



West  
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Conservancy


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Working since 1967 for the conservation and wise management of West Virginia's Natural Resources

# Spring Review 2000

April 28-30 - Cheat Mountain Club

For over 30 years, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has been holding this very special event. The Spring Review has become a West Virginia tradition of celebrating the Highlands. It is the premier opportunity to enjoy together the lands and waters we work so hard to protect. This year we will be exploring the upper Shavers Fork of the Cheat River and the newly acquired Forest Service Lands known as "The Mower Tract," or "Cheat Mountain Backcountry." Join Us!!



For over 100 years known as a great place for hunting, fishing and wilderness adventure, the Cheat Mountain Club is a special retreat from the outside world - a gracious, quiet, comfortable lodge that fosters contemplation, good talk, and recreational enjoyment in a place of spectacular natural beauty.

In this special newsletter you will find all the information you will need to register for this year's Spring Review. It is full of background information on the "Cheat Mountain Backcountry" and citizen efforts to protect and restore the area."

This information will help you better understand and enjoy your weekend with us, or if you choose to explore this special place another time. Either way, we hope you will imbibe its spirit, and learn to appreciate this special place, one of the largest contiguous areas of the "Monongahela National Forest."

A special thanks to all the people who contributed to this newsletter and made this special compilation of interesting and colorful accounts possible.

Dr. Ken Carvell, Dr. George Deike, Ruth Blackwell Rogers, Larry Pittis, Dr. Roy Clarkson, Zach Henderson, Tom Rodd, Dave Saville, Bryan Moore, Don Garvin, the staff of the Cheat Mountain Club, and Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Chuck Myers,



# A BIT OF HISTORY OF THE MOWER TRACT

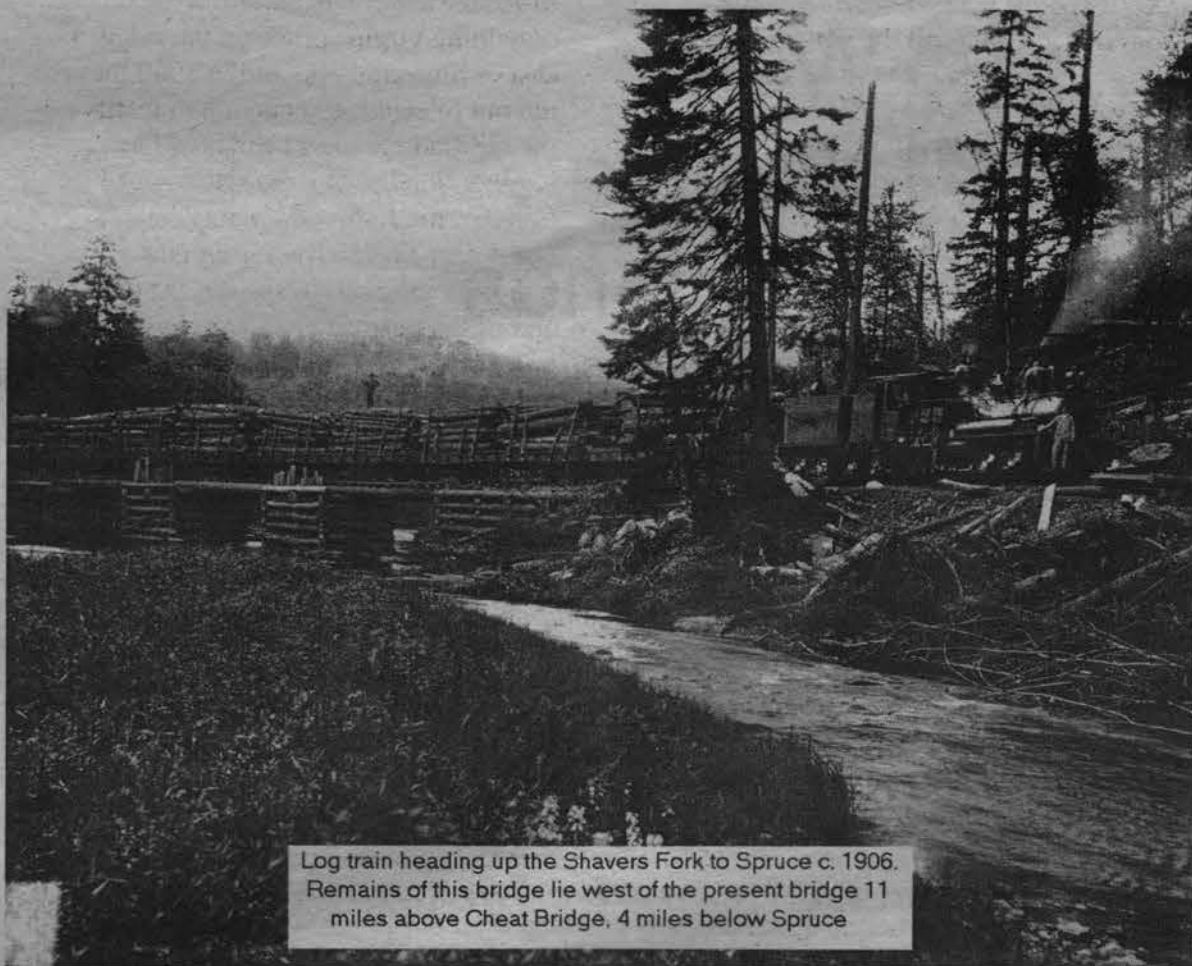
by  
Dr. George Deike

The Mower Tract consists of some 40,000 acres on top of Cheat Mountain, encompassing the valley of Shavers Fork of Cheat River from Cheat Bridge at U.S. Route 250 to its headwaters. The name is derived from Mower Lumber Company, which bought the land in 1942. The land is almost entirely above 3000 feet, and through most of the 19th Century was a virgin red spruce forest, a relict of the frigid climate of the Pleistocene. In the second quarter of the century a turnpike road was built across the mountain and all the way to the Ohio River, to connect the growing settlements. Defending the road cost Civil War soldiers more lives from weather than from battle. Hunters and fishermen walked and packed into the wilds. The pressure on game increased when Cheat Mountain Club was built to entice businessmen from afar to come and go hunting. But it was a time to wonder at today, a time when strings of big native trout could be caught most anywhere, and fish hatcheries were part of the unimaginable and unnatural future. It is sobering to realize that even then our ancestors wiped out the elk, cougar and wolves on this remote mountain.

In the 1880s the Dewing family, short of exploitable land in Michigan, discovered this wilderness, bought the land, cleared rocks from the river, and built a dam to float logs at



Loading logs on the head of the Shavers Fork in 1945 on present Snowshoe lands.



Log train heading up the Shavers Fork to Spruce c. 1906. Remains of this bridge lie west of the present bridge 11 miles above Cheat Bridge, 4 miles below Spruce

Cheat Bridge. They hauled in a tiny locomotive to bring logs to the river. The company failed, trying to float the logs clear to the Pennsylvania line, but the stage was set for the timber boom.

In 1899 West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company (now Westvaco) bought Dewing out for \$8.65 an acre. Spruce wood made fine paper pulp, and WVP&P was building a new paper mill at Covington, VA. Remarkably, the

mill was not built near Lewisburg, WV partly because people objected to the potential pollution! By 1901 the C&O Railroad had reached Cass, WVP&P was building a town and mill there, and its logging railroad reached Shavers Fork.

Logging by rail involved building a rough track into uncut timber, building camps for the "wood hicks", then cutting, skidding to the tracks with horses, loading the cars with a steam loader, and hauling the woods away to Cass. When the trees were gone, the track was torn up and the job moved on, leaving the area to return to some approximation of its wild state.

Cutting began at the head of the river, where Snowshoe Resort is now, and came down river tributary by tributary. In 1905 the town of Spruce was completed, with a mill to reduce spruce logs to pulpwood size. Spruce was the highest town in the East. Legend has it that there was no cemetery because the ground was always frozen. In 1908 a coal mine was opened at Hopkins, 10 miles below Spruce, to supply the locomotives, loaders, mill, etc. In 1910 the Big Cut was begun to take the railroad west from Spruce into the timber on Elk River. This was the largest excavation ever done by a lumber company. The same year cutting reached Cheat Bridge. East of Spruce the mountain was planted in seedlings, a peculiar idea being encouraged by German foresters. It was not to be. Fire swept the new growth, fueled by the wreckage of logging, and probably started by steam machinery. No trees were planted again.



By 1926 the accessible timber was gone from Shavers Fork all the way to Bemis, where the railroad connected to the Western Maryland Ry. The mill at Spruce had been closed, and more than 80 miles of the main line of WVP&P's railroad was sold to the WM Ry in 1927. WM upgraded the track and began to haul coal to Elkins from the Elk River valley, and logging went ahead along the Elk. Spruce became a WM railroad town, where helper engines were kept and serviced. When diesel power replaced steam in 1951, Spruce was

In 1950 Mower went after the remaining virgin spruce on the ridge east of Shavers Fork, and in 1960 they ran out of stands big enough to justify the railroad. Some 11 miles of the logging line became the state owned Cass Scenic Railroad. A tiny stand at Gaudineer Scenic Area is all that remains of the virgin spruce. At the end of the railroad era a strip of land 7 miles wide, 20 miles from the head of Shavers Fork to Cheat Bridge, was without a road, about as wild as you

### "The Big Cut"

by  
Roy Clarkson,  
from his book *On Beyond Leatherbark: the Cass Saga*

To reach the timber in the Elk River Valley, it was necessary to construct a new rail line. The Route of the Elk River extension ran almost due west from Spruce and crossed the divide into the Tygart Valley River watershed at 4,012 feet elevation, about one mile west of Spruce, a climb of 159 feet. It then passed north and west of Mace Knob into the Elk River Drainage, and closely followed the Elk River to Bergoo.

