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The Highlands Voice

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West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection Studies It, Answer Still Unknown

CAN COAL SLURRY BE INJECTED UNDERGROUND?

By Cindy Rank

Is injecting coal slurry underground into empty mine voids harmful to surface or ground water – or those who rely on those waters ?

If anyone expected – or hoped – that the slurry study would provide an answer to that question, the recently released report (May 28, 2009) is a real letdown.

After two years of investigation authors of the report basically state that we don't have enough information to say for sure. ... And, where problems do appear, there are too many other mining impacts or too little background information that one can't really separate out and point to any one cause.

Backing up a bit, I remind readers that in February 2007 the WV legislature approved Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 15 (SCR-15). — For the most part that action was taken in response to citizen lobbyists and coalfield residents who visited legislators, presented personal appeals, horror stories about rashes and diseases, gift bottles of awful looking tap water. SCR-15 directed the WV Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) and the WV Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR) to conduct a comprehensive study of the potential effects of underground injection of coal slurry on the environment and human health. WVDEP also enlisted the assistance of the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE).

Coal slurry is the waste created when 'raw' coal straight from the mines is washed at preparation plants and basically prepped for shipment to buyers for use in power plants, for export, etc. Physical and chemical

processes are used to remove unwanted rock, dirt and other impurities that interfere with the burning or other uses intended for the prepped coal. The resulting waste product consists of both coarse and fine refuse and slurry. [Coal slurry is not be confused with coal ash which is also often in slurry form, but is a waste product created at power plants and other industrial facilities, where coal is burned.]

According to the WVDEP report some 85% of this processing waste is disposed of in impoundments or slurry cells. [NOTE: Leakage, breakthrough, breakout and flooding from these unlined impoundments are also of great concern, but not the subject of this particular investigation.] SCR-15 focused on the other 15% of coal slurry waste that is piped and injected underground into voids created by deep mine workings i.e. into inactive underground mine cavities. Those activities are subject to the UIC (Underground Injection Control) program.

The just-released Phase I study investigates the effects on water and was mostly done under the auspices of West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation Enforcement.. Phase II will be conducted by West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and is to address the possible human health effects of slurry injection.

I suppose I'm all over the map on this one. - GRATEFUL that someone has begun to investigate this practice. - HORRIFIED that no more

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Early Summer Salad

A few thoughts tossed together, without dressing—

Red spruce was the short title and indicator species, though the conference, supported in part by the Highlands Conservancy, was properly called “Ecology and Management of High-Elevation Forests of the Central and Southern Appalachian Mountains.” Fifty presenters and that many more interested parties convened at Snowshoe on May 14 and 15 to discuss current knowledge of, and expectations for, these important ecological communities. A “Proceedings” will be published later this year.

From the papers, slide shows, posters and talks, scholarly and practical, this amateur understood that red spruce as a species is doing well, but the plant and animal communities with which it is associated are vulnerable, even imperiled. And they are important: red spruce communities in West Virginia are the “hottest” loci for biodiversity in the Eastern United States. Ninety percent are on public land.

It’s worth emphasizing how rare—globally rare—these communities are: one presenter called them “an archipelago of high-elevation islands,” and like oceanic islands they’re at serious risk from global climate change. At Snowshoe, of course, we were on such an island, and at every break, one saw scientists, managers, and mappers stroll outside, away from the buzz of conversation, to gaze at the headwaters of the Shavers Fork and brood upon the future of the lovely dark patches.

Endangered children-in-nature: Most of us are aware that children today spend ever more time indoors; so do grown-ups, of course, but children used to be different. They could get out of the office and away from the phone. Now their view of nature is likely to be a picture on a phone.

I’m not sure what to do about this on a scale any larger than my own family, but Richard Louv certainly does. He has built a career on decrying and urging. Recently he was in Charleston promoting his book, *Last Child In the Woods*, now available in paperback. Its subtitle, “Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder,” shows his gift for phrase-making as well as his orientation toward pathology.

Since I agree whole-heartedly that kids ought to play outside, why do I wince at Louv’s mass marketing? I think it’s the way he prescribes a dose of nature to prevent ADHD, alienation, and crime. One day we might develop a nature pill—and then what will happen to the woods?

Critics of wilderness accuse proponents of wanting to “lock up” natural resources; in response, some defenders of wilderness calculate a monetary value for uncut trees, rare plants and animals, clean water, peace and quiet. But nature has more than utilitarian value—the natural world left alone is priceless.

Recently, we were in North Carolina babysitting our granddaughters, aged four and three. Tom had cleared a path through the jungle down to the little spring-fed creek that runs behind their house right in town. Dinah and Juno loved to play there. A favorite game was building “fairy houses” of rocks, twigs and flowers. With them day by day, Ruth *relived* the feeling of squatting by the creek behind the house where she grew up, the sensations on and inside her skin,

(More on p. 3)

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HUGH DISHES MORE SALAD (Hold the croutons, continued from p. 2)

the ripples, shade, bugs, fish, pebbles, the whole cool murmuring moment with nothing else to do.

Experience isn't an argument, and it's difficult to argue with someone who's never had a deep experience in nature. All the more remarkable that our Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964, "In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition . . ."



Take it out on the Old Dominion: What is it about Corridor H that drives its advocates crazy? Now the Lewis County Republican Executive Committee has asked the governor to revoke permits for one of the generators at the Mount Storm power plant. Thus they would cut off electricity flowing to Virginia, in retaliation for Virginia's declining to extend the highway from the state line to I-81. Take that, Mother State!

It's possible that the committee just noticed a decision that the Commonwealth Transportation Board made more than ten years ago. More likely, though, the committee was misled by reports that the Obama administration had decided to stop construction of Corridor H. It was time to put the hurt on somebody.

The federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) did reject a \$10 million earmark for Corridor H construction in the economic stimulus bill on the ground that it was "over and above [highway] formula allocations." In other words, West Virginia would get its share of highway money and if it wanted to spend it on Corridor H, fine. Earmarks, though, were out of favor.

Two points come to mind. First, the corridor's supporters would rather not compete for funding with other highway projects. There are good reasons why H is the last unfinished Appalachian Development Highway. Compare its cost-benefit ratio with all the upgrades, bridge repairs, and other overdue projects on the Division of Highways list and you'll see why it requires special treatment.

Second, you can't believe everything you read. Rejecting the earmark (which would have paid for a few tenths of a mile) was first reported as "curtailing," then as "stopping" the entire project.

Some years ago, the Charleston Daily Mail reported on a ribbon-cutting for the Buckhannon-to-Elkins section of Corridor H. Although that piece wasn't as controversial as the alignment east of Elkins, its opening was tense. Demonstrators hung banners from trees and trailed one from an airplane that interrupted Senator Byrd's speech; people

chanted, "Stop it here!" The Daily Mail's Washington correspondent, Jack Deutsch, wrote that after the event, "they all drove home on the new road." Cute. He neglected to mention that the old road back to Elkins had been buried under fill below the four-lane.

