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The Highlands Voice

The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Volume 42

No. 10

October, 2009

GROUPS HEAD TO COURT TO PROTECT PARKS FROM GAS DRILLINGS

By John McFerrin

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, along with Friends of Blackwater and Cordie Hudkins (a retired Chief of the West Virginia State Park System in the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources) are going to Court to protect Chief Logan State Park in Logan County from the location of gas wells within the Park.

The action would also affect all other state parks as well, potentially clarifying the law to make it clear that state law prohibits oil and gas drilling in state parks. This is significant not only for Chief Logan State Park but for the other parks where West Virginia does not own the mineral rights—Babcock, Blackwater Falls, Canaan Valley, Cedar Creek, Pipestem, Twin Falls and Watoga.

The controversy began in late 2007, when Cabot Oil and Gas applied to the Department of Environmental Protection for a “well work permit” to drill within Chief Logan State Park. A “well work permit” normally addresses such things as roads to the well site, plans for casing the well, plans for sediment control, and other technical aspects of the well.

The Department of Environmental Protection denied the application for a well work permit based upon a statute that had always been considered to prohibit gas wells in State Parks.

The denial became controversial because protection of the Parks is most directly the responsibility of the Division of Natural Resources,

not the Department of Environmental Protection. Cabot Oil and Gas, as well as the mineral owner Lawson Heirs, contend that only the Division of Natural Resources can enforce this statute. (This is yet another example of why ordinary people hate lawyers. Only a lawyer could say with a straight face that, even if something is illegal under one statute, that doesn’t matter because the wrong agency is seeking to enforce the statute.)

Cabot and the Lawson Heirs also contend that it has always been the policy of the Division of Natural Resources to allow gas well drilling on State Parks. They point to several instances of gas wells which are located on State Parks. From this, they conclude that the Division of Natural Resources must not object to the drilling of gas wells in Parks.

Based upon these arguments, in June, 2009, the Circuit Court of Logan County reversed the decision of the Department of Environmental Protection and ordered that the well work permit be issued. The Department has not yet issued the permit and no work has yet begun in the Park. The Department of Environmental Protection has said that it intends to appeal the Circuit Court’s decision to the West Virginia Supreme Court.

Mr. Hudkins, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and the Friends of Blackwater are now headed back to the Circuit Court of Lo-



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Visit us on the web at www.wvhighlands.org

From the Heart of the Highlands

by Hugh Rogers

Two Views From the Sods

On an early September day of high sky, east wind, and low temperature, I went to Dolly Sods and banged up my shins on a hike to Stack Rock. Maybe I walked six miles, but the hike was better measured in yards gained against opposition.

It had looked so simple: from the parking area near Bear Rocks, a rough trail through the taller huckleberry bushes, then up a hillside of low bushes and ferns, and from the top—the northern boundary of the new addition to Dolly Sods Wilderness—Stack Rock clearly visible, although bands of spruce mixed with birch and laurel grew in between. They didn't seem to be a problem.

No doubt I was distracted. I had confirmed that the new wind turbines along the Allegheny Front were visible from within the wilderness (at least from that summit near 4100 feet); but then as I scanned north and west, over a dip in Cabin Mountain I could see the wind facility along Backbone Mountain. Two in one view: The ridge-grabbing projects were on their way from novelty to multiplicity. To the northeast, a double row of blazingly white towers with slowly spinning blades; to the northwest, a long picket of the same machines. And of course, dead ahead, the Mt. Storm power plant with its own towers belching smoke plumes. (The turbines are also visible from the high point on Bear Rocks at the USGS survey marker.)

It was a more truthful picture of energy production than what you see on TV. Not alternative energy but both—and, more and more. Wind turbines won't replace any coal-fired plants. To accomplish that will require something else.

The Forest Service describes this part of the wilderness as a "high-elevation plateau, wind-swept and boggy." One of its chief attractions is "wide-spreading vistas." Looking north, the Allegheny Front appears as a land-wave surging from west to east. While the Mt. Storm complex sits in a shallow depression beside its cooling lake, the giant turbines stand on the crest of the wave, out of scale in the drama, incorporating the mountain into their project of electrical power generation. One can see why they're there. One wishes they weren't. It really is a shame.

Farther south, out of sight of the machinery, the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory bird-banding station occupies a spectacular overlook. It's been there for more than fifty years. Half that long ago, our sons had gone on field trips for which Ruth had been a driver, but I'd never seen it. The path to the edge wound through low oaks and maples, laurel and mountain ash. There was a neat three-sided hut where birds were identified, measured, banded, and recorded before they were released through an opening in the south wall. The nets made a sort of terraced vineyard whose harvest would be returned to the wild (and sometimes come back again). In the hut were records of birds that had been banded here and recaptured in Florida, Honduras, and other points south, as well as Quebec and points north; and another list of birds from those places that had been captured here.

In earlier years, children were allowed to hold the birds, but that practice ended with the spread of West Nile virus. Bird banders must serve an apprenticeship and obtain a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Over the years, more than two hundred thousand birds have been banded here, and crucial information obtained about

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Roster of Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs

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GAS WELLS FOR CHIEF LOGAN? (Continued from p. 1)

Logan County to ask that the Court consider the matter further in light of the evidence that they have uncovered.

The Circuit Court in Logan based his ruling, in part, upon his understanding that the Division of Natural Resources had frequently allowed gas well drilling in State Parks. There is even an existing gas well in what is now Chief Logan State Park. From this, it is easy to infer that the DNR does not believe that such drilling was illegal.

It now appears that his understanding was based upon incomplete information. There are several instances of gas wells located on State Park land. Those wells were, however, drilled before the land became part of a State Park. This is true of the well in Chief Logan. The Division of Natural Resources routinely denies requests to drill on State Parks. It does so because it believes that drilling for oil or gas on a State Park would be illegal.