Work commenced on this line in late 1910. By December, one hundred Italians were working on the western end of the railroad at Mace. To reduce the grade on each side of the divide, a cut was planned starting nearly one mile west of Spruce. This has since been known as the Big Cut.

The Big Cut was started late in 1910 and completed in 1914. Work was done "principally from the west end as there was a large amount of fill material to be used west of it. Logging commenced west of the Big Cut before it was finished, however, and the logs had to be stockpiled along the tracks in what was "probably the largest pile of logs ever seen in Pocahontas County and probably the World." This stockpile was estimated to contain one thousand carloads of logs.

To make the Big Cut, a 100-ton Marion steam shovel was purchased. It was mounted on railcar trucks and could be easily moved along as the work progressed. The material was moved with ten 20-yard Northwestern dump cars, ten 30-yard Oliver dump cars, and two locomotives. The drilling was done with steam drills in lifts above the shovel and shot light.

abandoned. The last coal train ran in 1993. In 1998 the line began to operate freight service to Elkins from the north, and railbus service for tourists through the Mower Tract, as the West Virginia Central Railroad, owned by the state and run under lease. Parts of the track, including the line from Cheat Bridge to Elkins, are not yet open.

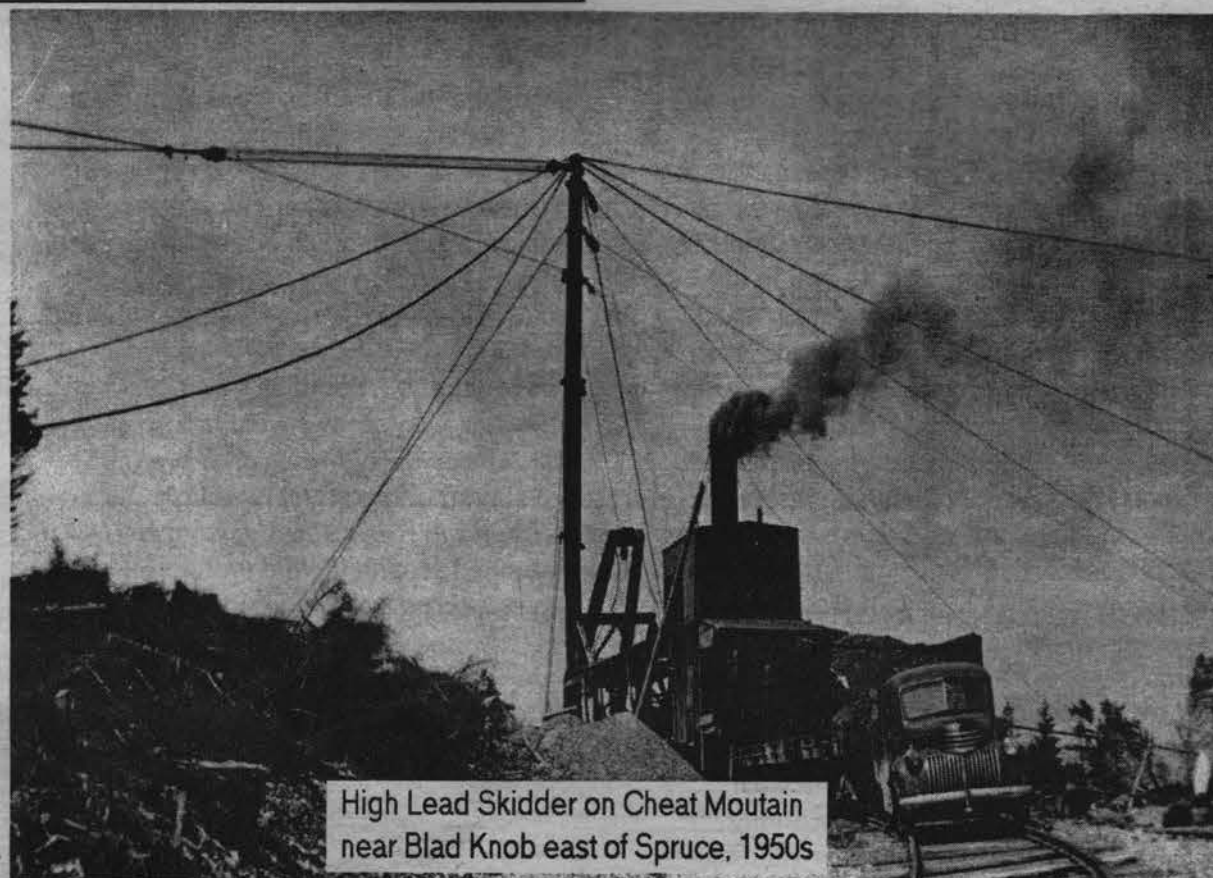
From 1939 to 1960 rail logging returned to Shavers Fork. The Elk was cut out, and although much of the company land (except the Mower Tract) had become part of the Monongehela National Forest, WVP&P exercised its right to get out timber it couldn't reach earlier. The means of doing so was the high lead skidder, which brought logs to the tracks with overhead cables, at the cost of tearing up the woods. Forestry consultants had warned against the use of skidders in 1920, but economics triumphed over gentleness. The second cut worked up river, and trains were running up Beaver Creek, 9 miles above Cheat Bridge, in 1942 when the whole job was sold to Mower Lumber Company of Charleston, WV. In 1945 cutting moved back onto the present Snowshoe land.



Digging Big Cut west of Spruce. It was nearly 2,000 feet long and 100 feet deep. c. 1912-1913

could get in 1960.

Logging continued slowly, under contract with Mower. The contracts were cheaper to those who would log with horses, because that is easier on the forest, but few were willing to forgo modern machinery. The area, so long difficult of access, began to be opened with truck roads. Roads have at least two drawbacks compared to the railroad: they were usable by everyone, and they were not turned back to the forest, but became permanent.



High Lead Skidder on Cheat Mountain near Blad Knob east of Spruce, 1950s



## The Town of Spruce

by Roy Clarkson from his book *On beyond Leatherbark: the Cass Saga*

After the railroad was completed to the top of the mountain in 1901 (from Cass), the cutting and shipping of pulpwood from Cheat increased and the number of men working multiplied. The men working on the mountain were obliged to stay in camps all week and could ride the log train to Cass Saturday night. They returned Sunday afternoon on another train. For men with families, this arrangement proved unsatisfactory, and the idea of building a town on top of the mountain was conceived. The location chosen for these houses was near the "low place" where the railroad crossed over the mountain. It was named Spruce and on August 25, 1902 a post office was established with E.P. Shaffér listed as postmaster.

As the amount of pulpwood shipped from the top of Cheat increased, much of it was shipped unpeeled. They soon learned, however, that when these logs were peeled at the mill in Covington and the bark burned, a feathery ash came in the windows and contaminated the pulp, sometimes ruining the rolls of paper. Also considerable space was required for the peeling operations at Covington, which cut down on the amount of peeled wood that could be stockpiled. Peeling all the wood on Cheat Mountain before shipping was then resorted to, and hundreds of men were employed peeling the logs with axes and spuds, a very expensive and inefficient operation because of the weather and the necessity of housing the men.

These reasons induced the company to build a rossing (peeling) plant on Cheat close to the supply of pulpwood. In 1904, a new town, also called Spruce, was begun about one and three-tenths miles from the original town of Spruce, henceforth called Old Spruce. In addition to the rossing mill, the new town had a hotel of forty rooms, a company store, a school and thirty-five dwelling houses. The town's location at 3,853 feet above sea level, made it one of the highest towns in the eastern United States. Spruce was unusual in having no highway access. All materials for the community were brought in by rail, and visitors and townsfolk alike rode the log train to and from Cass, a distance of eight and one-tenths miles, or in later years, to Mace on Elk River. Some persons owned motorcars, adapted to ride on the railroad. These were used for transportation to and from the mountain.

The population of Spruce in 1904 was 50. After the mill opened, the population of Spruce in 1906 was listed as 300. Spruce was incorporated in 1909. After 1913, Spruce was the junction point for the Greenbrier, Cheat and Elk Railroad where logging trains were dispatched along Elk River and along Cheat River to Bemis. Log trains from these points were made into smaller units at Spruce and dispatched to Cass. By 1920, Spruce had a two-room school. One room held grades one through three and the other room grades four through eight. No permanent minister was stationed in Spruce. However, the Presbyterian minister at Cass visited periodically to encourage the flock.