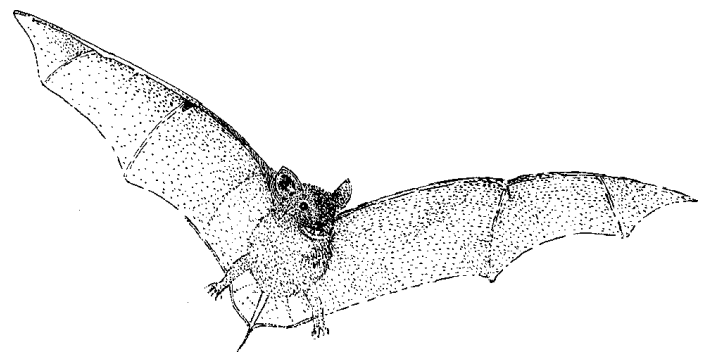
Nine acres lost in the Fernow: During our Spring Review, we got a look at the gas well in the southern end of the Fernow Experimental Forest. More than half of the nine-acre surface impact was attributable to the pipeline. So far, no effects on a nearby Indiana bat hibernaculum have been observed. That was one of the concerns of the staff at the Northern Research Station and Timber and Watershed Lab.

As often happens, what drew public attention to the well was not the big picture, but instead a relatively small but ugly mistake: the half-acre of trees killed by drilling fluids sprayed on the ground. The Forest Service strictly limited the area affected by surface disposal. The application was too concentrated, and the plan backfired.

What's the big picture, then? Thirty-eight percent of mineral rights under the Monongahela National Forest are privately owned. The boom in natural gas exploration waits only for a new infusion of cash. During the recession, the Forest Service has a last chance to re-think its rights and duties as surface owner.

It's had plenty of opportunity to do this before on the Allegheny National Forest just north of us in Pennsylvania. But the Allegheny has been riddled as Forest Service officials claimed they were helpless to regulate private companies. Now the problem seems to have been kicked upstairs, to the Regional Office in Milwaukee and the General Counsel in Washington, and simultaneously shoved aside, into a courtroom in Pennsylvania, where three lawsuits are currently pending. The Forest Service has finally acknowledged it does have the authority and obligation to protect the forest by regulating oil and gas drilling, and it has promised new rules to guide superintendents.

No rule enforces itself, however, and some friends of the forest fear that gas drilling will be seen as the new money-maker to replace timbering. Stay tuned.



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The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose:

The purposes of the Conservancy shall be to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation—including both preservation and wise use—and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation, and especially of the Highlands Region of West Virginia, for the cultural, social, educational, physical, health, spiritual, and economic benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and Americans.

PATH- Finally, Formal Application Filed with PSC

By Frank Young

After several delays amounting to almost a year, four sub-corporations of American Electric Power Co. and Allegheny Energy Co. have filed a formal application with the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) for permits to construct and operate the much promoted, nearly 300 miles long 765 Kilovolt power transmission line known as PATH- the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline.

The most current proposed route would have PATH running from a sub-station at the John Amos power plant in Putnam County, through parts of Putnam, Kanawha, Roane, Calhoun, Clay, Braxton, Lewis, Upshur, Barbour, Tucker, Grant, Hardy, Hampshire and Jefferson counties in West Virginia before crossing into Frederick County, Virginia, and from there to near Frederick, Maryland. Maps show that PATH would eventually cross parts of Pennsylvania and into New Jersey.

The current cost estimate for the PATH Project is \$1.849 billion. The current cost estimate of the West Virginia PATH segments is \$998 million. These costs would be paid for by regional electricity ratepayers- **including** those in West Virginia.

In a May 15th news media release, the WV Highlands Conservancy said, "For West Virginians, PATH is primarily about two coal-based electrical power companies combining their efforts to cause to be mined and burned even more coal through mountaintop removal and other strip mining methods."

West Virginia already generates three times as much electricity as is consumed in the state. PATH would add further to the amounts of electricity generated in the Ohio Valley, with all the added pollution and other miseries of mining and burning coal, but for consumption by consumers in cities near the each coast.

Detailed local county routing maps for PATH can be found at: <http://www.pathtransmission.com/maps/default.asp#County>

A detailed description of exact local routings can be found in the PSC's Notice of Filing at: <http://www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/WebDocket/ViewDocument.cfm?CaseActivityID=267586&NotType='WebDocket'>

Opposition to PATH:

Strong both governmental and private citizen opposition to PATH has developed in central and eastern West Virginia. Ten West Virginia county commissions and two cities have passed resolutions opposing PATH, with some vowing to become official case interveners against



PATH at the WV PSC. It is expected that up to 50 or more individual citizens along with several organizations, including the WV Highlands Conservancy, will file to intervene against PATH.

Organizational interveners must be represented by an attorney. But individual interveners do not need an attorney, and may file pro se-meaning with self representation.

Petitions to intervene against PATH should be filed with:

Sandra Squire, Executive Secretary
WV Public Service Commission
P. O. Box 812
Charleston, West Virginia 25323

Refer to case number 09-0770-E-CN

To be recognized as legal parties to the case, interveners need to show some interest that may be affected by PATH- such as personal financial interest (as with a directly affected or nearby landowner), or recreational, historical, quality of life, or other issues.

To be allowed to fully participate in the case, interveners should petition to intervene by the end of June.

To contribute to the WV Highlands Conservancy's legal and expert witness costs in the case against PATH, send contributions, with the note "PATH", to WV Highlands Conservancy, P.O. Box 306, Charleston WV 25321. Or contributions can be made on WVHC's web site at: <http://www.wvhighlands.org/store/pages/donate.html>. Contributions to WV Highlands Conservancy are fully tax deductible.

WV LEGISLATURE STILL IN SESSION

By Donald S. Garvin, Jr., West Virginia Environmental Council Legislative Coordinator

As I write this on Friday night, May 29, the 2009 regular session of the West Virginia Legislature is still not over. However, they have finished most of their work, and it looks like they will sign the budget bill on Sunday.

But the Governor has called for a Special Session, which will begin on Monday, June 1. The good news is that **HB 3000, the Governor's proposed Transmission Line Tax Bill**, is NOT on the agenda. The bad news is that two of the Governor's other energy bills ARE on the agenda.

One of those is **SB 297, Alternative and Renewable Energy Portfolio Act**. This bill creates a phony "Renewable Portfolio Standard" that includes lots of "clean coal" technologies and burning waste tires, and lacks any emphasis on implementing energy efficiency measures. The other is **SB 375, Office of Coalfield Community Development Master Land Use Plans**. This is the Governor's post-mining land use bill, and is basically another attempt to get around the "approximate original contour" provisions of SMCRA and to promote "clean coal" projects on mountaintop removal mine sites.

Here is a brief update on the environmental bills that were still in limbo when I reported to you last month.

HB 2535, the Solar Energy Tax Credit Bill, was vetoed by the Governor because of a technical error. In the extended session, the Legislature amended the bill to fix the error and sent it back to the Governor for his approval. The bill provides a state personal income tax credit of up to \$2,000 for the installation of a residential solar energy system.

SB 715, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act, was also vetoed by the Governor – and rightfully so. This bill should have been titled the "Delay Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act." While purportedly attempting to find funding sources for Eastern Panhandle wastewater treatment plants, the bill actually was an attempt to extend compliance deadlines for those plants to meet federal water quality standards for nitrogen and phosphorous. In his veto message the Governor pointed out that messing around with compliance schedules would be a violation of provisions of the federal Clean Water Act. In the extended session, the Legislature amended the bill by removing the section that extended compliance schedules, and sent it back to the Governor for his approval.