Now Mr. Hudkins and the citizens groups are going back to Court in order to make sure that the Court has all the facts necessary to make a correct ruling. They believe that, were the Court presented with all the facts, it would determine that oil and gas drilling on all State Parks—including Chief Logan—is prohibited by law.

The case is set for hearing on October 9, 2009, in Logan.

NOT THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

Cordie Hudkins, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and Friends of Blackwater are not the only ones who are concerned about the possibility of gas wells in Chief Logan State Park and possibly other parks as well. The West Virginia chapter of The Sierra Club has also asked to intervene in the Logan County case. It will be presenting similar evidence and seeking similar relief from the Court.

WHAT SAYS THE DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES?

Everybody and his dog (or at least the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Cordie Hudkins, the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and their members) are concerned about gas wells at Chief Logan State Parks and State Parks in general. So what of the Division of Natural Resources? Is it concerned?

Apparently so. A representative of the Division told The Charleston Gazette that it considered gas drilling in state parks to be prohibited. While it had no plans to intervene in the pending action in Logan County it apparently intends to take legal action if Cabot Oil and Gas actually tries to drill.

LISTEN UP!!!

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy will take place on Sunday, October 25, at 9:30 a.m. at the Greenbrier County Public Library, Lewisburg, WV. The agenda will include the election of officers and any other business that comes before the membership. All members are urged to attend.

The quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors will occur immediately upon the completion of the Annual Meeting. By past practice, all members are welcome to attend the Board meeting and participate in discussions although only Board members may vote or make motions.

Mindful of the principle that all work and no play makes us dull boys and girls, we'll take a short hike in the newly-designed Big Draft Wilderness (about 15 miles from Lewisburg).

The *Highlands Voice* is published monthly by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Articles, letters to the editor, graphics, photos, poetry, or other information for publication should be sent to the editor via the internet or by the U.S. Mail by the last Friday of each month. You may submit material for publication either to the address listed above or to the address listed for Highlands Voice Editor on the previous page. Submissions by internet or on a floppy disk are preferred.

The *Highlands Voice* is always printed on recycled paper. Our printer uses 100% post consumer recycled paper when available.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page is www.wvhighlands.org.

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: An Even Bigger TrAIL of Destruction

By Frank Young

The fight about the proposed 225 miles long, 765 Kilovolt PATH (Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline) is one of words- literally millions of words- on tens of thousands of pages of public comments, sworn testimony, rebuttal testimony, data requests and replies to data requests. And after the evidentiary hearings in February will come more thousands of pages of briefs and reply briefs, and more public comments.

In the meantime, the TrAIL of destruction for PATH's 500 Kilovolt little sister power line, known as TrAIL (Trans-Allegheny Interstate Line), is proceeding across more than 100 miles of northern and eastern West Virginia.

PATH is dreams come true for the dozens of lawyers who assemble millions of words supporting PATH, and for makers of the hundreds of reams of paper used to record them.

And while the PATH corporate lawyers compose their hundreds of official looking documents, dozens and dozens of hours of more words are spoken by citizens at public hearings in the thirteen western, central and eastern West Virginia counties through which the giant PATH line would pass.

With all these spoken and written words in opposition to and in support of the PATH interstate highway for electrons, one might think that all anyone would ever want to know about a proposal to build such a gigantic facility would be answered in those millions of words. But one would be wrong.

There are four PATH companies- some old and some new- that have together applied to the WV Public Service Commission (PSC) for a Certificate of Need construct and operate the PATH power line.

There is one area of significant information that the PATH companies steadfastly refuse to answer about- and resist letting others even inquire about. That is the matter of generation sources for the electricity the PATH line would carry

The PATH companies contend that the only issue before the PSC is that of allowing the construction and operation of the PATH line. PATH contends that the economic effects of PATH on electricity ratepayers, and the sources of fuel to generate electrical power to feed the PATH line, are not relevant to the PATH application case.

The more than 200 legal interveners in the PATH proceedings at the PSC beg to differ. Most of the 240 intervening parties- along with thousands who have written public comment PATH protest letters- are very concerned about the source of the

electricity that would feed the PATH, and about how PATH would affect WV electricity rates.

The basic need for PATH is at the heart of the litigation at the PSC. The PATH companies contend that PATH is needed to address "reliability" issues on the interstate power grid- especially in regions east and north of the Allegheny Mountains of WV. Opponents contend that West Virginia already exports 70 percent of the electricity it generates, and that the state and its residents should not be bearing even more of the economic and other human and environmental burdens to supply electricity to feed the insatiable energy appetites of east coast areas.

Interveners plead that the 200 feet tall and 200 feet wide PATH line would decrease the quality of life and decrease the economic value of properties- especially residential properties- in the vicinity of PATH. And these interveners are especially concerned about the health effects of electro-magnetic energy expelled from the PATH line onto the surrounding environment.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy (WVHC) and the WV Chapter Sierra Club are both interveners against PATH. They contend that PATH would not only disrupt the lives of people and other living creatures and natural amenities along the PATH

route, but that the mining, especially strip mining, and burning of coal to generate the power to feed PATH would increase the already overwhelming deleterious environmental effects of coal and other fossil fuel generated energy.

WVHC argues that PATH would have the effect of quashing incentives for developing more local and renewable sources of power, discourage better efficiency standards and demand side management techniques, and would thwart efforts to wean ourselves away from the use of fossil fuels.