In 1925, the pulp peeling mill at Spruce closed and the town rapidly declined. Many of the workers and their families moved to Cass or Slatyfork and continued employment with the company. On August 31, 1925, the post office closed and Spruce was officially dead, although several families continued to live there. By 1939 the town consisted of nineteen houses, an engine house, and a boarding house, all operated by the Western Maryland Railroad. A school was maintained at Spruce until 1950. No buildings remain today.

In 1973 the head of the river was sold to Snowshoe, a tract now including 15,000 acres with extensive facilities, and attracting people to the wilds at a rate of near 400,000 a year. In 1988 the remainder of the Mower Tract was sold to the government. Some roads were closed, but more were further improved to permit easy access.

Based on what we imagine and hope is a renewable resource, the lumber industry could (perhaps) have been perpetual. But in 30 years two dozen mills had come to Pocahontas County alone, cut out, and closed, leaving only Cass. Even with 170,000 acres, Cass was done in 60 years, probably less than half the time it takes for a decent recovery. It was a natural result of believing in unlimited growth in a finite world.

The mountains look pretty good. Greenery covers the rocky land so naked in old photos. Deer, nearly exterminated, have been "managed" back to a population explosion. Of course most of the big native mammals are long gone, and there are various trees and animals in trouble. But a new era of human activity has begun on Cheat Mountain. The area is relatively natural and relaxing, compared to the urban frenzy engulfing so much American land and its people. It would seem like a place for visitors who like the area for what it is: slow-paced, rural, somewhat wild. But what kind of visitors are coming? And does it matter what residents or visitors would like? Is the future once again in the hands of politicians and entrepreneurs who see, this time, big money not in timber, but in

intensively developed tourism? Will we overbuild and degrade the resource the way lumber did? Or worse?

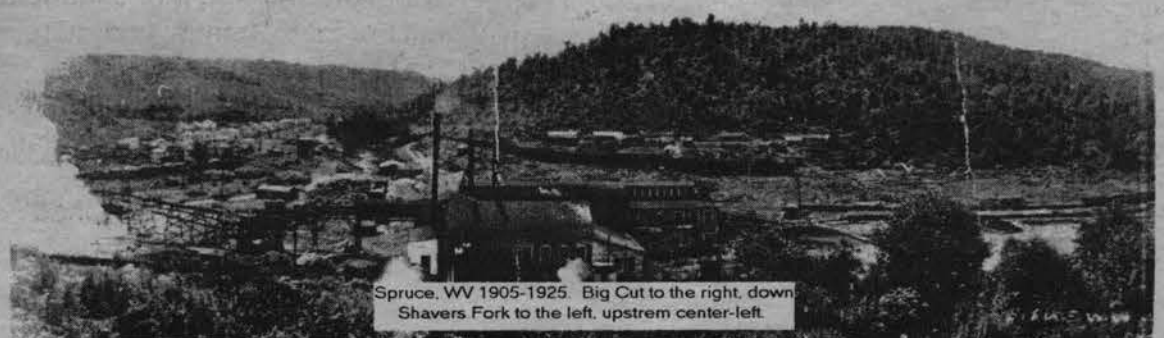
Thousands of drinking college students is not the same as a dozen men whooping it up at the Cheat Mountain Club. Strings of people trekking, biking, horse back riding....a lodge full of fishermen lined up along a river, a squad of cross-country skiers....all with paid guides and rented equipment, is

money, but its not the same as two buddies fishing up Shavers Fork, or a family hiking. Its going to be very hard to conserve anything natural in this new economic environment, which brings hoards of people, many of whom want, or are sold, the same amenities they have in the city, except they want more woods nearby. The loggers came, got what they wanted, and went home. They stayed away for decades at a time. We may find their touch was light compared to recreational developers. Unlimited growth in wild wonderful experiences is a contradiction in terms.

Riding the rails from Cheat Bridge you will see the Cheat Mountain Club, first step in "developed" recreation, some of the many vestiges of the logging railroad and its dozen branches up tributaries, the siding at Hopkins mine, the site of Spruce with remains of both the mill and the WM railroad facility the Big Cut more than 4000 feet above sea level, and a view of Tygart Valley and Elk River valley beyond. There are some big spruce trees along the river, nearly 100 years old now, but

truck logging has been nearby in some areas. You may also see a good road with pickup trucks that goes fully 9 miles up river. You may see only your fellow passengers, but, then again you may see 5 or 50 or more people along the way. Wild isn't what it used to be.

Dr. Deike is a leading authority on WV logging history and past president of the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association. He is also the author of *Logging South Cheat, The History of the Snowshoe Lands*.



Spruce, WV 1905-1925. Big Cut to the right, down Shavers Fork to the left, upstream center-left.



# A Brief History of the Shavers Fork Coalition

Ruth Blackwell Rogers

The Shavers Fork Coalition had its beginnings in a senior thesis written by Zachary Henderson in 1996. While attending Davis and Elkins College, Zach had fallen in love with the Shavers Fork river and watershed. He had a scientific interest in the river's physical dynamics and water quality, and a personal interest in the outstanding recreational opportunities and aesthetic beauty of the area. That summer, Zach wrote and received a West Virginia Stream Partners grant. He organized public meetings that brought together watershed residents, businesses, recreational users, agencies, farmers, and private and government landowners. Serious flooding in early 1996 had raised concerns among many, and there was significant interest in those first meetings. The initial board of directors included watershed landowners, small business owners, environmentalists, and tourism interests.

As chair of the newly-formed Shavers Fork Coalition, Zach developed an educational display about the Shavers Fork, and he and the board began a wide variety of projects, including:

- Riverbank cleanups on Pheasant Run and at Stuarts Park.
- Timber walks with district foresters to view potential timber sales on Slabcamp Run and Shavers Mountain.
- Posters highlighting points of interest in the watershed.
- Repainted the stream gauge at Cheat River Inn and installed a new gauge at Slabcamp Run.
- Watershed Steward Internship Program: in 1998, intern Mark Tracy mapped and described the WV Central Railroad from Elkins to Bergoo; in 1999, Brock Reggi and Laura Hawkins inventoried sources of sediment on the headwaters.
- Using Mark Tracy's findings, published a document on the WV Central Railroad: "History and Survey of Present Day Conditions and Attractions."
- Streambank stabilization project on Slabcamp Run.-Workday with the Canfield family as they restored historic Mt. Zion Church on the lower Shavers Fork.
- Sponsored a two-day Stream Channel Assessment and Monitoring Workshop at Davis and Elkins College.
- Handicapped fishing access project at Shavers Fork Store near Bowden.
- On-going water quality monitoring at several locations on the river.

This year the Shavers Fork Coalition is concentrating on the headwaters. Last July SFC sponsored a railbus trip from Cheat Bridge to Old Spruce to learn about USFS, WVU, DNR, and Trout Unlimited research and restoration projects and plans. SFC interns worked with the Monongahela National Forest to identify and map sources of sedimentation. SFC received a second grant from the WV Stream Partners Program to develop an 8-page booklet on the red spruce ecosystem, which will be published soon.

On May 18-19, 2000, SFC will sponsor a summit, "Healing the Headwaters," at which the partners mentioned above and many others, from railroad and history groups to recreational users and industry, will continue to share research and information. Participants will again tour the upper Shavers Fork by railbus, brainstorm future plans, and draw up a document, "Healing the Headwaters: A Shared Commitment for the Restoration and Conservation of the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River, West Virginia."

The Shavers Fork Coalition is grateful to the WV Stream Partners Program, Canaan Valley Institute, and American Greenways Foundation for grants received, and to Davis and Elkins College, Monongahela National Forest, WV Division of Natural Resources, WVU Division of Forestry, Canaan Valley Institute, Tygart Valley Soil Conservation District, Trout Unlimited Mountaineer Chapter, US Geological Survey, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Friends of the Cheat, and WVU Extension Service for technical assistance, facilities, and services. Although Zach is away at graduate school, he returns often to the Shavers Fork watershed, the place his heart remains. His passion continues to guide the organization's efforts. The initial meetings established that enhancing the quality of life and preserving the unique qualities of the Shavers Fork is a common goal for the watershed. It will take many years and much cooperation to help restore the Shavers Fork to a healthier, more stable condition from Snowshoe to Parsons. You are invited to join the Shavers Fork Coalition by calling 304-637-4082 or writing to PO Box 2777, Elkins WV 26241.





# Chuck Myers

## Monongahela National Forest Supervisor

### Featured speaker at Spring Review 2000

Interview by Dave Saville

Forest Supervisor Chuck Myers will be our special guest and featured speaker for the Saturday evening program during the Spring Review. Chuck has been supervisor of the Mon for over 3 years. He's a busy guy, but I was able to track him down last week when he shared a few comments for us - about himself - and his goals concerning the management of the Monongahela National Forest.

DS What's the job description for a National Forest Supervisor?

CM In a nutshell, the Forest Service is a very de-centralized organization. What that means for me in this job is that I've got the authority to make nearly all the decisions that affect the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. There are some decisions that I can not make, Forest Plan revisions, some lands acquisitions and exchanges that I don't have the authority over, but by-and-large, I have the full authority to make all the natural resource decisions here and allocate the budget as it comes down to me. I'm relatively autonomous from our regional office in Milwaukee.