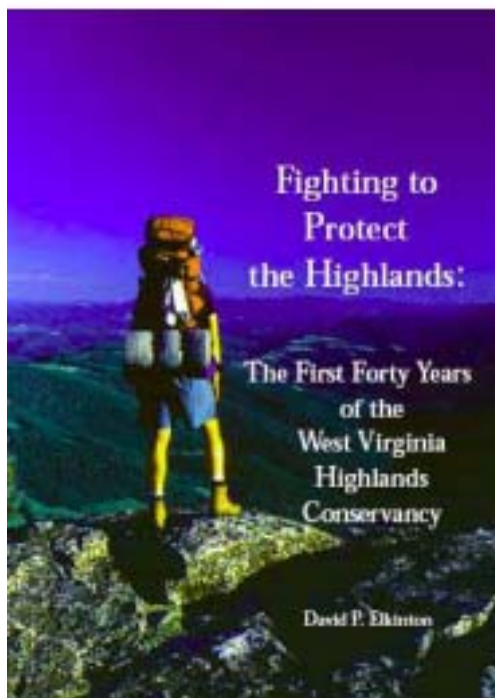
The Governor signed and approved the following bills:

SB 600, the Special Reclamation Fund Tax

SB 461, Extending Selenium Effluent Limits Compliance Time

HB 2931, Removing Timber Severance Tax for Three Years

HB 2860, Regulating Sequestration and Storage Of Carbon Dioxide



GREAT HISTORY BOOK NOW AVAILABLE

For the first time, a comprehensive history of West Virginia's most influential activist environmental organization. Author Dave Elkinton, the Conservancy's third president, and a twenty-year board member, not only traces the major issues that have occupied the Conservancy's energy, but profiles more than twenty of its volunteer leaders.

Learn about how the Conservancy stopped road building in Otter Creek, how a Corps of Engineers wetland permit denial saved Canaan Valley, and why Judge Haden restricted mountaintop removal mining. Also read Sayre Rodman's account of the first running of the Gauley, how college students helped save the Cranberry Wilderness, and why the highlands are under threat as never before.

With a foreword by former congressman Ken Hechler, the book's chapters follow the battle for wilderness preservation, efforts to stop many proposed dams and protect free-flowing rivers, the 25-year struggle to save the Canaan Valley, how the Corridor H highway was successfully re-routed around key environmental landmarks, and concluding with the current controversy over wind farm development. One-third of the text tells the story of the Conservancy's never-ending fight to control the abuses of coal mining, especially mountaintop removal mining. The final chapter examines what makes this small, volunteer-driven organization so successful.

From the cover by photographer Jonathan Jessup to the 48-page index, this book will appeal both to Conservancy members and friends and to anyone interested in the story of how West Virginia's mountains have been protected against the forces of over-development, mismanagement by government, and even greed.

518 pages, 6x9, color cover, published by Pocahontas Press

To order your copy for \$24.95, plus \$3.00 shipping, visit the Conservancy's website, wvhighlands.org, where payment is accepted by credit card and PayPal.

MORE FLASH FLOODS IN THE COALFIELDS

By Bob Gates

I have made my film about the floods in Southern West Virginia: *Mucked: man made disasters - flash floods in the coalfields*. Nonetheless, on Sunday, May 16, Penny Loeb, Eli Rouse and I made a trip to Mingo County to look for the causes of this most recent wave of flash floods. Armed with mine maps from DEP we did find some valley fills on Gilbert Creek that had held up well. We spotted at a distance some active mines that we could not get to on our limited time. At Baisden on the left fork of Gilbert Creek, an area very heavily damaged, a large valley fill could be seen from the road, and just down stream was a big rock wash coming out a hollow.



Logging headwaters of Beech Creek, Photo by Bob Gates

In *Mucked* Penny, Eli and I talked with Freddie Steele at Avondale where his house at Ritter Hollow had been completely buried in rocks. He explains in the film how a gas well road pushed trees into the head of his hollow. These form into little dams, and when the rain waters fill them up they blow out in a domino effect causing a massive



Cemetery at Varney, Photo by Bob Gates

tidal wave of water and rocks. We found this same situation at a buried cemetery at Varney beneath a new gas well road.

Mucked explores six major regional flash floods from the July 8, 2001 flood through the June, 2003 floods. These three companions: steep slope timbering, gas well roads, and Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining, all explored in “Mucked”, continue to be a very major factor in the coalfield flash floods.

Anyone who is interested in these issues should find and look at a copy of *Mucked*. It can be obtained through the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page store, Inter-Library loan, or from me at:

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copies are \$20 + \$5 s/h for personal use, Institutional copies inquire.



View from Twisted Gun Golf Course, Photo by Bob Gates

A Note About Perspective

In the picture to the left, those little bitty things in the middle of the picture, just above the trees, are rock trucks. A person standing beside one of them would barely, if at all, reach to the axle.

MORE ABOUT COAL SLURRY (Continued from p. from p. 1)

clarity or answers can be offered to families with that awful water and unexplained rashes or health problems. - OUTRAGED that more hasn't been done sooner, that more documentation and monitoring hasn't been required these past many years. ... And, as always, AMAZED at how much prodding is needed before any action is taken - prodding by people who have possibly been victimized by actions and activities that could have been prevented decades ago if agencies had done what our environmental laws and personal morals dictate.

The 80 page report and 1335 pages of Appendices indicate a great deal of time and a lot of care and thought went into the investigation and sampling and conclusions. But when all is said and done, the mound of paper mostly shows how little is known about what's gone on for decades at these coal slurry injection sites.

Out of sight - out of mind seems to have been the order of the day for decades. ... The report mentions anecdotal information that injecting slurry became popular after the tragic Buffalo Creek disaster in the '70's. That it was possibly a matter of safety. But as is too often the case with the coal industry, this practice was waste disposal on the cheap.

Regulation of underground injection of coal slurry is spotty at best before 1999. The report states that "information about such activities prior to 2000 is insufficient for research purposes, and records prior to 1983 are essentially non-existent." Furthermore, many questions remain as to the locations, the quantity, and the quality of historical slurry injection within the State. "For these reasons, this study focused only on UIC sites that have been permitted since 2000."

Permitting begun in 1999 is referred to as the "modern era program". Thirteen sites are listed as being active today. (Though I've just been made aware of one in Upshur County that was approved in December 2008 which is not included in that number.) Eighteen more are considered inactive. As for the older historic sites, over 87 are known, others likely exist but are undocumented.

A major disappointment with this study is that many of the concerns voiced by citizens in Rawl, Prenter and elsewhere throughout southern West Virginia apparently stem from the older 'historic' sites for which there is little or no information about the activities and are therefore not considered in this study.

As for the four "modern era program" sites chosen for detailed study, the Executive Summary of the "comprehensive" report states the following.

"A study of the effects of coal slurry injection on the environment is highly technical and complex. The one-year environmental review period mandated by SCR-15 was not sufficient to complete the study. In order to meet time limits, WVDEP determined that the team would need to forego seasonal sample collections that might require years to complete for a comprehensive hydrologic assessment. For example, the team members took a one-time sample, rather than drilling additional monitoring wells and monitoring rainfall and discharges over several years to obtain seasonal variation. THEREFORE, THE FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED INFORMATIONAL, RATHER THAN ABSOLUTE." [Emphasis added]

At the risk of over simplifying the extensive report, I offer the following as somewhat typical of the conclusions at each of the 4 sites where the impacts on water were studied. While some effects were detected in groundwater, the receiving streams and a few individual wells, conclusions could not be drawn as to whether those effects were from present or past mining activity, slurry injection, or other human activities.

In other words at this point there are no answers for those citizens plagued with disgusting water and unexplained rashes and illness whose stories and pictures finally moved the legislature to order the DEP to conduct a comprehensive study in the first place.