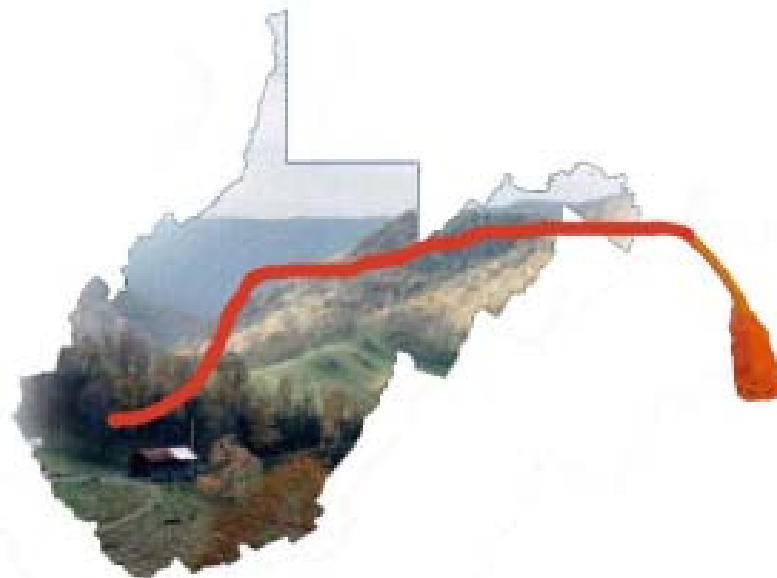
Have you made your voice heard about PATH? There is still time and opportunity to do just that. Public hearings are still going on- and including at Davis (Tucker County) on October 13th, and at Buckhannon (Upshur County) on October 22nd.

Public comment letters will be accepted until the PATH case is decided by the PSC in mid June, 2010.

Comments can be addressed to: Executive Secretary Sandra Squire, WV Public Service Commission, 201 Brooks Street, Charleston WV 25301

Refer to PATH case number 09-0770-E-CN.

There is one area of significant information that the PATH companies steadfastly refuse to answer about- and resist letting others even inquire about. That is the matter of generation sources for the electricity the PATH line would carry.



PATH to Destruction!!!

DUNKARD DIES

By Cindy Rank

This will be old news to those of you who read the Charleston [WV] Gazette or listen to WV Public Radio, but several miles of a healthy stream called Dunkard Creek died this past month.

The cause is unknown ... or as yet clearly identified, but it was not a natural death and there is a debate raging as to who and how the death occurred.

Still a mystery to me is the presence of excessive amounts of chloride in discharges from a flooded deep mine pool.

More normal in this area are tons of iron or sulfate or other acid mine associated water problems that are the key components of the vast underground pools of water that lurk beneath the surface of the ground throughout northern West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania. But chloride emanating from the pools of water in the deep mines in and around the Dunkard Creek watershed have exceeded state water quality standards for nearly ten years.

The WV Department of Environmental Protection has been granting delays and extended deadlines in a series of compliance orders to CONSOL and others to meet standards at their discharges since at least 2002.

But the stream maintained its rich abundance of aquatic life – fish, salamanders, mussels, and all sorts of other living breathing crit-

ters.

_____ Until mid September 2009 when everything changed.

The sights and smells of dead and decaying fish assaulted earthbound neighbors along Dunkard Creek. People who for decades have prided themselves in their love and caring for the creek, one day began to see a phenomenon of death that they were powerless to control.

In came Frank Jernejcic WV Division of Natural Resources (WV DNR) and long time lover of all things fishy in northern WV to assess the dead and dying population of these waters that he too loves. Others followed and the debate began.

Was it CONSOL's briny water? Could it be an unpermitted discharge of brine water from that new and nasty Marcellus gas well fracturing? And what about that gold-brown algae that is normally associated with more brackish waters elsewhere? Where did that come from? And what role has it played in this tragedy of Dunkard Creek? Did some unwashed gas drilling equipment bring it with the rigs from Texas?

Everyone is pointing fingers at everyone else, but what we know is far less decisive.

Is it that the gold-brown algae – however introduced – thrived so much that it released enough toxins to suffocate all life in the stream?

Or did some extra influx of chloride cause the stream life to die leaving no critters to munch away at the algae and keep it in check?

From what I can tell all we now know is that this stretch of once thriving stream - shared by West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania - is dead.

And there is no relief in sight... no definitive cause ... not anyone to accept the responsibility for cleaning up whatever can be cleaned up.

The response by West Virginia officials so far has disappointed concerned citizens and residents of the area. They have asked the federal Environmental Protection Agency to step in. According to a news release:

"The Friends of Dunkard Creek of Pennsylvania, Dunkard Creek Watershed Association of West Virginia, Wheeling Creek Watershed Conservancy and the Greene County Watershed Alliance urge the US Environmental Protection Administration to take the lead role in the investigation of the biological disaster that killed over 130 species of aquatic life in Dunkard Creek."

For more see Dunkard Creek website and Ken Ward's continuing covering in his Coaltattoo blog: <http://blogs.wvgazette.com/coaltattoo/2009/10/01/friends-of-dunkard-creek-see-epa-takeover-on-fish-kill/#more-1257>

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 real, honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution mail to WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Speakers Available !!!!!

Does your school, church or civic group need a speaker or program presentation on a variety of environmental issues?

Contact Julian Martin at 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314, or Martinjul@aol.com, or 304-342-8989.

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.

How Many Times ???

....The Continuing Saga of Mountaintop Removal

By Cindy Rank

From the small Bird Watchers Digest to the expansive new coffee table book *Plundering Appalachia*, news and commentary about the impacts of mountaintop removal continues. There appears to be no end to the ever-expanding list of documentaries, books, TV news shows, front page and cover stories on national magazines and newspapers.

And yet, Peter, Paul and Mary keep singing in my head.... "How many times must our mountains explode before they're allowed to be whole?..... The answer my friend is blowing in the wind..." and blowing.... and blowing... and blowing...

Fortunately, and every now and then those answers blow closer to home — There is movement afoot in each of the federal agencies involved in some aspect of regulating the huge strip mines with valley-fills. The biggest (and best) news to date revolves around the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent actions with regard to dozens of 404 fill permits pending before the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

FIRST — Exercising its authority to review Corps actions to ensure consistency with the requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA), EPA initially announced its concern about 79 pending permits on September 11, 2009. Following a 14-day period of public review, EPA wrote to the Corps on September 30th indicating that all 79 applications "raise potentially significant water quality and environmental issues" and all have been elevated for further review.