DS How close do you work with the Monongahela National Forest District Rangers? How autonomous are they within their District?

CM Very much so. My style pretty much mirrors my bosses style. I am not a micro-manager. I empower my District Rangers to make nearly all the decisions they feel they need to make at the district level. We talk once or twice a week with all the District Rangers. We have a conference call every Monday morning with the District Rangers and



my 2 assistant Superintendents Richard Cook and Kate Goodrich. We talk about the weeks issues and events.

DS Tell us about yourself.

CM I grew up in eastern Arkansas in the Mississippi River Flood Plain. My parents gave me the gift of appreciation of the out of doors. We did a lot of camping, hunting, fishing and hiking. We moved up to Pennsylvania when I was in High School so I ended up going to the Forestry School at Penn State and graduated from there with a degree in Forest Science in 1972.

I was in the army for a while as the Vietnam War was winding down. I got out of the army and went to work for Weyerhaeuser Corporation as a research scientist in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. I did this for 6-8 months and decided to go back to graduate school at Penn State. I got my Masters degree in Forest Resource Economics, and this has served me well in jobs I've had since. While I was there, I got a whole potpourri of backgrounds. I don't consider myself a trained economist

even though that is what my degree is in. My Masters thesis was actually a hydrology problem, looking at low flow water levels.

After I finished my Masters, I went back to work for Weyerhaeuser as a research scientist for a while, but Penn State asked me to stay on as a member of the faculty. I went back to Penn State and started working on a Ph.D. in application of social and psychological sciences in forestry issues. My research focused a lot more on recreation. We looked at monitoring ecological damages along river corridors. I also took a sabbatical while I was there to do some research in some of the western Wilderness areas. I went to work for the Forest Service's Wilderness Research unit out of Missoula Montana. I did a study of people's reaction to crowding conditions in Wilderness Areas. I really enjoyed that.

I was on faculty at Penn State for 5 years teaching primarily forest recreation, but also land use planning and some other things. I left, and of all things, went to work as a timber supply analyst with the Southern Forest Experiment Station in New Orleans. I really wanted to work for the Forest Service. My wife didn't like the heat and humidity of New Orleans so we only stayed a year. But it opened up a whole new world of ecology for me. I spent a lot of time canoeing in swamps and bayous down there along the Achafalya River Basin. Almost got hit by an oil barge once.

See "Supervisor" next page



"Supervisor" from previous page

The first time we were in there we came across these floats in the water. We didn't know what they were. We pulled one up, it was a trap just chocked full of crawdads. I turned around and there was a cajun standing there with a 12 ga. double barrel shotgun pointed at us. It was a moment you never forget. The guy was actually very friendly. He had never had his picture taken. He said if we took his picture and sent it to him, we could have some crawdads, and they have big crawdads down there.

From New Orleans I went up to the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania and worked in budget for a while. But most significantly, I was the planning team leader for the Forest Plan on the Allegheny National Forest. This was in the early 1980s. I left there to become the district Ranger on the Wayne National Forest in Athens, Ohio and really enjoyed it. What I was most proud of, from being in the District Ranger's position, was bringing the Forest Service and public's attention to some recreational opportunities that existed in the area that hadn't been promoted very much. We established a trail along the Muskingum River with some primitive campsites and worked with tourism folks to promote it. We also added some hiking trails over along the Ohio River. I was there for 3 years and then on to the Regional Forest Service office in Milwaukee.

There, I worked as a Litigation Coordinator for 3 years. It gave me a perspective on issues and the Forest Service that you just don't get on the Forest or District level. It gave me a much broader view of the world. From there I went to the Deputy Forest Supervisor's position, second in charge if you will, on the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire.

We had a lot of highly contentious issues up there, including the Appalachian Mountain Club's re-permitting process. It was really interesting how that whole thing evolved.

DS With your recreation background, what are your feelings about the AMC's relationship with the Forest Service?

CM Let me broaden that for a second. The public's sense of ownership of the White Mountains is really different than what I find in West Virginia. It was groups like the Society for the Preservation of New Hampshire's Mountains, and the AMC that created

the Weeks Act which was the enabling legislation creating all the eastern National Forests. That movement actually started here in West Virginia to protect watersheds, flooding and sedimentation issues. But it was actually New Hampshire people that got the legislation passed. In fact Weeks was actually from New Hampshire. There was an incredible feeling of ownership with all the different groups we worked with in New Hampshire. From the timber industry to all the recreation groups. They were very possessive about the mountains and were always making it clear to the Forest Service that "if we don't like the way you are managing the Forest, we'll find someone else who will." If it's not the Forest Service, we'll get the Park Service. They're in charge of "their" mountains. It was an interesting situation to work in with all the history up there. The AMC is certainly a huge part of that history.

The AMC, way before the National Forest was established, created the network of trails you find winding throughout the White Mountains. They created them and they maintain them. They have also established primitive huts all through the mountains up there. Then the National Forest came into existence, so everything was already in place. Over the years the Forest Service and the AMC have had an up and down relationship, but by and large the relationship was absolutely outstanding. I wouldn't have traded it for anything.

DS Do you feel it's healthy having that much citizen involvement in the Forest Management process?

CM Definitely.

DS I have always gotten the impression from the Forest Service that they would rather avoid citizen participation and that sense of ownership.

CM That's not the kind of attitude that I have tried to bring to this Forest. The way I would like to see this Forest managed would be to put the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the timber industry and all these groups in a room, the Forest Service would lay down some sideboards and have all you guys determine how this Forest is going to be managed. I'm not one who believes that my values ought to determine exactly how this Forest ought to be managed.

It ought to be a collaborative effort by all the groups in the state.

The reality of it is that I don't think the climate here is right now to do that. I set out my tenure here 3 1/2 years ago to try to set a climate for collaborative management of this Forest. [Assistant Supervisor] Kate Goodrich and I thought we were beginning to make some progress, but the Blackwater Canyon issue has blown it all apart. The groups are significantly more polarized now than before this issue came up. So Kate and I are re-grouping right now, searching for some ideas on how to get back on track before we go into Forest Planning. If we went into Forest Planning today, I think it would be a disaster. The groups are so polarized, the Forest Service would be in a position to have to make decisions on the Forest Plan, which is our responsibility, but that's not how I'd like to see it happen. I'd like to see it happen with the groups working together, to craft some solutions, some give and take we could all live with. Right now, I just don't think that's possible.

DS Do you plan on being around throughout the upcoming Planning Process? [the Monongahela National Forest Plan will be going through its 10 year revision soon, current plan implemented in 1985.]

CM I don't have any plans on leaving.

DS Knowing the agency and how they like to shuffle people around a lot, do you think it plans for you to stick around awhile?

CM The agency has changed. We don't move people around like we used to. We are all more in control of our own careers than before. I've been here 3 1/2 years, the average tenure for a Forest Supervisor is probably 5 years. I'm under no pressure to leave. I still have a huge job still to do here in West Virginia, to build a collaborative climate for managing this National Forest. At this point, I don't have any intentions of leaving, my boss isn't pushing me in any direction either.

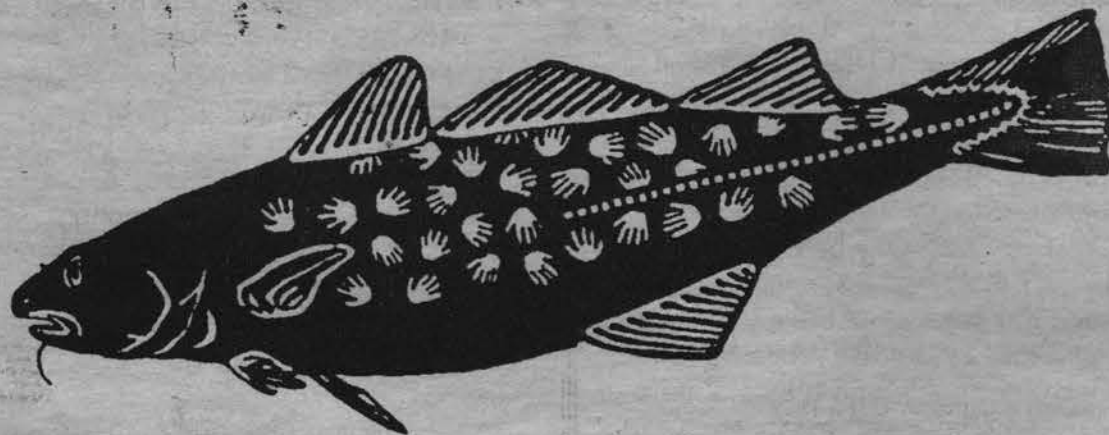
DS Thank you Supervisor Myers and we look forward to our discussions during the Spring Review.



# There used to be trout....

by  
Zach Henderson

"There used to be trout in this river *this big*," Mr. Warner held out his arms close to two feet across. "The water would always flow deep and dark. Damn near the coldest water almost year round. Didn't do much swimmin' up here."