On a more positive note, WVDEP has issued a moratorium on coal

slurry UIC permits that haven't already been issued.

"None of the sites chosen for the hydrologic assessment showed water quality impacts to surface waters caused by coal slurry injection alone [emphasis added]," WVDEP Director Randy Huffman said in the press release. "However, the study did point out areas where improvements can be made in the Underground Injection Program. While the Department of Health and Human Resources conducts its portion of the study, we will be making changes to our permitting program and gathering more information from the operators."

In other words those operations with an approved permit may continue, and WVDEP is working on improvements to the program for future permitting.

Included in the suggested improvements are recommendations to fully document all chemicals used in the coal preparation process; closely monitor all mine pools that receive coal slurry using monitoring wells at multiple locations; conduct detailed baseline monitoring of mine pools and groundwater throughout the life of the permit [and I would suggest for some number of years beyond that]; conduct baseline sampling then monitor all water wells (in use) within one half mile of the mine pool throughout the injection process.

Also these: to require site-specific and hydrologically pertinent groundwater and surface water monitoring; adding slurry injection as a major modification and require updated PHC and CHIA water assessments; sampling results should be detailed in both mine and injection permits; ban use of diesel fuel in any prep process that produces slurry for injection; maintain a public GIS layer of all UIC injection sites and associated mine pools, etc..

As welcome as these suggestions are, the severe heartburn I feel as I continue to read the report and write this article pales in comparison to those health problems experienced by people in areas like Prenter and Rawl. And to concerns in households where water once clear and safe has become disgustingly contaminated and causes unexplained rashes when people wash with it.

One can only hope that Phase Two will address some of these health issues, but the official release from WVDEP states that "The samples collected and analyzed by this study will be given to the DHHR to use as it takes up its part of the study". One has to wonder just how better, or more definitive, results can be drawn from the same data and sampling.

Though the reason for the moratorium is to allow time to improve the program... many - myself included - believe that the only right thing to do is to require different methods of disposing coal waste entirely. Require filtering and dry press methods of removing the water from the sludge and slurry, no more slurry injections or unlined impoundments or slurry cells — period.

The official press release is found on the WVDEP website: <http://www.wvdep.org/>

Copies of the study and two Appendices can be downloaded from the WVDEP's website at www.wvdep.org/dmr/slurrystudy.

And for those of you who don't already follow Ken Ward's informative blog Coal Tattoo, you can read his thoughts, comments, criticisms, etc on the slurry page of the blog: <http://blogs.wvgazette.com/coalattoo/category/slurry-impoundments/>

What's next?

DAVE SAVILLE ACCEPTS A POSITION WITH THE WEST VIRGINIA WATER RESEARCH INSTITUTE

By Dave Saville

I have recently accepted a position with the WV Water Research Institute (WVWRI) at West Virginia University. I'll be working as Outreach Coordinator, handling communications, organizing workshops and conferences, working on media, publications and their web site, <http://www.wri.nrcce.wvu.edu/>

Directed by Dr. Paul Ziemkiewicz, the WVWRI is "dedicated to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment through research and outreach with industry, government agencies, academia, and the public." It has been in existence since 1967 and has served as a statewide vehicle for performing research related to water issues.

WVWRI is the premier water research center in West Virginia and, within selected fields, an international leader. WVWRI serves as the coordinating body for the following programs: the National Mine Land Reclamation Center, Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative, Acid Drainage Technology Initiative, Combustion Byproducts Recycling Consortium, National Environmental Education Training Center, State Water Institutes, Geo-Technical Center, West Virginia Water Gaging Council, Northern West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center, and

Hydrology Research Center.

While I won't be working as an employee of the Highlands Conservancy on public lands issues any more, I hope to keep engaged on some level as a volunteer. I will continue to coordinate the Highlands Conservancy's efforts to restore the High Elevation Red Spruce Ecosystem in West Virginia.

I am grateful for everyone's support of all the work I have done on behalf of the WVHC over the past 12 years. My many years as administrator, public lands advocate and coordinating the Wilderness campaign, which led to the passage of the Wild Monongahela Act, have been extremely rewarding. We couldn't have made as much progress and accomplished as much as we have, without the generous support of the Board of Directors, the Highlands Conservancy membership and the cooperation of so many individuals, agencies, organizations, and elected officials. Thank you all!

I'm proud and excited to continue my professional career working to protect and restore what we all love so much about our state.



BROCHURES

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has joined with the Sierra Club, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Voices, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Keeper of the Mountains Foundation and Christians for the Mountains have put together a new brochure entitled "***Mountaintop Removal Destroys Our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!***" For a copy send a self addressed stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

Quantities are available for teachers, civic and religious groups and anyone who can distribute them.

Speakers Available !!!!!

Does your school, church or civic group need a speaker or program presentation on a variety of environmental issues? Available topics include a slide show presentation on mountain top removal including up to date information on coal sludge pond and coal ash pond failures in Kentucky and Tennessee. Contact Julian Martin at 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314, or Martinjul@aol.com, or 304-342-8989.

Leave a Legacy of hope for the future

Remember the Highlands Conservancy in your will. Plan now to provide a wild and wonderful future for your children and future generations. Bequests keep our organization strong and will allow your voice to continue to be heard. Your thoughtful planning now will allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness, wildlife, clean air and water and our way of life.

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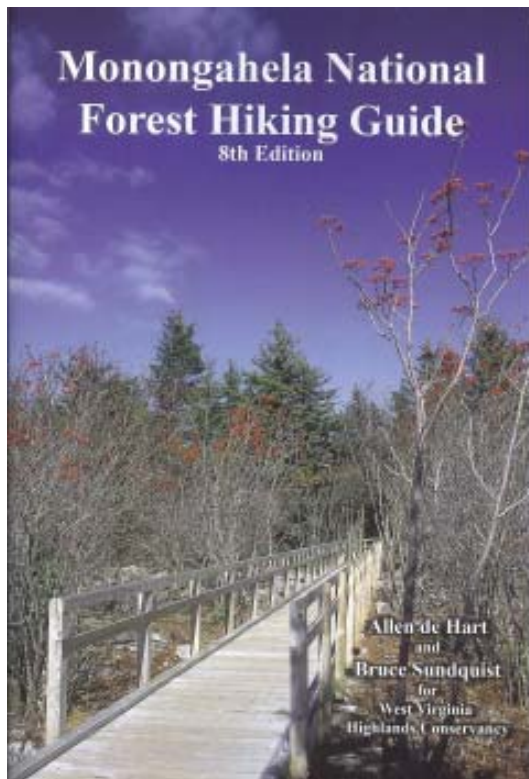
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Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321

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ALL NEW Printable, full color, 24K scale topographic maps of many of the popular hiking areas, including Cranberry, Dolly Sods, Otter Creek and many more

Price: \$20.00 from the same address.

TOPLESS

By Morgan Cain Gram

I read quickly as his car sped by...
curious what token he offered the world,
what statement defined him enough to brand his vehicle.
Squinting, I made out the small words on his bumper sticker:

**I LIKE MY MOUNTAINS LIKE
I LIKE MY WOMEN: TOPLESS**

The car sped off into the distance, but the slogan did not.
It stayed with me. Lingering. Repeating. Stuck.
Taking me back to a sad day.
A field trip unlike childhood years
with packed lunch and souvenir money.
The day I saw a mountain decapitated.
Invaded. Stripped. Topless.