I realize all this may sound like old news and overly repetitive of things we've heard for the last ten years, but EPA's letter goes on to state that the agency identified environmental concerns in four key areas:

- the potential for reduction in impacts to aquatic resources through additional avoidance and minimization;
- the potential for excursions from applicable state or Federal water quality standards;
- the potential for significant cumulative effects from historic, current, and proposed surface mines,
- the adequacy of compensatory mitigation to offset lost aquatic functions.

In other words — my words, that is, not EPA's — the fills are too many and too big, the operations are likely to produce bad water, and will add to the already overwhelming cumulative negative impacts on the region.... Oh, and lest I forget, so far industry has been unable to re-

ally recreate headwater streams like the ones they've filled.

Currently listed for review are 23 of our favorites in WV, 6 in Ohio, 1 in Tennessee, surprisingly none in Virginia and a whopping 49 in Kentucky. The two agencies are to work together in line with what are called the Enhanced Coordination Procedures (ECR) starting with the Corps is taking a closer look at these permits in the next 60 days.

There are many more details about the ECR and much more about these developments in general on what I like to refer to as EPA's O WOW! webpage:

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/guidance/mining.html>. — Check it out.

SECOND — In the September 25, 2009 Federal Register EPA announced the formation of a new ad hoc panel of experts under the auspices of EPA's Science Advisory Board and requested nominations of experts to provide advice on ecological impacts associated with mountaintop mining and valley-fill operations".

In response to recent published scientific information that reveals mountaintop mining and valley-fill operations in Southern Appalachia may be linked to degraded water quality and adverse impacts on in-stream biota, EPA Region 3 Philadelphia requested EPA's national Office of Research and Development (ORD) to prepare a scientific assessment of the ecological impacts related to these operations.

"The scope of this assessment includes: loss of headwater streams, downstream water quality and subsequent effects on in-stream biota, and cumulative ecological impacts. In addition, the draft assessment will evaluate restoration and recovery methods used by mining companies to address these ecological impacts associated with mountaintop mining and valley-fill operations. Cultural, aesthetic and human health impacts that may be associated with this mining technique are not part of the scope of this current assessment."

Also on the O WOW! webpage is a link to further information about nominating "individuals with nationally recognized expertise, experience, knowledge, and field experience" in a variety of disciplinary areas associated with mountaintop mining and valley-fill operations. If you have someone to recommend follow the directions on O WOW!

As I understand it, the experts we have called upon for testimony in court may not be

included on the panel due to previous work on our behalf. If that is the case, no doubt their outstanding peer-reviewed published works will surely be included in the scientific studies the ad hoc panel will review.

THIRD — The Spruce mine — famously the focus of our 1998 Bragg v Robertson litigation and arguably the largest single strip mine permit (originally 3,000 acres then over the years reduced by a couple hundred acres) to have been granted in West Virginia — is not among the 79 mentioned above.

Spruce #1, sometimes better known as Jim and Sibbey's or the Pigeonroost mine, has all its required permits, including the 404 fill permit from the Corps. In 2007 when the fill permit was issued we (WV Highlands Conservancy, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and Coal River Mountain Watch) challenged the permit and in a series of back-and-forths the coal company agreed to limit its mining to a small section on the Spruce Fork side of the permit away from Pigeonroost hollow.

On September 3 of this year EPA wrote to the Corps requesting that the agency "use its discretionary authority under 33 C.F.R. 325.7 to suspend, revoke or modify the Spruce No. 1 permit." EPA's request was based upon the agency's belief "that reevaluation of the circumstances and conditions of the permit is in the public interest."

The following day the Corps asked the court to grant them a 30 days stay. Over the objections of Mingo Logan Coal Company Judge Chambers issued an order on September 15th noting the company's ongoing ability to mine outside of Pigeonroost hollow and affirming the authority of the Corps to review the permit, granted a 30 day stay of all proceedings in regard to Spruce #1.

Stay tuned... more, much more to follow.

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 I 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 I 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 Jaames 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 total by mail; **long sleeve** is \$15. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax. Send sizes wanted and check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy ATTEN: James Solley, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

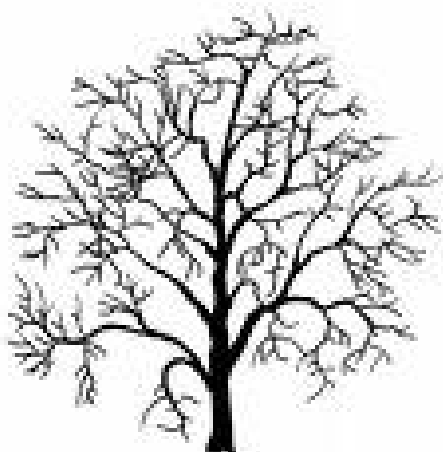


BUMPER STICKERS

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 bth) you want.



How did you Celebrate National Public Lands Appreciation Day?**RAINY DAYS AND RED SPRUCE PLANTING**

Saturday September 26, Canaan Valley, West Virginia

By Dave Saville

The Highlands Conservancy has been sponsoring spruce and fir restoration events of several varieties for many years now. We've collected balsam fir cones during the August season 3 times now for the every-5-year cone crops. We've built 8 foot tall fences to create deer enclosure areas to protect stands of balsam fir. We annually collect red spruce cones in October and November. And two times each year, we plant the trees grown from the seeds we collect.

Our spring planting event happens in the middle of April each year. That event is anchored by West Virginia University student organizations. The Student Sierra Coalition, Parks & Rec Club, Wildlife & Fisheries club, Plant & Soil Science Club and the Student Chapter of the Society of American Foresters have all contributed to that 2-day volunteer effort for 6 years now.

Of course we always have additional help, often from students from Davis & Elkins College, Garrett County Community College, Boy



WVU students getting their feet wet planting spruce.

Scout troops from various places around the state, and of course, from Highlands Conservancy members.

