable yield of our precious hardwoods and mixed mesophytic forest becomes more difficult to imagine. With this realization, the idea of prohibiting timbering at least on the very limited acreages of public land here in the east, especially here in WV, becomes far more attractive than ever.

And what of the other vegetation? Will the new grasses and plants introduced in post mining plantings all across the state these past twenty years lead us to some future fame as a farming state, or big game hunting preserve? Or will these exotics just increase competition among the native plants that formerly grew and thrived in WV?

## AIR AND ASH

Of course, this discussion would not be complete without at least passing reference to a couple other by-products of burning coal for energy.

The full impact of toxic acid rain that stunts trees and washes nutrients out of the soils is only beginning to be measured, and already the picture is frightening. Even the most recent goals of the Clean Air Act are insufficient to stop the destruction of trees, soils, high quality waters and headwater trout streams in the highlands of WV.

The impact of the mountains of ash produced at coal burning power plants is an even greater mystery at this time. As a waste product it presents a massive disposal problem. Industry wisdom and agency hopes of the day point

to the highly alkaline nature of this refuse and look to using the ash as a neutralizer in deep mine voids and refuse and surface mine backfills where acid is a problem. But it has yet to be proven what long-term role the heavy metal content of ash will play in this picture. Will those metals leach out? If so, what variable will determine which ash is safe to use and which isn't... which ash, from which power plant, from which different coals, etc., etc., etc.?

And so, as this month of earth day celebration winds down and industry's claim that 'every day is earth day' dims for yet another year, one wonders if coal company names like Evergreen are meant to reassure us that all is under control and that green grass means the eventual return of hardwood timber? or that operations with names like HIGH POWER MOUNTAIN are meant to make us swell with pride as they conger up images of the importance of the coal industry as "ENERGY EXPORTERS TO THE WORLD" (as in WV Public Radio's advertisement)?; or just what the River of Promise promises - and to whom? - cleanup for how long? and to what end?

As talk of strong enforcement is replaced with the hype of 'cooperation' and calls for accountability are drowned out by the celebrations of 'mutual intent' and 'shared commitment'; old and new portions of the earth continue to bleed, suffocate and strangle; mining fatalities are on the rise - and contributions to retirement, compensation and reclamation funds remain stagnant at below necessary and legal levels.

There can be no doubt that mining has always had a profound place in the lives of West Virginians. And no one can downplay the importance of mining jobs. Even through the mine wars of yesterday and the union busting tactics of reorganization today, coal mining has put food on tables and clothes on the backs of thousands of honorable, dedicated and devoted West Virginia families.

But, the big picture of cumulative long-term negative impacts from current mining is bleak, and cries out for relief for the sake of the earth and its waters that are to support mountaineers seven generations from now.

Industry publications are wont to decry the rip and run atrocities of past mining activities. But the scars of earlier pick and shovel mining are more like superficial scratches when compared to the arm and leg searing nature of the mining technologies of the '90's.

Cleanup of mining messes of the past may be tedious and difficult, but major portions of the state (and nation) may never recover from the more shattering touch of 21st century mining. ♦



more uses of 'junk wood' - mushroom biodiversity



# A Forest Health Conference

## Saving the Forests or Rearranging Deck Chairs on the Titanic?

by Ragette' and Gaspar

The Lucy Braun Association for the Mixed Mesophytic Forest and the US Forest Service cosponsored a conference the weekend of March 15/16) at the University of Charleston. Representatives of a wide array of interests attended and presented talks. State and Federal Forest agency personnel, scientists from agencies, universities and environmental groups, and citizen activists reported on their studies and activities.

Orie Loucks, eminent forest ecologist from Miami University, and John Flynn, WV native and forest activist extraordinaire, were able to coax the diverse and often bitterly opposed players to come together and listen to each other for a couple of days.

Almost everyone interested in forests these days claims our forests are in trouble, but there seem to be as many reasons and solutions as there are trees. Industry whores in Congress, under the guise of a forest health crisis, passed legislation opening up tens of thousands of acres of ancient forest to logging without environmental review.

Over the last few years many journals and newspapers have carried articles announcing and examining the apparent rapid increase in tree mortality throughout the east. Other folks, including our own state forestry officials, claim that forests are healthier than ever and it's only fires and poor harvesting practices that are damaging the forests.

Many enviro tree huggers have been concerned that unsustainable logging, clearcutting, cutting in National Forests and conversion of forests to pulp wood were having extremely detrimental effects on biodiversity and clean air and water. Jeff DeBonis, founder of Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics said that with all the overcutting and conversion of our forests that talking about whether air pollution was the primary of secondary cause of tree death was like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. To me it felt like the old shell game - look over here at the myriad details of air and soil and tree chemistry while the forests are being cut at the fastest rates in decades.