With a stab to my chest, I dissected the words:
Topless mountain. Topless woman.
But no sensual silhouette would come to mind.
No ripened breasts, exposed, and proud.
Instead, a woman, in mourning like the mountain.
With shameful scars in place of breasts.
Wounds: Exposed. Abashed.
Where cancer had spared her life, but stolen her bosom.
Invaded. Stripped. Topless.

Is this what the driver meant?

The words were branded on my skin like his bumper.
Even though his car was infinitely distant from me...
As distant as roots feel, ripped from their earth.
As distant as babes feel, weaned from the nipple.
As distant as the woman and the mountain
from nature's intentions.

All I thought of was the woman, the mountain.
All I felt was their shame. A victim's shame.
Unjustly felt. Unjustly suffered.
I stared into her, I stared unto the mountain.
My eyes trying to apologize.

Her eyes stared back...
telling me how it once was.
How the bare chest she clutched once nursed babes.
How her breasts gave strength to precious little lives.
How she once knew herself through them,
part of her distinct shape, femininity, identity.
How she never knew she loved them...
never knew she would be without them.

The mountain, too, stared back at me...
speaking the wisdom of a timeless elder.
Tales of changes and seasons. Life and death.
Animal, tree, rock, fern.
The springs of life that once flowed abundantly.
The billions of years spent climbing, moving.
So slowly that man could not notice.
The infinite, patient journey since creation.

They stared back at me.
Telling me how it would never again be.
Of what was forever severed.
Irreversible. Irreplaceable. Gone.
Invaded. Stripped. Topless.

I stared. I listened. I cried.
Heavy tears turned to cleansing flood,
baptizing my stained conscience.
And then...I knew.
**I LOVE MY MOUNTAINS LIKE
I LOVE MY WOMEN: SHAMELESS**
Healthy. Vivacious. Proud.
A new slogan branded to my soul!
A new song for you, woman,
a new ballad for you, mountain:

Woman, you survived.
Live shameless. Live assured
of tomorrow's cure.
Mountain, live to see
God's glory restore man's rape.
For long before draglines,
there lived prophets, proclaiming:
"The Lord's house shall be established
on the top of the mountains!"

You survived. You breathe.
And with all the life left in you,
You strive. You fight.
You live.
To see a future
with no more
Invaded. Stripped. Topless.

Morgan Cain Gram is a student in the Appalachian Studies Program at Virginia Tech. This poem won the Steger Poetry Prize, a \$1,000 award. The competition was administered by Nikki Giovanni, an internationally recognized poet and member of the English faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

Readers write

Dear Editor,

I've been dismayed for some time about the Conservancy's apparent position re wind power as "NIMBY." So I was really appreciative of Bob J. Baker's letter in the most recent *Voice*. (May, 2009). It offers a reasoned perspective that has been absent in what I've been reading from what has otherwise been a needed strong voice for our highlands.

Please look to the reality of his argument.

Concernedly,
Robert M. Brown
Hedgesville, WV

Voice Available Electronically

The Highlands Voice is now available for electronic delivery. You may, of course, continue to receive the paper copy. Unless you request otherwise, you will continue to receive it in paper form. If, however, you would prefer to receive it electronically instead of the paper copy please contact Beth Little at blittle@citynet.net. Electronic copies arrive as e-mail attachments a few days before the paper copy would have arrived.

Send us a post card, drop us a line, stating point of view

Please email any poems, letters, commentaries to the VOICE editor at johnmcferrin@aol.com or communicate by real, honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution mail to John McFerrin, WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CONSIDERING RELAXED IRON RULES FOR TROUT STREAMS

By Ken Ward Jr.

West Virginia regulators are working on a plan that would double the legal limit of iron allowed in the state's trout streams, state Department of Environmental Protection officials announced Monday.

DEP officials said the change is one being considered as part of their review of state water quality standards, required every three years by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Dave Montali, head of the DEP's stream cleanup unit, said agency officials are having trouble devising plans by which some trout streams can meet the state's current limit of 0.5 parts per million of iron. So they want to increase the limit to 1.0 parts per million, the level currently recommended by the EPA.

Montali said surrounding states all have limits that are looser than West Virginia's, and DEP officials could not find a single state with a standard as strong as West Virginia's. Montali also cited a more than 30-year-old state study that said trout could survive iron levels as high as 1.37 parts per million.

"There is information out there that suggests a more lenient criteria might be appropriate," Montali said. "We're committed to taking a look at the criteria."

If eventually approved by the DEP and the Legislature, the change would loosen pollution permit limits for companies, including coal operations, that discharge iron into state streams that support reproducing trout populations.

The announcement of the proposal came during a Monday afternoon meeting held to begin public outreach on the DEP's latest triennial review of water quality standards. It's the second such review to be conducted by the DEP since the agency took over water quality standards' authority from the state Environmental Quality Board in 2005.

DEP officials also said they have no plans to propose a tightening of West Virginia's limit on the amount of mercury considered legal in fish tissue. Currently, the state's limit is 0.5 parts per million. The EPA recommends a lower limit of 0.3 parts per million.

Mike Arcuri of the DEP said a survey conducted last year found that West Virginians eat only about half as much fish as they catch from local streams as the nationwide estimate the EPA used to develop its recommended standard.

If the state survey figure — a little more than 9 grams of fish per month, compared to EPA's national average of 17.5 grams per month — is used, the state's mercury limit turns out to be perfectly adequate, Arcuri said.

Arcuri said the DEP's survey, conducted by an outside contractor, did not account for whether low-income populations in West Virginia eat more fish they catch than other state residents.

Also during Monday's meeting, DEP's Pat Campbell said the agency is studying but not currently proposing any sort of water quality limits for total dissolved solids to address growing concerns about disposal of fluids from large-scale oil and gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation.

EPA recommends standards in the range from 250 parts per million to 500 parts per million, and surrounding states such as Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio and Virginia have or are moving to adopt such standards. West Virginia does not have a water quality standard for total dissolved solids.

"This is the beginning of the state considering whether to have a TDS criteria and what that number should be," Campbell said.

Note: This story originally appeared in The Charleston Gazette.

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

Saturday June 20, Day hike into Lower Otter Creek Wilderness. Meet at McDonalds in Parsons at 11:00 a.m. After creek crossing the three mile trail out along the beautiful stream is easy. Out by 5:00 p.m. For more information contact Don Gasper at 472-3704. Otherwise just show up.

Saturday, June 20, County Line Trail Maintenance, Cranberry Wilderness; Join the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, AmeriCorps, Highlands Conservancy and Forest Service as we put some quality work time into improving our Wilderness hiking trails. Meet at 10am at the County Line Trailhead along the Williams River Road. Volunteers should bring lunch, water, gloves and dress appropriately. Severely inclement weather would cancel the work day. Tools will be provided. Contact Dave Saville at daves@labyrinth.net or 304-284-9548.

Monday, July 6--Friday, July 10, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins; Join Marion Harless' 32nd annual Augusta Herbs workshop. Daily herbal teas, snacks; one lunch, one dinner. Day trip to Dolly Sods. Conservation oriented wild herbs, multitudinous tame herbs. Make and take many items. Learn about those green things you are "whacking." Yes, we pull garlic mustard. www.augustaheritage.com, (304) 637-1209.