During the fall, in late September it's the Adventure WV Program at WVU that provides the bulk of our volunteers. This is the innovative Freshman Orientation program that introduces incoming freshmen students to the wild and wonderful West Virginia that we all know and love...and work to protect. They go climbing, backpacking, whitewater paddling and more, all over the Highlands.

This program has been so successful that Colleges and Universities from around the country are learning about and trying to emulate it. It has become so popular with the students that they have increased the program's capacity this year from 400 to the first 700 students to sign-up.

As part of the requirements for the 3 credit hours students receive for completing the program, they must participate in service outings during their first semester at WVU. There is a list of service projects

built into the syllabus that the students must select from. The most popular project each year has been the Red Spruce restoration project in Canaan Valley sponsored by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. This year 60 students came to the Valley in a huge University bus.

This fall's red spruce project was different than in previous years though. In the past, we have always worked with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to restore the ecosystem on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The Forest Service joined in the effort this year, and we had a joint restoration project on the Monongahela National Forest and on the Wildlife Refuge. Two federal land managing agencies, who manage adjoining lands, working together with citizen groups and students from the state's flagship university to achieve a common goal.



Boy Scout Troop #64 came all the way from Charleston to plant spruce trees.

But there was more to it than that. Russ McClain brought 20 of his biology students from Davis & Elkins College, and we had a dozen students from West Virginia Wesleyan College too. Boy Scout Troop #64 from Charleston, led by Matt Blackwood, and a gang of Highlands Conservancy members joined several staff members from both agencies as well as some of The Nature Conservancy staff to make close to 120 volunteers planting trees on that rainy Saturday.

The weather could have been worse. I've always heard that it can snow during any month of the year in Canaan Valley. So I guess we were lucky for the relatively balmy 50 degree temperatures we enjoyed, although I'm not sure we can say the same about the steady rain. We set up 5 large canopies and had hot chocolate ready for the masses as they came out of the woods for lunch.

Everyone had their fill of Pizza from Sirianni's Restaurant in Davis, and special salads and brownies for desert from White Grass Cafe in Canaan Valley. Many hands make light work, or so the saying goes. We were able to get all 4,000 trees planted before the 1:30pm lunchtime, so our wet volunteers didn't have to go back up the mountain after lunch to plant any more trees. Maybe some day they will realize that it really was fun. At least they all got a nice Public Lands Day t-shirt compliments of our friends at the Forest Service.

This year our restoration efforts have focused on connecting the spruce/fir forests of Canaan Valley with the higher elevation spruce forests on the surrounding mountains. Our spring event used Freeland

(More on p. 8)

MORE SPRUCE PLANTING (Continued from p. 8)

Run, on the east side of the V alley, as a riparian corridor where we planted spruce and fir trees to connect with the vast spruce forests of Cabin Mountain and Dolly Sods. Our fall event used Flat Run, on the west side of the Valley, to connect the Valley's spruce forests to those on Canaan Mountain.

Spruce forests in West Virginia have not only been reduced by over 90% from their original coverage in the

Matt Blackwood, Boy Scout Troop #64 leader, help serve the Siriannis Pizzas.



Highlands, the remaining spruce has been fragmented into hundreds of small patches. Our restoration goals have been to expand and connect these disconnected areas of spruce. Using GIS imagery, we have been able to develop landscape scale restoration plans by identifying patches of spruce forest, and finding realistic, achievable target areas to create more connectivity. Many species that rely on this ecosystem to survive, like salamanders, cannot move long distances to interbreed between patches of spruce. The long-term survival of these species may depend on expanding the habitable range to allow for viable populations.

Special thanks to Marquette Crocket and KerSturm, Wildlife Biologists at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge; Russ McClain, Biology professor at D&E College; Kate Goodrich-Arling, JackTribble and Kent Karriker from the Monongahela National Forest; Evan Burks, Vista Volunteer with The Nature Conservancy; Maddy Hoden and Greg Corio with the Adventure WV program; Matt Blackwood from Scout Troop #64 and to Nathan Beane, WVU Forestry PhD candidate, for their leadership; to Walt Ranalli at Siriannis and Laurie Little at White Grass Café for the eats; and to all the volunteers who have made this annual event the success it has become. Let's do it again next year!

HUGH KEEPS ROLLING ALONG (Continued from p. 2)

survival rates, breeding ages, and migration routes, timing, duration, and rest areas.

The few volunteers working on September 1st were affiliated with the Brooks Bird Club, the organization Cindy Ellis now represents on the Highlands Conservancy board. So we had friends in common. Tom Fox, a retired conservation officer with the Division of Natural Resources, told me it wasn't the best time to see birds. The wind had turned around and was blowing steadily out of the east; it was supposed to continue that way for three days. Bad for migration, good for the view. We saw small flocks get up into the breeze, swirl around, and settle back down in the trees. A couple of slate-colored juncos were re-caught and released. They were said to hang around all winter, dropping down into the valley and changing their diet.

Later, Cindy would urge me to return at the peak of migration, when the birds would be "hitting the nets like popcorn" and the banders would struggle to keep up.

But I had a piece of good luck: a young woman came in from one of the nets with two birds in brown paper bags (every bird gets a bag, and they are not re-used). They were black-throated blue warblers—a precise description of the male. The female was bright green and yellow. The woman at the table in the hut carefully drew the male out of the bag. It peeked between her fingers: no struggle, no rapid eye-blinks, just a flare of its feathers as she turned it to check its body fat and estimate its age. One method of age determination involved dabbing the back of the head with water and patting the feathers apart to see the skull formation. As it grew older it developed a second layer of bone. There were tiny tools for the tiny bodies: calipers to pinch the leg-bands, a scope to read the numbers, a straw to blow a little part in the belly feathers to see the skin.

To me, these warblers had generally been silhouettes in the forest, hopping from branch to branch and then gone. Once, during last year's migration, they had been a statistic: 72 black-throated blues were among the 500 birds killed on a foggy September night at a lit-up school building on Backbone Mountain. But these two were vivid, perfect. I could study the female's light eyebrow, the small white patches on their wings, the dark shading on the blue back of the male. It was a gift to meet them at last.