Although the conference was designed

to focus on the effects of Air Pollution and Acid Precipitation on our forests, many other forest health issues were discussed, both in and out of formal sessions. It didn't take long to see that the main point of contention was whether or tree mortality was caused or aggravated by air pollution. It was interesting for me to see normally cool and deliberate scientists get into a verbal cat fight over the issue.

One USFS forest pathologist said Air Pollution (not just Acid Deposition) may not be immediate cause of tree mortality, but chronic deposition can severely compromise a tree's resistance to other stresses - insects, diseases, drought, severe winters. These agents of decay are omni-present and ecologically necessary in the recycling of nutrients. (One researcher reported that in his most acidic study plot, acid deposition had so reduced soil fauna that the forest leaf litter was accumulating and not returning nutrients to the soil for forest use.) Healthy trees can withstand the various onslaughts, but at least 5 scientists reporting at the conference were confident that acid deposition and other air pollution were stressing forests magnifying the mortality normally caused by insects and diseases.

Another hot topic at the conference was Nitrogen deposition. Nitrogen, in its various forms, spewed out by cars, power plants, agriculture, is also stressing our forests and killing trees. Briefly, although nitrogen is an essential element of tree growth, too much nitrogen in the soil will bind with other very important elements (notably calcium, magnesium and phosphorous) and then leach these minerals out of the soil. This compounds a host of other problems such as heavy deer browse, insect infestations (made worse by nitrogen overload in tree leaves which makes the leaves tastier), drought, temperature extremes... This air borne nitrogen also increases the concentration of ground level ozone, harmful to plants and people.

Nitrogen also mobilizes aluminum from the soil into surface waters where it is toxic to fish. Scientists at Penn. State found especially high levels of aluminum in stream water after heavy rains. These brief episodes of high exposure can kill fish. This 'fish loss' has oc-

curred in trout streams throughout Appalachia.

Unfortunately, when the Clean Air Act was originally written many scientists thought Sulfur and Sulfuric acid emissions were the main culprit. The auto industry also lobbied very hard to exempt nitrogen emissions from regulation. While emissions of sulfur com-

pounds have been reduced some, nitrogen compounds have continually increased.

Legislation to correct this problem may not emerge from our current nature hating Congress. The states have been trying to address the problem by forming a compact on ozone reduction. Unfortunately the WV legislature has recently passed a bill to keep the state from joining this effort. ♦

### Sierra Club Endorses ZERO CUT on National Forests

from WV Sierran Forest Watch Committee

The Sierra Club referendum on a policy to oppose commercial logging in National Forests passed by a nearly 2 to 1 margin. Executive Director Carl Pope said "The vote is not surprising in light of the recent environmental abuses on our national forest." He highlighted recent "legislation that exempts most commercial logging on our national forests from complying with basic environmental laws" and stated "The Forest Service and the timber industry say they can conduct commercial logging in ways that do not adversely impact other public values and that will not require taxpayer subsidies, but the hard evidence indicates that they failed to meet those standards time and time again." The new national policy requires the Club to support enacting federal legislation, but details of how the policy will affect Sierras work under existing laws and existing forest plans still need to be worked out. ♦

### Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

The Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide, 6th edition, is bigger and better than ever, with 368 pages, 96 pages of maps, 49 photographs, 177 trails totalling 812 miles, and a full color cover. West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is the publisher. Authors are Allen de Hart and Bruce Sundquist (same as edition 5). Allen has hiked all the trails of the Monongahela N.F. over the past few years. Bruce was the editor for the first four editions. The hiking community and the U.S. Forest Service provided trail reports and photographs. The Guide also provides information for ski-touring and backpacking.

The growing throngs of visitors and the public at large regard the Monongahela National Forest as a 'Special Place'. And indeed it is. The hiking, backpacking, and ski-touring opportunities it provides are among the best in the eastern U.S. The more outstanding areas are becoming known far and wide - Otter Creek Wilderness, Dolly Sods Wilderness, Flatrock Plains, Roaring Plains, Blackwater Canyon, Spruce Knob, North Fork Mountain, Shaver's Mountain, Laurel Fork Wilderness, Cranberry Back Country, Cranberry Wilderness, among others.