Saturday, July 11, Middle Fork Trail Maintenance, Cranberry Wilderness; Join the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, AmeriCorps, Highlands Conservancy and Forest Service as we put some quality work time into improving our Wilderness hiking trails. Meet at 10am at the North-South Trailhead along the Highlands Scenic Highway. Volunteers should bring lunch, water, gloves and dress appropriately. Severely inclement weather would cancel the work day. Tools will be provided. Contact Dave Saville at daves@labyrinth.net or 304-284-9548.

Saturday, July 18, County Line Trail Maintenance, Cranberry Wilderness; Join the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, AmeriCorps, Highlands Conservancy and Forest Service as we put some quality work time into improving our Wilderness hiking trails. Meet at 10am at the 3 Forks of Williams Trailhead. Volunteers should bring lunch, water, gloves and dress appropriately. Severely inclement weather would cancel the work day. Tools will be provided. Contact Dave Saville at daves@labyrinth.net or 304-284-9548.

Saturday to Tuesday, July 25-28, Seneca Shadows Car Camping with 2 day hikes, MNF, VA. This campground is meticulously maintained. The hikes will include a 10 mile shuttle hike across North Fork Mountain with tons of views and a 10 mile circuit in Dolly Sods North. Optional hike to the top of Seneca Rocks for early arrivals. Pre-register with Mike Juskelis 410-439-4964, mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

Saturday, August 1, North Fork Trail Maintenance, Cranberry Wilderness; Join the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, AmeriCorps, Highlands Conservancy and Forest Service as we put some quality work time into improving our Wilderness hiking trails. Meet at 10am at the North-South Trailhead along the Highlands Scenic Highway. Volunteers should bring lunch, water, gloves and dress appropriately. Severely inclement weather would cancel the work day. Tools will be provided. Contact Dave Saville at daves@labyrinth.net or 304-284-9548.

Saturday, August 8, Middle Fork Trail Maintenance, Cranberry Wilderness; Join the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, AmeriCorps, Highlands Conservancy and Forest Service as we put some quality work time into improving our Wilderness hiking trails. Meet at 10am at the 3 Forks of Williams Trailhead. Volunteers should bring lunch, water, gloves and dress appropriately. Severely inclement weather would cancel the work day. Tools will be provided. Contact Dave Saville at daves@labyrinth.net or 304-284-9548.

Saturday to Tuesday, October 24-27, Douthat State Park Car Camp with 2 Day Hikes, VA. Camp in the oldest park in the Old Dominion. Hikes are moderate to strenuous in difficulty and ranging from 7 to 10 miles in length. Lots of views. Pre-register with Mike Juskelis 410-439-4964, mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

Open Dates: Visit Kayford Mountain south of Charleston to see mountain top removal (MTR) up close and hear Larry Gibson's story about how he saved his mountain, now almost totally surrounded by MTR. Bring lunch for a picnic on Larry's mountain. Call in advance to schedule. Julian Martin (304) 342-8989; martinjul@aol.com or Larry Gibson (304) 542-1134; (304) 549-3287.

HIKING SENECA CREEK BACKCOUNTRY

By Mike Juskelis

I was joined on this three day trek by Single Malt, Good Golly Miss Molly, Everybody Loves Raymond, Indiana Moser, Bubbles, Dr. Mike and Jack and Jill. It was a great weekend for a backpacking trip. We got under way from the Allegheny Mt./Big Run Trailhead a little after noon.

We set off descending down the Big Run Trail. After crossing 2 tributaries we eventually crossed Big Run itself and followed it down stream. Initially we were in the woods but we soon found ourselves passing through some marvelous meadows with the stream oscillating down their middles. At about 1.6 miles we turned right to follow the North Prong of the stream up to the top of Allegheny Mt.

I consider this stream to be a miniature Seneca Creek with little rapids and slides crossed multiple times by the trail that was formerly a railroad grade. It too has its meadows. The upper most one is by far the most impressive. At this point the trail becomes a double track road that passes through a couple of hunter's fields.

Once on the top of the ridge we turned left and made good time as we hiked along the ridge of the mountain. We turned onto the Horton Trail at the end of our ridge walk and began a steep descent on a footpath, constantly listening to the sound of the creek grow louder with every step we took.

We forded Seneca Creek and camped at the first campsite below the waterfall. By 9:30 we had all turned in for the night.

Sunday was "Adventure Day". Besides visiting the High Meadows we were to also visit the "Lost Meadow" we discovered last Labor day and attempt to find even more. We got under way at around 9:00, first ascending the Huckleberry Trail to the Lumberjack Trail. We stopped along the way for obligatory visits to two very attractive meadows.

It was easy but wet walking along the Lumberjack Trail. I don't think it ever dries out. We made good time to the junction with the High Meadows Trail. The old grade that serves as the entrance to the "Lost Meadow" was blocked by some blowdowns but these were easily circumvented.

As we crossed the first of the previously discovered meadows we found two empty large canisters of propane under some spruce trees, the kind you use for car camping stoves and lanterns. This could not be the work of backpackers. We don't use these kinds of cylinders. They are too heavy and bulky to backpack in. Then at the end of the trail that opens up to the primary "Lost Meadow" someone had built a fire right on the trail, scaring it for many years to come. Again, this is something a backpacker would not do. It seems as though our secret meadows were not very secret!

After taking in the view for a bit Indiana and Bubbles found the continuation of an old railroad grade that I thought might be the route to even more meadows. We followed it for a mile, negotiating several blowdowns and pushing through heavy brush, before giving up. Along the way we passed and abandoned blue tarp that is now the home for a garter snake. It's good condition told us it couldn't have been left there too long ago. This was way

too big for us to carry out so we left it. After a brief lunch we backtracked to the primary meadow and hiked up to the crest of the hill where you could see views to the east as well as to the west and took it all in for about fifteen minutes.

As we hiked up, we all noticed ATV tracks in the grass. This might explain some of the trash we found. As we began to return to the main loop for the day a light rain began to fall. This lasted a total of about ten minutes. Single Malt found a heavy metal tree stand. It was then we realized this tuff was not being carried in on someone's back. While hunting is allowed in Seneca Creek Backcountry, ATVs are not, except in designated areas. The Allegheny Trail is not one of them and it is the only way into the "Lost Meadow" that can be traversed by an ATV.

The "Official Meadows" are still very nice to look at but they pale in comparison to what we visited earlier. As we neared the bottom meadow we could look back and see most of what we visited earlier.

Once back on the Huckleberry Trail we leisurely retraced our morning steps back to camp. Our little adventure was over by about 3:30. The rest of the day was a repeat of the night before except we all turned in earlier in hopes of breaking camp early the next morning. As we sat around the campfire we wondered aloud how the ATVers got to one of our favorite spots and how they could be so thoughtless with their trash and harmful ways.

We managed to break camp at 8:30 and began our day with a chilly wade of the creek above the falls. Once across this first one we were able to rock hop the rest of the crossings. No matter how many times one hikes this trail you never get tired of it. It is perhaps the prettiest streamside hike in the Mon with the possible exception of Otter Creek.

We took in a set of falls I like to call the "Three Amigos", "The Grist Stone Campsite" complete with its grist stone and falls and the slides just below the old Judy Springs campground. Since we parked at a different trailhead than most we had to make a gradual climb back to the ridge of Allegheny Mountain using the Tom Lick Trail and then Following the Allegheny Mountain Trail (a jeep road at this point) back to the cars. We changed our clothes and began our drive back down the mountain. We passed the now nearly empty Seneca Creek Trail lot. As we approached the Lumberjack Trailhead we noticed quite a bit of police activity. There were two U.S.F.S. Law Enforcement SUVs, a State Trooper SUV with empty ATV trailers and a State Trooper sedan. Perhaps a rescue operation – but next along the side of the road were several civilian pickups, two with empty ATV trailers. Is it possible that some illegal ATVers were about to have a very unhappy Memorial Day. We all hoped so!