Straws in the wind, mercury in the water**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PREPARES FOR REVIEW OF WATER QUALITY STANDARDS**

By John McFerrin

Every three years West Virginia has to do what is called a "triennial review" of its water quality standards. The water quality standards reflect the amount of pollution that is allowed to be in West Virginia's streams.

The next review is not until 2011 but the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is already getting ready. While it has not announced what changes it will propose, there are indications of its intentions in announcements it has made concerning mercury.

Right now the standard for mercury in West Virginia is weaker than the standard that the United States Environmental Protection Agency recommends. In June, the Department of Environmental Protection made a presentation on mercury to the West Virginia Environmental Quality Board. The study presented the Department of Environmental Protection's view that West Virginians were less at risk for poisoning from mercury because they ate less fish than did people in other states. If they ate less fish, then they would consume less of the mercury contained in the fish.

It is well known that mercury in the water accumulates in fish. Humans are at risk of mercury poisoning if they eat the fish. This is why West Virginia has a warning against eating fish from West Virginia streams.

The DEP bases its conclusion that West Virginians eat less fish on a study it commissioned. In 2008, it hired a consultant to do a study of fish consumption in West Virginia. The consultant surveyed 1687 West Virginians and found out how much fish we eat, how often we go fishing, whether we eat the fish we catch, etc.

From this survey, the Department of Education determined that fish consumption by West Virginians "may be less than the rates computed by EPA for the general U.S. population." (Presentation to Water Quality Board). From this, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection concluded that it would not be necessary to have a mercury water quality standard that is as strict as the EPA standard. In the DEP's view, we don't need to strictly regulate mercury in the water because we are not eating the fish anyway.

There is good reason the DEP used the wishy washy "may" in announcing its conclusion. The study itself does not say anything about how much fish people in other states eat.

It only says what West Virginians eat.

In its presentation about the study, DEP refers to EPA's assumption about how much fish the average American eats. From the study and the presentation, if West Virginians consume any less fish at all it is a trivial amount. According to the study, West Virginia's children eat one twentieth of an ounce per day less freshwater fish than the EPA's estimate of national fish consumption. West Virginia adults eat about one eighth of an ounce per day less freshwater fish than the EPA estimate.

It is not clear from the material that DEP has made publicly available whether EPA's estimate refers to total fish consumption or freshwater fish consumption. If it is total fish consumption, then West Virginians eat almost as much freshwater fish as other people eat in both freshwater and saltwater fish. Since West Virginians also eat saltwater fish, this would mean that West Virginians eat more fish than people in other places.

Even if the study solidly supported the conclusion that West Virginians eat less fish than other people, it still would not support the conclusion that it is OK to have more mercury in our waters. The freshwater fish that West Virginians eat comes from those waters. The DEP has presented no data on where fish that other people eat comes from. The study says, however, that what West Virginians eat, they catch.

One species in the survey (tilapia) is farm raised. It cannot be caught in any West Virginia stream. All of the tilapia we eat comes from a store or restaurant.

In all the other species surveyed, the overwhelming majority (about 80%) of freshwater fish that West Virginians ate came from fish they caught. West Virginians don't buy freshwater fish. West Virginians catch freshwater fish.

This makes comparisons to other states' fish consumption an even less reliable basis for making public policy on mercury pollution. We don't know where the fish that people in other states eat comes from. They may be farm raised in mercury free environments. We know that the fish we eat comes from our own streams.

Then there is the effect of West Virginia's fish advisory. All streams in West Virginia are under a fish advisory from the De-

partment of Environmental Protection based upon mercury pollution. Residents are advised to limit their consumption of fish from West Virginia streams because of the danger of mercury pollution.

Even if it is true that West Virginians eat less fish than people in other states (an iffy proposition), this may be because they are following the advice of the fish advisory. They are scared to eat the fish. If this is what is happening, it is a weak basis for making public policy. It amounts to allowing excessive mercury pollution and then using the results of allowing excessive mercury pollution to justify continuing to allow pollution.

Yet it appears that the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection intends to do just that.

Because it is a naturally occurring element, mercury has always existed in West Virginia's waterways. It has increased with the burning of fossil fuels. In West Virginia, three fourths of the mercury air emissions come from coal fired power plants. — it's a naturally occurring element. But since humans began burning fossil fuels for energy, the amount of mercury in the air and water has increased.

High levels of mercury can harm fetuses and small children whose brains are still developing. In adults, too much mercury can cause headaches and memory loss. Many of these symptoms are reversible, but children and pregnant women are the most vulnerable. Damage can be permanent for those who have particularly heavy or prolonged exposure.

So that is where we are. West Virginia currently allows more mercury in our waters than EPA recommends. Instead of doing something about it, the Department of Environmental Protection is seeking justification for maintaining the status quo. The triennial review would be a time to fix this problem. Instead, early indications are that it is going to bypass the opportunity.

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unteer leaders.

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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.

Or write: WVHC, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Proceeds support the Conservancy's ongoing environmental projects.

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Although *Fighting to Protect the Highlands, the First 40 Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* normally sells for \$24.95, we are offering it as a premium to our members. Anyone who adds \$10 to the membership dues listed on the How to Join membership form (right up there ) will receive the history book for free. Just note on the membership form that you wish to take advantage of this offer.

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(c) Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

CAMPING AT TEA CREEK AND DAY HIKING THE CRANBERRY BACKCOUNTRY

By Mike Juskelis

On August 25 through 28, Janet, the dogs and I arrived at Tea Creek Primitive Campground around 3:00 on Saturday. We had been hoping to get our favorite spot along the creek but all the creek-side sites were taken. At the end of the spur was a hidden gem, a very large site with a huge tent pad right across the road from the creek and, better yet, no neighbors. All that separated us from the stream was a thin swath of huge Rhododendron bushes. It was so big I thought I would need my GPS unit to find my way around.