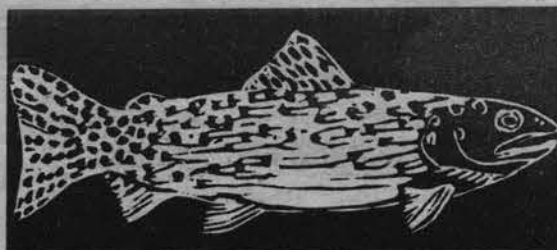
I love listening to these fish stories. Not only for the pleasure of imagining days of watersheds romantic and wild, but for the science. Fish are an indicator of a landscape's ecological state. In fact, in some parts of this country, we are beginning to identify fish as keystone species, the building blocks of entire ecosystems. Recently in the Pacific Northwest, ecologists have begun to realize that salmon are critical as food and energy for a very wide range of organisms including its own offspring, terrestrial animals, marine animals and even streamside vegetation.

Recent studies have traced particular nutrients, only found in marine ecosystems, into the leaves of trees, the bones of bears and in the young of new salmon. It appears that the fish are bringing parts of the ocean up river with them.

What do salmon have to do with the mountains of WV? We don't have anadromous fish in this part of the country! That is true. But, what native fish do we have in this part of the country and what are their roles in the ecosystem's health? Is it possible that some of our fish are keystone species?

Our native, poster-child is the brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*). The only native trout, this fish is one of the most colorful, aggressive and elusive organisms in our mountain streams and quite possibly an indicator organism. Particularly sensitive to warm water and silt, trout often retreat in the face of typical mountain land-use.

Two of the more typical impacts associated with human occupation of mountainous regions are the destruction of streamside forest for development and agriculture and the very common transportation corridor called a road. Unfortunately, development and roads are "necessary" in our modern world... but luckily, not everywhere.



The Shavers Fork Coalition, Trout Unlimited, West Virginia University and the Friends of the Cheat have decided to take a stand for the brook trout of the Shavers Fork. Not as a trophy fish, but as an indicator organism of threatened watersheds everywhere in the eastern United States. The upper Shavers Fork watershed, from the historic Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike to the Snowshoe ski slopes, has always been a legendary trout fishery.

A review of the Cheat Mountain Club guest register from the early 1900's is a great indicator of the pre-logging Shavers Fork trout productivity. Once the hallmark of wild West Virginia tales, this fish is very much a part of our mountain heritage and will be an important part of the future as well. The coalition's current work of developing restoration partnerships, identification of erosive roads, inventory of stream channels, tracking fish and adopting portions of the watershed, is a long way from a permanent sanctuary for these animals, but a great start.

Why have we chosen the Shavers Fork? As the highest stream for its size in the eastern U.S., this watershed represents a piece of Canada in the middle of West Virginia. An entire suite of organisms only found in more northern climes call this watershed home. But is this area any different from the other highlands we love? Namely, 60,000 acres. The contiguous, forested watershed of high-elevation spruce and mixed-hardwood stands are unrivaled in WV, particularly when considering the relative lack of development.

See "used to be" next page



"used to be"  
from previous page

The First Fork *tributary* alone is nearly the size of the Dolly Sods wilderness and is entirely above 3000'. Why haven't we ever really heard much about this area? The answer to this question is based partly on the watershed's nature and partly on its past ownership. The nearly impenetrable spruce forests of the basin limited early harvest and exploration; in fact, virgin timber was still being harvested off the watershed until the 1960's. The land went through a series of surface and mineral rights owners throughout the 60's, 70's and 80's and was not purchased as a portion of the National Forest until 1988. In those years before public ownership, the upper watershed was heavily logged, strip mined and roaded. We have strip mines on the upper Shavers Fork occupying an area as large as the entire tract that Allegheny Hardwoods purchased in the Blackwater Canyon. Thankfully, a new movement has begun!

With the Forest Service's renewed dedication to watershed stewardship, the upper Shavers Fork watershed is primed as a venture in "wildland restoration". Reclaimed "original contours" of the strip mines are beginning to fail. Sediment retention ponds are leaking and starting to erode. Industrially developed roads reroute water and concentrate runoff into sensitive areas. Barren mined areas are in need of replanting. We have a chance to heal a truly wild, unique watershed that is ecologically distinct, incredibly beautiful and desperately in need of our helping hands.

#### Upper Shavers Fork (upstream of Rt 250)

##### Watershed facts:

60.1 square miles, 38,463 acres,  
31,351 of which are owned by the US Forest Service  
0 acres have high intensity development;  
17 acres have low intensity development

Elevation: highest 4840'; lowest 3520'

Forest: red spruce, red spruce-eastern hemlock,  
yellow birch, sugar maple-beech

Coal mining: deep mining since 1908; beginning in  
the '50's, approximately 2000 acres have been strip  
mined

Timbering: from the 1880's through the 1980's

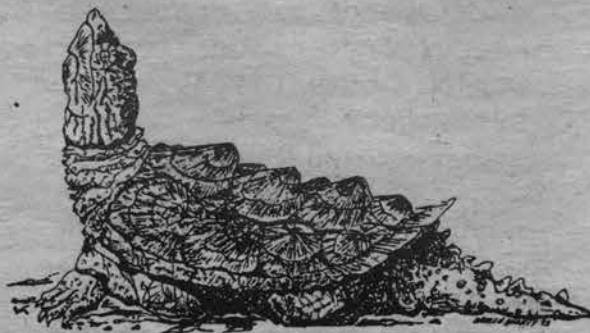
Roads: mostly built to take out second growth timber  
from the 1960's to the 1990's; 128 miles of roads plus  
over 400 miles of skid roads

History of human impacts: Little is known about  
Native American use of the area. In the mid 1830's  
the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike was built across  
Cheat Mountain and the Shavers Fork. A small farm  
was developed around White Top, which later  
became the site of Cheat Summit Fort during the  
Civil War as the turnpike became highly contested.

Fishing was popular in the early 1900's. For most of  
the 20th century, mining and logging activities have  
heavily impacted the watershed.

Mower Tract acquired by USFS 1989

While on the watershed for the Spring Review, enjoy the beauty of the area. Visit the old-growth spruce at Gaudineer, hunt for spring peepers in the First Fork wetlands, and fish the hidden holes of Second Fork... But also make sure to visit the strip mines on Lambert Run and Black Run and experience the sizable opportunity that is now in our hands. A restoration project of huge proportions. A restoration that the brook trout is counting on.



## About the Cheat Mountain Club

Built in 1887 as a lodge for wealthy sportsmen, the Cheat Mountain Club was located on what was thought to be the best hunting and fishing ground in West Virginia. The high elevation where the club is located, 3400 feet, creates a unique environment of northern mountain vegetation, cold streams, and diverse animal life. Located on the banks of the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River, one of West Virginia's finest trout streams, the club is surrounded by the Monongahela National Forest. When the threesome of Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and Harvey Firestone rolled through the area on a camping trip in 1918, this is where they stayed.



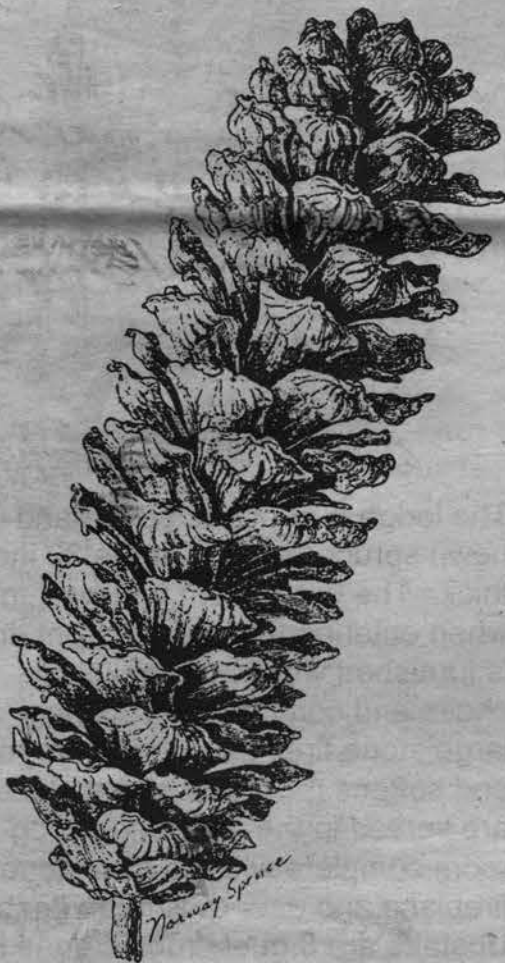
The lodge is constructed of hand-hewn spruce timbers, some 30 inches thick. The great room you walk into, when entering through the front doors, is furnished with hardrock maple chairs and comfortable couches. A large stone fireplace warms the room and softens the atmosphere. Meals are served in the adjoining dining room complete with its own stone fireplace and deer antler candleabras. Upstairs are 8 guest rooms done in knotty pine, each with one or two comfortable beds. There are shared bathrooms, one for man and one for women, at either end of the wide hallway. The third floor has a small bunk room with additional bedspace. Nearby is a new building for conference use, we will be using as a bunkhouse.