We continued down Briery Gap Road and stopped at the Gateway Restaurant for one last meal together before parting ways. It was truly a great trip even though we never found more "Lost Meadows". That adventure is still ongoing.



"The Lost Meadow" with Spruce Mountain in the background. Photo by Mike Juskelis.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE VANISHING SPRUCE

By D. S. Jeffers Iowa State College and C. F. Korstian Appalachian Forest Experiment Station

The romantic story of the "lost tribe" has invariably caught our fancy, in whatever form it has appeared. There is a wistful appeal in the picture of an isolated community, preserving in some forgotten corner of the world the manners and customs of a far distant homeland. The original lost tribes of Israel or the fabled lost "Atlantis," the realm of Prester John, the imagined but never discovered remnant of the Aztecs in Peru, all these and many others have beguiled us, down to the survival of seventeenth-century England that is found today in



Photo © Jonathan Jessup

the mountains of Kentucky and Arkansas.

All unknown to many, we have in this country another lost tribe, a vanishing race, whose romantic history antedates even that of Israel or the lost Atlantis, and which has remained through the centuries, isolated in an alien land, and yet clinging persistently to the characteristics of its own kind hundreds of miles and thousands of years away; The "lost tribe" in this instance is not, however, a kind of men, but a species of tree, or rather two related species, red spruce and Fraser fir, direct descendants of the Canadian spruce and balsam.

When northern America broke from its long sleep under the great blanket of ice, animals found new lairs and plants new habitats. Marked changes in climate had been wrought by the southward movement of the glaciers. There had been a slow southward procession of boreal climatic conditions, which irresistibly set to migrating all species which were able to migrate. Not animals alone, but vegetation as well, had spread southward in advance of the great glacier. Even trees had migrated with the rest, the northern species finding new sites as the warmth-loving southern species were frost killed and driven forth.

In this manner the red spruce came from

its home in the north and, well in advance of the last reach of the ice sheet, established itself in the region now covered by the Central Atlantic states. The migration was not confined to spruce alone, for birch, beech, maple and other northern species traveled in the same caravan. All doubtless became well established in this part of the country, until the glacial period came to an end.

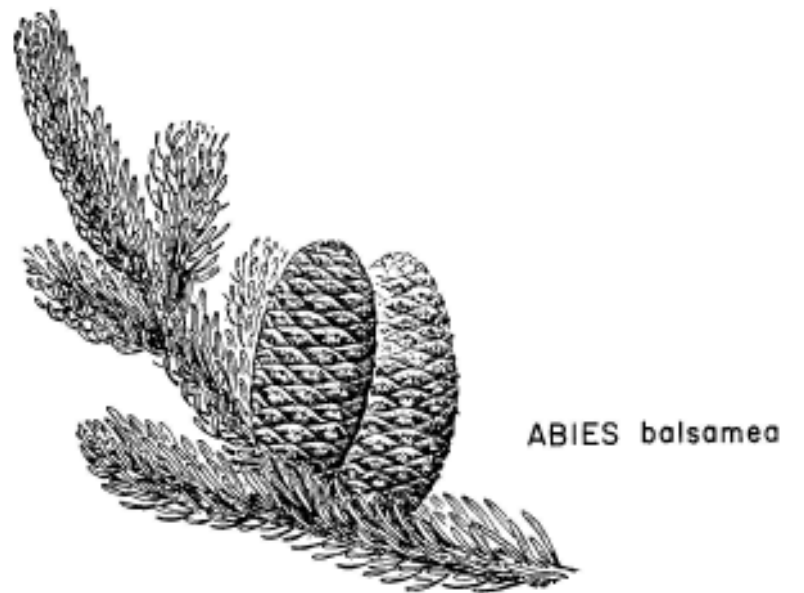
Then came disaster. In the increasing warmth, the forests of the south must have waged a relentless and successful warfare against their hapless northern rivals. Only those trees and plants could escape that could climb above the altitude limit of the prolific southern vegetation. This the spruce, among others, succeeded in doing, and became accordingly confined in this region to the highest summits and loftiest ridges, where, in the Southern Appalachians, it has persisted all these centuries and is found today.

The range of red spruce is thus decidedly limited, because of the relatively small area that is high enough to reach the bracing coolness and the plenitude of moisture spruce demands. The Southern Appalachians are themselves the remains of a plateau, once higher than the highest of the peaks remaining (6,711 feet). Composed of much soft rock, which weathered away, exposing the harder surfaces to a slower erosion, this plateau gradually lost all identity as such and took the form of the present mountain range, more than forty of whose peaks rise 6,000 feet and over. At this elevation the temperature is comparable to that of southern New England and the sub-alpine climate of the Rocky Mountains. Because of the greater elevation, however, the atmosphere is much more moist and the rainfall heavier. Here the red spruce has kept its hold, with its more wintry range-mate, Fraser fir. The latter, beginning in the uppermost part of the spruce zone, grows in almost pure stands of small extent, and is the counterpart of the balsam fir of eastern Canada.

Other compatriots of the spruce have also found lodgment, and in the lower part of the spruce belt the hardwoods and hemlock of the north mingle with the hardier species. Here all the vegetation is suggestive of Northern New England and Canada, while the true soil under the trees is covered by a spongy layer of plant remains known as upland peat, sometimes

more than a foot in thickness, and frequently as acid as the peat of many of the Coastal Plain swamps.

Successful in its warfare with nature, the spruce in recent years has found certain man-made circumstances too powerful for it. War between nations across the ocean has touched these spruce forests and decimated them, for modern warfare calls for aeroplanes and aeroplanes demand spruce and fir of the splendid quality so often found in these Appalachian stands. War and a growing population in the cities call also for more newspapers, and newsprint takes a heavy toll of spruce, wherever it is available. For these reasons a large portion of these spruce lands has been logged over, involving a great loss in stream flow protection and scenic value, and contributing but an insignificant amount to the nation's wood supply. What centuries of continuously hostile climatic



conditions could not do to dislodge this valuable forest remnant, man has been accomplishing in a short span of years. The Appalachian spruce is vanishing and may well become extinct if man does not repair the destructive work he has started here.

Details of the logging operations that are clearing off these forests will make the situation clearer. A large portion of this region has been logged over, the spruce lands yielding a cut averaging from 18,000 to 30,000 feet to the acre board measure. In these operations the overhead skidder has been used to some extent to get out the material that lay above the logging railroads and at the heads of the flumes. On the steeper slopes dry slides are

(Continued on p. 15)

STILL ON THE TRAIL (Continued from p. 14)

sometimes used and frequently the pulp-wood bolts are rolled down the steep mountain sides, a process locally known as "ball-hooting." Frequently, when the saw-timber has been logged from an area, the latter is "wooded," which means, in 'local parlance, that it is again cut over, this time for pulpwood. This second cutting removes trees down to about six inches in diameter. The slash left after logging is a fire trap, and the scarlet scourge-the ever-present enemy of young spruce-has taken its toll of the remaining small trees, leaving them as gray sentinels to mark the passing of the present generation. Where logs have been skidded downhill by horses and dragged uphill by the steam skidder, rain has within a year started to "gully" the mountain side.