We quickly got our gear setup and began to enjoy some of the best summer weather in West Virginia. It never got over 75 during the day and was in the 50s at night ... perfect camping weather. Most of the days were either sunny or partly cloudy with one brief 15 minute shower that occurred on the way back from our last hike.

The hiking plan for this trip was to do two large loops which could later be spliced together for a nice three day backpack next year. The first hike was a relatively easy 13.5 mile circuit starting behind the Cranberry Mountain Visitor Center. The first half of this hike was not big on views or water falls but was A+ for solitude.

We hiked up to Blue knob using the Pocahontas and Blue Knob Trails. The forest was stunning in its green canopy and mossy understory. We found two interesting plant species on the way up. First we found an orange vine with clusters of small white blossoms called Dodder. After the vine attaches itself to a victim with suckers its roots die. From that point on it subsists solely on the nutrients in the host plant, in this case a Stinging Nettle.

Near the top we found another interesting plant that resembled a yellowish brown set of deer antlers with simple, dull yellow flowers. Our post-hike research found it to be the chlorophyll-less Beech Drops and is found only growing under Beech trees. As we approached the top we walked through one of the largest stands of Tall Bell Flowers I have ever seen. I'm used to seeing one, two, a dozen plants but in this case there were hundreds.

I'm glad we found all of the neat wildflowers because there was nothing worth seeing at the top of Blue Knob except a nice log to take a break on. We descended using the Kennison Mountain Trail which at this point was an old haul road surrounded by White Snake Root in bloom along with a plant with huge spade shaped leaves

and tiny yellow flowers that smelled like lemons called Horse Balm. I can still smell it (or that might just be my lemonade.).

We crossed Route 39. From previous trips here I thought there would be a slight climb to the next trail junction but the way to South Fork Trail was nearly flat. We turned onto it and switched back down some old railroad grades. All of the streams were crossed via bridges. The last one was nearly broken in half making the crossing a bit tentative.

Once across FR 102 the surroundings totally changed. We circumnavigated Cranberry Glades on the Cowpasture Trail. I used to wonder how a 6 mile, nearly perfectly flat trail could hold any attractions to a real hiker. After hiking it I now consider it to be "THE" most scenic flatland trail in the Mon.

The hiker starts hiking through a stand of huge spruce trees, crosses the South Fork of the Cranberry River and its bog for the first time and then through another dense plot of spruce. This north side of the trail is mostly on an old haul road except for where the trail was shortened many years ago to cross the headwaters of the South Fork and is easy to walk. Shortly after the last spruce grove a side trail leads you out to a deck that stands about 15 feet tall and offers panoramic views of the bog surrounded by Kennison and Fork Mountains as well as other ridges. From that point on, every time the trail approaches the edge of the bog the views open up before you.

After crossing the South Fork for the second time the trail joins an old railroad grade that passes even more views as you go in and out of Rhododendron tunnels, forest and Golden Rod Meadows. Towards the end of the trail it takes leave of the South Fork and follows the drainage of Charles Creek for a short distance before depositing you onto the Scenic Highway in sight of the Nature Center. On either side of this trail junction there is a veritable field of Black-eyed and Brown-eyed Susans, Oxeye Daisies, Queen Anne's Lace, Yarrow and many other wildflowers. So far this adventure is paying off.

I approached our second hike with some apprehension. I did not load up the GPS info I had for the Frosty Gap trail and was not sure if I would be able to find where the trail joined and then left a hunting road. This worry ended up not being an issue since every thing was well signed, let alone the fact that the trail joined the road at its begin-

ning ... and left it at its end. This one was about 15.5 miles in length and had substantially more elevation gain.

Precious and I started the hike on the Kennison Mountain Trail at the Route 39 crossing we used the day before. This time we climbed all the way up to the Frosty Gap Trail. It still didn't seem as hard as the last time I was here. Maybe the absence of a forty pound pack made it seem easier?

The next mile or so was probably some of the best "view-less" mountain hiking I've ever done. Although the majority of the forest was deciduous the understory consisted of young Red Spruce reaching up to the skies, ferns and moss covered boulders. This true wilderness feeling didn't last long as we soon found ourselves deposited on that hunter's road I was so concerned about not finding.

At first the hike along this stretch was pretty boring but after a while it became more encapsulated by mature forest and took on a more woody (but still tame) appearance. The trail was nearly flat and the tread smooth so Precious made sure I kept up a good pace along that stretch. Then the wildflower thing started again with St. Johnswort, more Queen Anne's Lace and Oxeye Daisies, Intermediate Dogbane, large plants related to sunflowers called Wingstem, all kinds of Asters and Hawkweed ... and on and on. Then five miles from its beginning the road ended. Not an issue! Saigt ahead, marking the resumption of the wonderful footpath we had started on, was a Frost Gap Trail sign. It really did end the way it started with all of the spruce trees, mossy rocks and ferns.

Then we turned south-east onto the Pocahontas Trail for some more of the same. We passed a small campsite we had stayed at 2 summers ago and crossed a couple of nice streams on bridges. After a brief climb up some pretty wet trail we found ourselves walking through an impressive rock garden with huge boulders strewn all over the place like a bigger power had been playing marbles and had forgotten to pick them up. We crossed over Route 39 and then an area called the Levels which contains the headwaters and bogs of Hills Creek.

From there it was a long, gradual climb to the top of Fork Mountain. Once on top the trail joined a perfectly flat and grassy jeep road which, in turn, led us back to the Kennison Mountain Trail. After a breath climb it was all downhill on the familiar trail back to the truck.



**Cranberry
backcountry**
Photo by Mike
Juskelis

A HISTORY IN CAVING

By Bob Handley

The last sentence of the article on exploring Hedricks Cave at Organ Cave, West Virginia (Page 9, September, 2009, issue of *The Highlands Voice*) was easily the understatement of that year – “we had to leave several passages unexplored because of fatigue and the lateness of the hour”. I had made a mental note of four passages on the right side of the main passage and five or six on the left side. There were also two streams coming into the main stream on each side.