# Cheat Mountain Backcountry, my vision for its future

by Larry Pittis

The first thing I looked for in the new "Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide" was information on hiking in the Mower Tract in the Greenbrier Ranger District. I was disappointed to find that in the entire 40,000-acre Mower Tract, there is only one designated hiking trail, the Strip Mine Trail. I see quite a different future for hiking and other recreation on one of the highest and broadest mountain watersheds in Eastern America. The following text outlines my vision of a future Cheat Mountain Backcountry and adjoining National Wilderness Areas.



A trail system would be set up with backcountry cabins. The Cheat, Shavers and Back Allegheny Mountain areas would be divided into two sections, north and south. The dividing line would be Route 250. North of 250, management would remain basically as it is now, but a new wilderness would be designated on Cheat Mountain in the northern area of the National Forest

south of Bemis. The new wilderness designation could also include a section of Shavers Mountain. Bald Knob and the southern section of Shavers Mountain would be a special scenic area.

South of 250, the Mower Tract would be a backcountry and wilderness. The backcountry would have coal mine reclamation demonstration areas set up on Barton, Crouch and White Top Knobs. Some grasslands would remain open and would be mown seasonally. The views are outstanding on these grassland reclamation areas. I envision a second wilderness on Cheat Mountain running from Crouch Knob south to the railroad cut covering Snyder, Ward and Beech Knobs. Yet another wilderness would be established on Back Allegheny Mountain running from 250 south to the Second Fork watershed.

The special feature of the new backcountry and wilderness I propose would be an extensive trail system with a staffed, overnight bunkhouse-style cabin system. This cabin system would mirror that run by the Appalachian Mountain Club in the White Mountain National Forest. Cabins would be open year-round. One would hike or ski from cabin to cabin. Meals and rudimentary lodging would be provided for a fee. The cabins would be situated on yet-to-be-determined sites located away from any type of road, reachable only by trail. They would be constructed, maintained and staffed by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and related conservation organizations. One cabin would be constructed and brought into operation as a first step.

Timber would be harvested in non-critical areas of the backcountry. The entire backcountry area would be focused on the regeneration of the Red Spruce ecosystem. The goal would be to recreate a habitat similar to that which existed prior to the timbering and coal mining of the Shavers Mountain watershed. All railroad right-of-ways would remain open. Forest road management, including gating and closure issues, would remain as they are except where wilderness areas are

designated. Gating and closure issues could be reexamined in the future if they conflict with the purpose of the backcountry.

Several small lakes could be developed for trout fishing and vehicular camping in the backcountry zone. Other camping areas would be set up with hike-in only access. The Cheat Mountain Club Lodge could be part of the cabin system, or participate as an information center or backcountry headquarters.

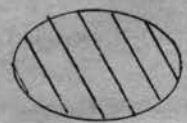
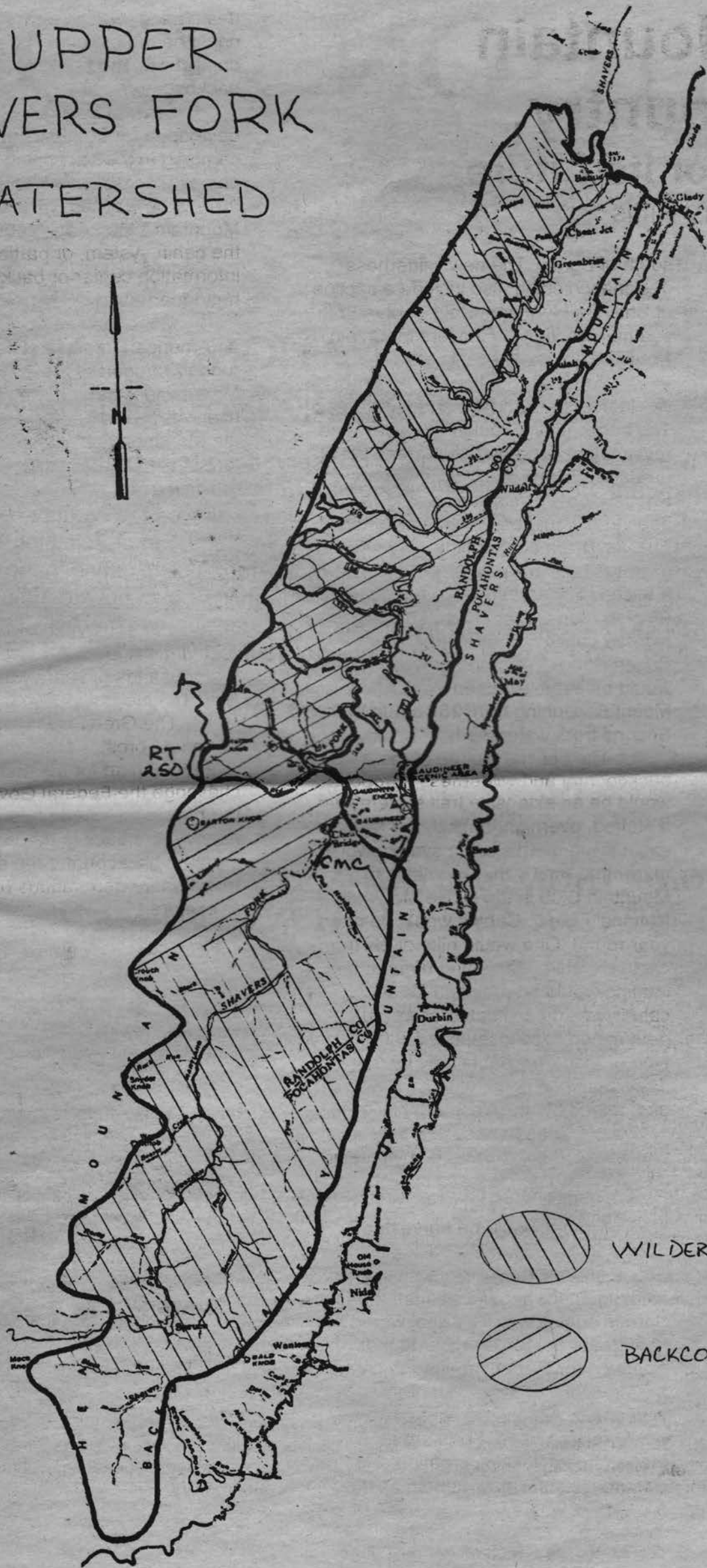
Monongahela National Forest is an American treasure. The remote, rugged rampart of the Allegheny Mountains is the mother of many great rivers. Shavers Fork is a major source of the Monongahela River, the southern fork of the Ohio. Forests of Canada growing in the south protect waters that run to the Gulf of Mexico. One marvels at these mountains made of the rubble of prehistoric swamps and deltas. With its long and dramatic timbering history, the Mower Tract has given our nation many resources. In a 100-year period, a vast virgin wilderness that had thrived for thousands of years was torn apart. Now it's time for healing.

The Greenbrier District of the National Forest is currently developing a recreation plan for the Mower Tract. I challenge the Federal Government and the Forest Service to return the Cheat headwaters back to nature. Let us create a backcountry recreation system for all future generations of Americans to explore.

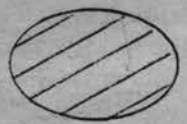




# UPPER SHAVERS FORK WATERSHED



WILDERNESS



BACKCOUNTRY





# MON-ATHON 2000



## *Celebrating Our* MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST

### WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

Mon-Athon 2000" is a West Virginia Highlands Conservancy project to celebrate and enjoy our wonder-full Monongahela National Forest.

Mon-Athon 2000 is open to everyone -- this means you! Mon-Athon 2000 includes all types of outdoor recreational activities -- like hiking, biking, swimming, fishing, birding, hunting, boating, skiing, etc. -- in or adjoining the Mon National Forest Proclamation Area (green on state road maps.) Join in a Mon-Athon public outing in the Mon (like the ones listed, more being added regularly as 2000 proceeds.) -- or report on your own private outing. All participants will be entered in three drawings for fabulous outdoor recreation prizes. Submit an activity report form, and we will send you a free MON-ATHON 2000 T-SHIRT! Send pictures of your activity and get a FREE Hiking Guide to the Mon.

Looking for ideas about recreational activities in your Monongahela National Forest? We can connect you with an experienced volunteer to talk about trip planning, destinations, gear, accommodations, etc.

For information, reporting forms, current outing schedules, contact: Tom Rodd, c/o WVHC, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV, 25321. E-mail: [thomasrodd@hotmail.com](mailto:thomasrodd@hotmail.com). Phone: 304-345-7663 (WVHC Charleston Office); 304-265-0018 (Rodd home). Or go to <http://www.wvhighlands.org>.

## JOIN A MON-ATHON 2000 OUTING IN YOUR WONDER-FULL MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST!

Contact the listed leader directly for more information.

**Saturday, April 1, 2000** -- "April Fool Frolic" Day Hike, Otter Creek Wilderness, Tucker/Randolph Counties. Moderate level. Leader: Rich McGervey, 2181 Grafton Rd., Morgantown, WV 26508, 304-291-8149, [mctervey@hotmail.com](mailto:mctervey@hotmail.com). Rich McGervey is the Vice-Chair of the Morgantown Sierra Club group. This is also a Sierra Club outing. Rich is a law student (about the graduate, go Rich!) and worked on the Conservancy's mountaintop removal case. Otter Creek is one of the gems of your Mon -- check it out!