What kind of timber, if any, can be cut from the next generation on such desolated areas? That is the important question which has confronted foresters and, to some extent, timberland owners with reference to the spruce-fir type. The forestry problems of this type are of a very difficult nature, and have called for some of the Appalachian Forest Experiment Station, which the federal government has established in this region.

On the cut-over spruce lands where fire has not burned, the young trees are coming up satisfactorily. These trees were seedlings before the cutting was made. New seedlings, dating since the cutting, have not yet appeared save on the older tracts. Altogether there is enough of this young growth to continue to hold these lands for spruce, if fire does not intervene; but there is not enough to result in fully stocked stands in this tree generation.

Where fire has come, even though only once, the cut-over lands are in a hopeless condition, so far as spruce is concerned. Blackberry and raspberry briars overrun these acres, to be succeeded by fire cherry and yellow birch, which according to count run several thousand an acre and in this region are of no commercial importance. Only occasionally on these burned areas are live young spruce found, and then around springs and seeps, or along streams, where the small advance growth of seedlings and saplings escaped, evidently because the fire was halted or because it was unable to burn the upper Layer of soil where seeds were stored.

All told, it is evident that the amount of new growth is entirely inadequate for a future stand of softwoods on by far the greater number of these spruce burns. If new stands of spruce and fir are to be available within a reasonable time, the slow and expensive method of planting must be adopted.

Most obvious and most important of all is the fact that adequate fire protection must be put in force on this cut-over land; otherwise what is true of these spruce burns will soon be duplicated throughout the length and breadth of the Southern Appalachians. In that event, the cool mountain streams flowing from hidden springs among the spruce-covered rocks, and inviting alike the hydroelectric engineer and the profitable tourist, will cease to flow. Down gullied, barren mountain sides spring torrents will rush, destructive and profitless to any. Throughout the summer no even flow will be preserved; no wheels will be turned; no hiking pleasure-seeker will find here the refreshing invitation that brings him to such regions.

With the vanishing spruce, the good that it has done to the mountain communities will vanish with it. Though strayed far from home and though driven to the heights to maintain itself at all, the Appalachian spruce has paid its way these many years, has made itself a good citizen and friend to man. Now, in its direst extremity, turn about is fair play: the perpetuation of the spruce type in the Appalachians is the duty of every human citizen and friend of the forest. As matters stand today, the loss of this tree is far too imminent a possibility.

This is an excerpt from an article that appeared in a 1925 issue of The Scientific Monthly. (Vol. 20 No. 4 (April 1925), pp 358-368). Though written about the Appalachians in Virginia and Tennessee, it is the same story of the spruce forests in West Virginia. Note that the fir trees in our state are considered "balsam," however. Because they have been isolated for so long from both other balsam to the north, and fraser to the south, West Virginia's balsam is unique. - Dave Saville



BUMPER STICKERS

To get free I ♥ Mountains bumper sticker(s), send a SASE to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314. Slip a dollar donation (or more) in with the SASE and get 2 bumper stickers. Businesses or organizations wishing to provide bumper stickers to their customers/members may have them free. (Of course if they can afford a donation that will be gratefully accepted.)

Also available are the new green-on-white oval Friends of the Mountains stickers. Let Julian know which (or both) you want.



THE SCOURGE OF STILTGRASS

By Evan Burks

The 2009 Garlic Mustard Challenge has inspired us all to do more about non-native invasive species (NNIS). A non-native invasive species is one that is not native to the area, but has been introduced, is starting to spread, and is causing damage to the natural environment. They are affecting plant and animal communities on our farms, parks, streams, and even our backyards. Nationally, they cost us over 138 billion dollars per year and are the primary reason why 42 percent of our threatened and endangered species are in trouble.

Japanese stiltgrass is the perfect poster child for aggressive invasive species. Stiltgrass is rapidly invading forests in the eastern United States, reducing native plant diversity and productivity, inhibiting forest regeneration, and threatening to alter forest species composition. For these reasons, the plant made the Plant Conservation Alliance's "Least Wanted" List.

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is an annual grass with a terrible habit of invading areas that are subject to regular mowing, tilling, foot traffic, and other soil disturbing activities. This plant frequently invades moist areas, so you may have seen it along bottomland hardwood forest, riparian areas, roadsides, and stream banks. Unfortunately, the plant is highly tolerant of shade and can grow and produce seeds in the deep shade of interior forests.

Native to Asia, this grass is thought to have travelled to the United States in packing material for fragile trade goods. Now this plant is found in at least 21 states and is listed as a noxious, banned weed in Alabama, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. This species can be distinguished from other grasses by its thin, pale green, tapered leaf blades, and by the shallow 'v' they often form as they extend from the stem. The alternate leaves have a silvery stripe of reflective hairs down the middle of the upper leaf surface. In the fall, identification becomes somewhat easier after the plant develops a slight purplish tinge.



Japanese stiltgrass can quickly spread into natural areas replacing native species with a nearly solid stand of stiltgrass. And, areas invaded by this plant are not easily recolonized by native species. Stiltgrass produces hundreds of seeds per plant that can remain viable in the soil for five years or more. These seeds can be dispersed by water, animals (especially deer), and by human activities. White-tailed deer help spread this species by feeding on native plants and avoiding stiltgrass. Instead, deer choose to use the thick mat of grass as a bed. Seeds get trapped in their fur and are spread to other disturbed areas.

So what can you do to control this invasive species and help preserve biodiversity? The shallow root system of this plant makes it easy to hand pull; however, infestations can be large. Hand pulling should be done mid-to-late summer to avoid the likelihood of seed germination. Stiltgrass can also be mowed or "weed-whacked" during the late summer months before seed is produced. However, recent information suggests that stiltgrass plants that are cut early in the summer respond by regrowing and flowering soon after cutting, much earlier than they would normally flower. This is another reason to cut in late summer to fall rather than during the early summer months. For larger infestations, herbicides may be the best option. But, always use herbicides responsibly and follow manufacturer's directions.

Remember, prevention is the best and easiest method of control. So, be on the look out for this invader! Seeds from this plant can cling to your clothing or boots, so be sure to avoid transferring seeds to new locations.

For more information, contact Evan Burks (eburks@fs.fed.us) for more information or visit www.afha.us/garlic_mustard. Evan is an AmeriCorps Member working with Appalachian Forest Heritage Area and the Monongahela National Forest.

HATS FOR SALE

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has two models of caps for sale.

One is khaki and the pre-curved visor is forest green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in gold above We ♥ Mountains. The heart is red; and lettering is black.

The other model is tan with a muted green pre-curved visor. The front sports the lovely, in color, logo that appears on the VOICE masthead. Beside the logo is "West Virginia Highlands Conservancy" in green. The lower back of the hat has the We ♥ Mountains slogan.

Pictures of both appear on our website www.wvhighlands.org. Both are soft twill, unstructured, low profile with sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. Cost is \$15 by mail. West Virginia residents add 6% tax. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to James Solley, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

T- SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-shirts with the *I ♥ Mountains* slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. "West Virginia Highlands Conservancy" in smaller blue letters is included below the slogan. Short sleeve in sizes: S, M, L, XL, and XXL. Long sleeve in sizes S, M, L, and XL. **Short sleeve** model is \$12 by mail; **long sleeve** is \$15. West Virginia residents add 6% tax. Send sizes wanted and check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy ATTN: James Solley, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