Profits from the sale of these guides support a wide variety of worthy environmental projects in the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. To order your copy of Edition 6 of Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide, send \$12.95 (this includes \$3.00 first class shipping) to

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy  
PO Box 306  
Charleston, WV 25321



I have included a \_\_\_ check or \_\_\_ money order for the amount of \$ \_\_\_ to WVHC for \_\_\_ copies of the Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you written those two letters yet? That's one on Apple Grove (see page 2) and one on the Old Growth in the Thornwood Pipeline (see pages 1,4,8). Thanks, now go outside for a walk.

## Recreation on the National Forests is Booming

Here is some information from the Forest Service's explanatory notes to their 1997 budget request. I always knew the National Forests value for recreation was much more than logging, but I did not realize it was 32 times more valuable by the FS's own calculations. According to "National Summary Timber Sale Program Annual Report Fiscal Year 1994" the logging program only created 76,000 jobs and only produced 2.7 billion for the economies.

In FY 1994 the Forest Service hosted over 835 million visits on National Forests, compared to 300 million by the National Park Service and 40 million by Disney. Recreational use of the forests is at an all

time high, and RPA projections indicate that use will increase over 50 percent by 2040. Over 2 1/2 million jobs are associated with the economic activity generated by recreation which is estimated to almost \$100 billion annually. Recreation fees to the Treasury were \$46 million last year and in order to meet increasing demand, the agency plans to increase the use of fees in the future. In 1995, National Forests provided 16.1 million activity days of hunting, at an estimated value of \$574 million, supporting 18,900 local jobs and generated \$22.6 million in local taxes. An estimated 37 million day of recreational fishing produced an estimated \$1.6 billion in economic value. ♦



# Forest Service Replies



by Bill Ragette'

I just received a 7 page fax from Tom DeMeo, forest ecologist on the Monongahela National forest. Tom finally went out and investigated the putative old growth in the proposed Thornwood gas pipeline corridor. He does admit that Rick Landenberger was correct in his assessment as to the age of the trees (up to 200 years vs. the 80 years the FS claimed for the trees). Tom calls the patch in question "residual clump of old growth attributes from the previous forest."?????. Tom scoured the area to find similar patches and found that "Similar clumps occur across the mountainside in the nearby vicinity." Isn't it strange that before the FS couldn't even tell the age of the stand upon coring it and now they can find several other stands in the area of similar age?

Although the patch meets 8 of 9 FS criteria for Old Growth, Tom claims it fails in one, that of being sufficient size to be viable. He concludes "the site does not meet the requirements for viable old growth." But it is the largest such patch that Tom found in the area and contains the oldest tree cored. I have a feeling that this time they looked for the oldest trees and counted all the rings.

In the whole forest we have less than 250 acres of documented old growth - even these areas have not been subjected to the rigorous criteria that Tom is applying here. To write off this remnant as not viable (and therefore expendable for this project??) may be premature. Its certainly a waste of scarce resources (Don't you like it when they call old growth trees resources?) What is the quality of the soils? Can we improve its viability by surrounding it with a no-cut buffer? Instead of being expendable, it should be considered expandable.

As it now stands Mon Forest Supervisor Don Kinerson says he has no information that would make him revise the Environmental Assessment for Thornwood. I'm appealing the decision, but don't hold your breath. I'm afraid that if you want to

save this old growth you'll have to put your body on the line. In the meantime why not write the superintendent and inform him of the grave error he is about to commit. Don Kinerson, Supervisor, Monongahela national Forest, 1800 Sycamore St., Elkins, WV 26241.

Here's Tom's analysis of the patch...

### 1. Age

Rick's work has clearly shown that the site has trees well over 100 years old, at least one beech exceeds 200 yrs. From field investigation I am convinced that there is a sufficient density of old trees on the site to consider it as meeting this attribute.

### 2. Species Composition

Overstory species is diverse, including beech, hemlock, black birch, and sugar maple. Since the growing season was just starting, it was difficult to assess understory composition, but judging from the structural diversity and presence of at least one gap, I conclude the understory is probably diverse as well.

### 3. Multiple Canopy Layers

These are evident; understory trees of different height and diameter classes were well represented.

### 4. Structural Diversity

Locations of all trees 2.5 cm or greater in diameter at breast height were mapped. As with the canopy layers the diameter class distribution is diverse.

### 5. Woody Debris

Downed woody debris is evident, in a variety of species and diameters. Pit-mound topography, characteristic of small-scale windthrow gap-formation processes, is also well-represented.

### 6. Snags

Snags of at least three species and of varied diameters are present. Cavities suggest they are well-used by wildlife.