**Saturday, April 8, 2000** -- "Down by the Riverside" Day Hike, Greenbrier River near Hosterman, Pocahontas County. Easy to moderate level. Leader: Leslee McCarty, HC 64, Box 135, Hillsboro WV 24946, 304-653-4722, [current@inetone.net](mailto:current@inetone.net). Leslee runs the Current, a bed and breakfast. She is active in protecting the deep, green, sensuous Greenbrier River. This trip is co-sponsored with the Greenbrier River Trail Association.

**Saturday, April 15, 2000** -- "Pedaling to Escape the IRS" Mountain Bike Day Trip, Cranberry Area, Pocahontas/Nicholas Counties. Easy, single track. Leader: Dave McMahon, 1624 Kenwood Rd., Charleston WV 25314, 304-344-3620, [wv david@access.mountain.net](mailto:wv david@access.mountain.net). Don't have a bike? Dave can probably steer you to a rental or loaner (and give you an idea of how muddy you'll be getting.)

**Saturday, April 29, 2000** -- "Spring Fling" West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Spring Review, Cheat Mountain Club, Randolph County. There will be several day outings in the Mon at the Spring Review, including a canoe trip (easy level) the Greenbrier from Cass to Clover Lick (BYO canoe, contact Tom Rodd, [thomasrodd@hotmail.com](mailto:thomasrodd@hotmail.com), 304-265-0018. This is also the day of the 14th Annual Great Greenbrier River Race, which begins at Marlinton. Attending/participating in this Race (bikes, canoes, and running) is also a feasible day outing from the WVHC Review location (about an hour). Contact Leslee McCarty, above, for more information about the race. For information on the Spring Review, contact Dave Saville, 304-284-9548, [daves@labs.net](mailto:daves@labs.net)

**Saturday, May 6, 2000** -- "Cherish the Cheat" Day Canoe Trip, Cheat River, Tucker County. Easy Class 1-2 -- Parsons to St. George. Leader: Tom Rodd, Rte 2 Box 78, Moatsville WV 26405, 304-265-0018, [thomasrodd@hotmail.com](mailto:thomasrodd@hotmail.com). This is a beautiful, ancient, river. The trip is suitable for novices. Canoe/paddle/life jacket rentals and shuttle service (package, about \$50.00 per Old Town Canoe -- reserve ahead, deposit not required, mention WVHC) from Blackwater Outdoor Adventures (Marion and Jim Browning), Rte 1 Box 239, St. George WV, 304-478-6260; [browning@iolinc.net](mailto:browning@iolinc.net); [www.raftboc.com](http://www.raftboc.com).

continued, see "Mon-athon" next page



# The Shavers Fork Headwaters

By Bryan Moore

The headwater section (18.2 miles) of the Shavers Fork, along with the associated tributaries, was adopted by Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MCTU) in May of 1998. The upper Shavers Fork is recognized as possessing the highest elevation of any major stream east of the Mississippi River. This area is rated as the second most prolific aquifer in West Virginia. There is a rich network of wetlands surrounding the stream, and a large number of pristine tributary and ephemeral streams. This watershed has been subjected to over eight decades of unmitigated resource extraction that affected massive abuse to the land in the watershed through clearcuts and mining. Since the initial adoption of the Shavers Fork we have acquired numerous partners among the public and private sectors. MCTU, along with its partners, has taken on the task of assisting the Shavers Fork watershed in its healing process.

MCTU, in conjunction with the US Forest Service, West Virginia University and the WV Division of Natural Resources, is developing an intensive long-term management and restoration plan that will address all aspects currently impacting the watershed and its native brook trout. MCTU is planning to directly address the stream and its tributaries through passive, non-intrusive habitat restoration projects. Our primary attention will be directed to the legendary native brook trout population found in the headwaters and tributaries. We will be working to enhance spawning areas and more defined riffle/pool characteristics through a natural system plan. Our greatest goal is to avoid any type of "amusement park management" in the watershed and to leave everything pretty much as it is. The best approach is to passively assist, not alter.

The Shavers Fork watershed has been altered enough in the past. MCTU will first deal with the lack of riparian vegetation and shading, due to anthropogenic

impacts, which has resulted in temperature impairment along some reaches of the stream. Last fall we kicked off this portion of the project with the planting of red spruce seedlings at the ghost town of Spruce. This was the first step towards our goal of "10,000 Trees For Shavers Fork". The red spruce is the dominant native tree on the upper Shavers Fork, so we felt it was the only tree to plant. These plantings will protect the stream banks and induce lower warm weather water temperatures through increased shading. And besides, the red spruce is one of the most majestic trees one would hope to see! The Shavers Fork watershed will take time to heal itself to some image of its former beauty, and it will require a long-term commitment from all of the partners involved. We believe these efforts will provide numerous benefits, but the greatest benefit will be to the Shavers Fork watershed itself!



Dr. Todd Petty and Bryan Moore discuss Shavers Fork

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"Mon-athon," from previous page

**Saturday, May 13, 2000** -- "Cranberry Backcountry" Day Hike, Pocahontas/Nicholas Counties. Easy to moderate level. Leader: Carter Zerbe, 16 Arlington Court, Charleston WV 25301, 304-345-2728 (H), 304-345-3175 (O). This should be a good trip for wildflowers. Carter is a long-time Highlands Conservancy stalwart, a prodigious hiker, and other good things. The Cranberry Backcountry is the fruit of a generous creation, including the people who fought to protect it.

**Saturday, June 3, 2000** -- "In The Heart of the Mon" Day Hike, East Fork of the Greenbrier River, Pocahontas County. Easy to moderate. Leader: Peter Shoenfeld (the WVHC Webmaster), 713 Chesapeake Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910; 301-587-6197; peter@cais.net. Allen DeHart, co-editor of the WVHC's Mon National Forest Hiking Guide, listed this as a favorite trail. Find out why.

**Saturday, June 24, 2000** -- "Into the Earth" Day Cave Trip, Sinks of Gandy, Pendleton County. Moderate exertion level, wet. Leader: Barnes Nugent, 1978 Smithtown Road, Morgantown, WV 26508; 304-284-9548; barnes@geosrv.wvnet.edu. A guided trip through a unique high mountain cave, suitable for novices.

**July 17, 18, 19, 2000**, Monday-Wednesday -- "Backpack Extravaganza." Middle Fork of the Williams River, Cranberry Wilderness. Moderate level. Leader: Jack Slocumb, 301-777-8810; JSLOCUMB@prodigy.net. Jack does great outdoor writing for the Voice. Dehart and Sundquist give this one an exceptional rating for scenery -- pure wilderness feel. Meet midafternoon on July 17 at the W trailhead and hike 2 or 3 miles to set up a base camp. Trail follows Middle Fork. On July 18, hike the many trails nearby or laze or meditate in the sun and turquoise waters of the Middle Fork.



# Spring Review 2000

April 28, 29 \$ 30 - Cheat Mountain Club

Featuring!!

## Friday Evening reception

**4pm - ?** Join us for an evening of socializing, star gazing, slide shows and more. The lodge is a very comfortable and roomy place for such a gathering. Snacks and a cash bar will be available. Bring your slides or photos of your latest adventures to share with friends. Displays and representatives from several groups and agencies will be present to provide lively discussion.

**9pm** Ruth & Hugh Rogers will present the *Hopi Scroll* - 'Four Worlds So Far' a 45-min. storytelling of the Hopi Indian creation story

## Saturday

**8am** Breakfast at Cheat Mountain Club

**9AM Field Trips** Meet at the lodge, find your trip leader, grab your gourmet lunch prepared by *Whitegrass Cafe* and hit the trail. Be sure to be prepared for any kind of weather.

**Hiking** Join Larry Pittis on a backcountry trek through the Cheat Mountain Backcountry. Stunning vistas and red spruce forests await you on this dayhike to Crouch Knob and Barton Knob. This will be a moderately difficult hike lasting a better part of the day. Sturdy shoes required.

**Explore** the upper Shavers Fork watershed with the Shavers Fork Coalition and the Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited. A presentation with Fisheries biologists Dr. Todd Petty from WVU and Tom Caine, USDA Forest Service will focus on stream restoration efforts. Followed by a drive 10 miles up the watershed to a site near Beaver Creek to restore the canopy and stream cover to an area of urgent need by planting red spruce trees. Bring gloves, small shovel or backpack to carry trees in if you can. In the afternoon float back to the lodge in a canoe, or ride a mt. bikeback, go along on a guided fly fishing adventure (WV fishing licensees required), visit Gaudineer Knob, or drive back to the lodge for some serious relaxation.

**Canoe** the upper Greenbrier River with Tom Rodd. Bring your own canoe, or borrow one from CMC. This trip depends on sufficient water levels in the River. Canoeing on the Shavers Fork is an alternative.

**4pm** A casual reception will take place with snacks and a cash bar. Relax, kick back, drop a fly in the river, take an evening stroll or mt. bike ride.

**6:30pm** buffet style dinner will be served

**7:30pm** our program will begin with

issue updates, we'll learn the latest happenings on Blackwater, Mt. top removal mining, the 2000 state legislature, clean water initiatives and more.

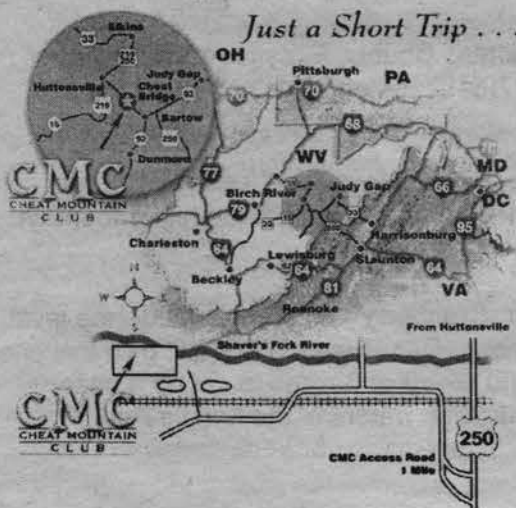
special guest speaker **Monongahela National Forest Supervisor, Chuck Myers**, who will talk about his objectives and vision for the Forest, what efforts his agency is involved in, and introduce us to the Rangers from the different districts of the Forest.

## Sunday

**8am** Breakfast at Cheat Mountain Club

**9am-4pm** West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Board meeting

**9am** Hiking trip to High Falls of Cheat - Leaves from the Lodge and will finish up in the early afternoon, leaving plenty of time to get home.



## Lodging

**Cheat Mountain Club**, Beds are still available in the bunk rooms for \$25/person/night.  
**Hermitage motel** in Bartow (10 miles) very nice rooms, 2 people for \$41/night 456-4808  
**Camping** is allowed on CMC grounds, check with proprietors before picking a site.

## Meals

Cheat Mountain Club is known for its great food, see registration form for more details. *Whitegrass Cafe* in Canaan Valley will be providing the bag lunches for Sat. field trips

if you have any questions, call dave at 304-284-9548 or [daves@labs.net](mailto:daves@labs.net)



**Spring Review 2000 Registration Form**  
Please send us your registration-no later than April 21st, thanks

	<u>Cost/person</u>		<u>#people</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration Fee	\$7.00	X	_____	\$_____
Saturday Breakfast	\$8.00	X	_____	\$_____
Saturday Bag Lunches	\$7.00	X	_____	\$_____
Saturday Dinner	\$20.00	X	_____	\$_____
Sunday Breakfast	\$8.00	X	_____	\$_____
Sunday Lunch	\$12.00	X	_____	\$_____
Bunk bed at CMC	\$25/night	X	_____	\$_____
			<b>Total</b>	\$_____

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Field Trips**

# \_\_\_ Hiking Cheat Mountain Backcountry

# \_\_\_ Shavers Fork Watershed & restoration project

# \_\_\_ Canoeing Greenbrier River

# \_\_\_ High Falls of Cheat on Sunday

Send Registration forms and payment to:

**WVHC**  
**PO Box 306**  
**Charleston, WV 25321**



**"Gaudineer Knob"**  
continued from back page

For many years this knob remained an unnamed peak in a vast wilderness. In the late 1930s it was named for Donald Gaudineer, a memorial to one of the U.S. Forest Service's colorful and dedicated early rangers. Don, as a young forester, was assigned to the Southern District of the recently established Monongahela National Forest. His headquarters, at that time, occupied the former Craig Lumber Company office at Thornwood. Don was an impressive 6 feet 6 inches New Englander who had recently graduated from the New York State Ranger School. During the years he was Ranger for the Greenbrier District of the Monongahela, he busied himself with reforestation projects, building wood roads for better wildfire protection, erecting firetowers in his district and other routine forest management activities. In the mid-1930s Don was transferred to the Cheat District at Parsons, and on April 27, 1936, he died trying to rescue his children in a house fire. The U.S. Forest Service selected this scenic peak in his former ranger district as a memorial.

The intersection of U.S. 250 and the Forest Service road to Gaudineer Knob is another interesting botanical location and warrants a stop. The spire shaped, blue-green conifers, so abundant along Blister Run, are balsam firs. The early settlers called balsam "blister pine" due to the small resin pustules on the bark surface. Although balsam fir only occurred at scattered points in the West Virginia mountains, these can be located easily on old geodetic maps by looking for blister runs, or blister swamps. Many of the original balsam stands have been rediscovered using these maps to indicate potential areas. These beautiful, fragrant trees have all the desirable characteristics that make good seedlings for Christmas tree growers, and their seed is in great demand today. The rare showy lady's slipper was once abundant along Blister Run, but many years ago these were dug up by nurserymen, and none have been seen in this area now for more than 60 years.

It is also interesting to note that in 1843 Asa Gray, famous New England botanist and author of Gray's Manual of Botany, traveled the old Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike, known today as U.S. Route 250. From his horse he was able to spot and make record of two rare plants: heart-leaved twayblade and lance-leaved buckthorn. It took botanists 100 years and much searching, but they eventually rediscovered these plants and verified his records.

Shortly before turning into the old firetower site, a road leads to the virgin spruce stand. Like other uncut timber stands, there is an interesting story as to why it was spared. Evidently, a surveyor's error led to an unclaimed wedge of 1,000 acres of timber. It appears that one of the surveyors failed to make a correction for declination. Usually when such errors occurred, the second logging company recognized that an error had been made and cut the unclaimed timber. For some reason, this time it did not happen. Later, the U.S. Forest Service was able to acquire this virgin tract, which is preserved today and much used for hiking, nature study and teaching.

The vegetation along these mountain roads is colorful in summer and fall. There is a profusion of red beebalm along the roadside. This is the same species that many grow in their gardens to attract hummingbirds. In addition, in summer there is a showy, silver dollar sized bright yellow flower growing abundantly on dry shaley road banks. This is the shale barren evening primrose, whose scientific name means "loving shade." In hardwood areas an interesting tree to look for is Fraser's Magnolia, or, mountain magnolia. It can be easily distinguished from other large leaved magnolias by the two protruding ears which extend down along the petiole. This feature gives rise to the common local name "ear leaf magnolia."

Today, the Gaudineer area gives little evidence of past logging. Nature essentially has restored it to its original forest conditions and splendor. Located in the heart of West Virginia's spruce country, it offers visitors a picture of virgin forests that once covered the region.





## Gaudineer Knob and its Namesake

by Kenneth L. Carvell

In southern Randolph County, along U.S. Route 250 near the Pocahontas County line, is a Forest Service sign pointing to the road to Gaudineer Knob and the Virgin Spruce area. This road leads into some of the finest red spruce forests and to one of the most spectacular views in the Mountain State. Today the area around this Knob is covered by a dense stand of red spruce. This second-growth forest seeded-in after the virgin forests were logged early in this century. The unpaved road ends at a parking area with picnic tables and a pump for drinking water. Close examination indicates the exact spot where the former fire tower stood, right on the boundary line between Randolph and Pocahontas Counties. It is interesting to speculate on just what factors caused spruce to return so magnificently to this area in spite of the hostile climate, of violent winter winds and deep snow.

Although the fire tower is no longer present, a spectacular view of the surrounding country is easily obtained by hiking a short trail to a clearing that gives a panoramic view of the high mountains, ridges and forests. Along this circular trail to the view site the forest floor is covered by a dense soft carpet of spruce needles. Here and there are ferns and lush green patches of mosses and liverworts covering decaying stumps and rotting logs. Although not evident to the eye, this area is the home of the endangered Cheat Mountain Salamander, one of a rare and endemic species of the southern Appalachians. This small salamander, black with gold flecking, is found only in the Cheat Mountain Range.

The view offered at the clearing looks south and southeast towards Spruce Knob, West Virginia's highest peak, visible on a clear day. The view is that of nearly continuous forest broken only occasionally by a man-made clearing. The lighter green foliage of the northern hardwood forest (beech, birches, and maples) on the lower and mid-slopes gradually gives way to the dark green of spruce in areas above 3,800 feet. Red spruce forms a broad cap on the tops of ridges and peaks.

When bears were less common in West Virginia, nature enthusiasts often climbed this tower to the observation platform to watch for bear and other wildlife. It afforded a good view of the parking area and the straight road beyond. Many West Virginians saw their first bear from this tower platform. Different types of hare and the West Virginia flying squirrel also are found in these woods.

During the first two decades of this century the virgin spruce and hardwood forests of this area were cut over by West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company at Cass. How well spruce returns to heavily cut areas depends on the presence of a good spruce seed source and whether wildfire can be prevented and controlled. There was a 1,000-acre tract of uncut spruce and hardwoods left nearby at the time the knob was logged. Spruce seed is light and well winged, and seed from these tall virgin trees reached the knob area in adequate amounts to reproduce the dense pure stand of red spruce we see today. The decaying spruce litter made an adequate seedbed for the spruce seedlings and kept weedy growth from choking out the slow-growing spruce.

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