### 7. Gap Formation

One gap 11 m in diameter was documented, as well as one about 5 m in diameter. The 11 m. gap is probably of sufficient size to facilitate tree regeneration overtime; the

5 m gap is not.

### 8. Minimum Area

The area in question was measured as 33 m by 55 m or .18 ha (close to half an acre)

Minimum area is a critical consideration, since it relates to old growth viability and function. Evidence is accumulating that some small eastern old growth remnants may not be viable over time, or at least unusually vulnerable to disturbance events. The beech scale-disease complex appears to be well-established in the vicinity, as evidenced by a high density of beech snags across the mountainside, as well as signs of the disease on trees on or near the site. This leads me to believe the site in question will experience beech mortality in the near future.

I conclude the site does not meet the area requirement for viable old growth.

### 9. Adjacency and Scale Considerations

This leads to the final consideration on the above attribute list, those of adjacency and scale. The site in question should be considered in the context of the surrounding landscape.

To assess this, clumps of residual old growth attributes were also evaluated in nearby areas across the north side of Spruce Ridge. Data were collected on patches encountered, with the attributes above documented where present. Several cores were taken from trees in each patch. The dimensions of each patch were measured or estimated. For the purposes of this evaluation, patches were considered to meet the age requirement for old growth if at least some overstory trees were at least 120 yrs old at breast height.

The mountainside contains at least several other clumps of old growth attributes. While it is difficult to say which is the most valuable, the site in question has the oldest documented beech trees and is slightly larger than the next largest patch.

Sincerely,

Thomas DeMeo  
ecologist

# ThornwoodGate



(from page 4) scrambled core on the same board (increment cores are mounted on a board as a means to preserve them for future reference). After discussing the matter among themselves, they concluded that an "honest mistake" was made "in the field", and that upon reviewing the three cores, indeed my data was substantiated.

Here are several interesting facts that I would ask you to consider.

1.) the forest service's stand age data that they routinely use to evaluate environmental effects according to NEPA does not indicate that this is an old stand. It is considered second growth.

2.) when I originally asked tom if I could review the cores (several months ago, back in November), I was told that they were "evidence" and that he could not bring them up to Morgantown for me to review (we had a class together and therefore saw each other several times a week).

3.) a single, incomplete, broken, and scrambled core was used to extrapolate to an entire stand, while two intact cores were (apparently) ignored.

4.) I've been repeatedly asked to accept the "honest mistake" explanation, but after requesting information on the specifics (how representative trees were selected, how the cores were taken, how the cores were handled and preserved, who counted them and why only a single, obviously invalid core was aged) I haven't received any answers. NEPA, by law, requires "full disclosure" of the methods used in environmental assessments.

The overwhelming evidence suggests (and therefore I can only conclude, being reasonable) that an "honest mistake" was not made in this case, and that a deliberate and calculated misrepresentation of the data occurred. Any semi-intelligent forester knows not to age a broken and incomplete increment core. The fact that two (much older) intact cores were lying immediately adjacent to the invalid core strongly suggests a conscious act occurred. On-the-other-hand, let's assume an "honest mistake" was made in this case.

What does that say about the Forest Service's competence when evaluating much, much more complex issues such as the prediction of sediment yields to aquatic ecosystems (many of the streams in the Thornwood project area already have very high sediment yields), the effects of fragmentation on various organisms, economic impacts associated with various projects, and the cumulative impacts of road building, silviculture, and "wildlife" management? By law, they're responsible to accurately estimate these (and other) effects.

As far as I'm concerned, either scenario (completely incompetent versus dishonest) is extremely depressing.

Stay tuned for the official Forest Service assessment of old-growth in this case. I predict that despite the FACT that all eleven intact cores that I collected (properly) and aged (properly), the official determination of the stand will be "not old-growth". As Tom said to me at 4:30 pm, Wednesday, April 10, the Thornwood gas pipeline project has simply gone too far to change its course at this point in time. The "honest mistake" made in the field will have ramifications for generations. Lets hope this kind of ridiculous bumbling and fumbling (and in my opinion downright dishonesty) doesn't ever happen again on our beautiful Monongahela National Forest. To learn more about it (please don't simply take my word for it), contact Linda Tracy, Steve Chandler, or Tom Demeo, US Forest Service, Monongahela National Forest, 200 Sycamore St., Elkins WV 26241-3962.

These are the people responsible for managing YOUR National Forests in the public interest. They receive YOUR tax dollars, and are responsible to YOU. I wish they were responsible to me.

Rick Landenberger  
338 Watts St.  
Morgantown, WV 26505



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