We knew we had a big cave with lots of opportunity for being the first persons to set foot on truly untrampled earth. No matter how carefully a person is in passing through a cave scuff marks and foot prints are left to indicate mans previous presence. To cavers, this is called “virgin cave” and most average cavers (or anybody else for that matter) only dream about being the first human to touch “virgin ground”.

Flack was also kidded about his statement “a rocky passage 40 ft. wide and 20 feet high which provided eight hours of strenuous crawling”. Scrambling may have been a better word than crawling because we did very little actual crawling that day. We did a lot of scrambling over areas of jagged boulders (cavers call this “breakdown”) much the same as hiking down the Black Water River stream bed below Black Water Falls. Except boulders in a river bed tend to be much more



One of Bob Handley's companions on his trip through Organ Cave.

rounded being subject to all the elements – especially freezing and thawing. WV cave temperature is close to 51 degrees year round – 24/7.

During the winter of 1949 Flack and I (with occasionally a few other Charleston Grotto members) explored the northern part of the cave near the Hedrick's Entrance. A short distance down stream from our break through a stream came in from the right (west side) in an area where the passage was larger with a flat gravel floor. “The Y” it was called because of the neatY inscribed in the gravel floor There were a few pretty cave formations (with areas of glistening white calcite) in the beginning of this west side passage.

There was a neat terrace of rimstone pools and further north a floor to ceiling tubular column about 14 inches in diameter at its base in the 12 foot high passage. Further north in this passage there were small side passages and another entrance. We had to crawl over wet gravels to get out but then didn't know exactly where we were on the surface. So, the new entrance was first called the North Entrance (the second of what eventually grew to 10).

By now we knew we had the longest known cave in West Virginia. Previously WV's longest cave was The Mill Pond Cave at Greenville in Monroe County – at a title over two miles of passages.

We scheduled a Grotto trip into Hedrick's for April of '49 which

really didn't work out well. We got maybe a third of a mile down the Hedrick's stream (on below the “Y”). Some of the dozen members had trouble with the long stretches of breakdown so we called the trip – some weren't ready to leave but we didn't want anyone to get hurt.

At the Grotto meeting the last week of May three of us (Flack and I and Bob Barnes – a mentor of mine from my short VPI caving days) planned to attempt an Organ Cave connection.

When Flack and I arrived at our Hedrick's camp site, about 7 PM on Friday night, we learned that four of the Grotto members had gone into Hedrick's about noon intending to make the Organ Cave connection. There was concern that the over due party had run into some sort of trouble. The group decided though to wait until midnight to start a search. The overdue party came out of Hedrick's at 11 PM – worn out but not injured. They had made no connection with the commercial Organ Cave after 11 hours in the cave.

The rest of the story appeared in a story by Bob Flack in the July, 1949, issue of National Speleological Society News

On May 23, three Charleston cavers, Bob Flack, Bob Barnes and Bob Handley, accomplished a long-hoped-for feat and virtually the “dream of every caver” when they emerged from the commercial Organ Cave entrance (at Organ Cave, W. Va.) amidst electric lights, tourists, and consternation after a three and one half hour underground

The view leaving the commercial entrance to Organ Cave.



journey from Hedricks Cave entrance. The two entrances are a mile apart as the crow flies, but as the caver travels the distance is nearly three miles.

This is the end of my Organ Cave story for this issue but I recently found a reference to my climbing ability in a new publication of the West Virginia Speleological Survey Monograph #3 “The Cassell Cave Survey Project” by Bob Zimmerman. I entered Grimes Cave in July of 1950 and found several small jaw bones in a shallow pot hole in the floor of the passage at a sharp bend. The bones were identified by a paleontologist (Dr. Claude Hibbard) at the University of Michigan. One jaw bone was that of a porcupine, the first hard evidence of a porcupine for West Virginia.

I remember very little else of that cave but I was by my self in that part of the cave. I vividly remember the small pot hole and the bones but have no recollection of the waterfall or the climb. I was there in July and there was no water in the stream, so no waterfall. That would probably have made a difference. Being alone, I got no boost.

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

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.

November 29, Evergreen Wreath Making Workshop - Join us for an afternoon of fun learning how to make your own holiday wreath. Bring a hand pruner and any decorations or adornments you'd like to add to your wreath. We'll have all the materials you'll need including a variety of firs to construct your very own piece of artwork. We'll get started at 1pm and be around all afternoon. Contact Dave Saville daves@labyrinth.net or 304-692-8118

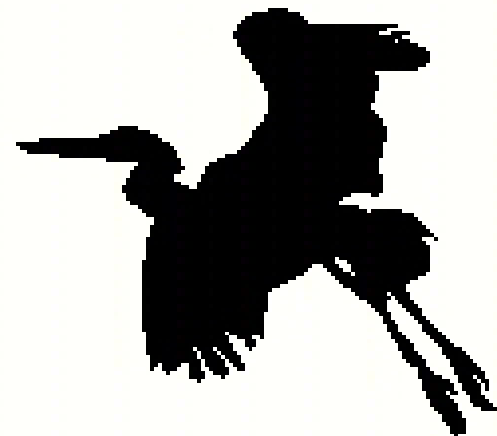
Open Dates: Visit Kayford Mountain south of Charleston to see mountain top removal (MTR) up close and hear Larry Gibson's story about how he saved his mountain, now almost totally surrounded by MTR. Bring lunch for a picnic on Larry's mountain. Call in advance to schedule. Julian Martin (304) 342-8989;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

WANT TO COUNT SOME BIRDS?

What happens in the backyard should not stay in the backyard—at least when it comes to bird feeders. By sharing information about which birds visit their feeders between November and April, backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes in bird numbers and movements from year to year, through Project FeederWatch, a citizen-science program from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

Project FeederWatch begins on November 14 and runs through early April. Taking part is easy. Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website. Participants submitted nearly 117,000 checklists last season. Since 1987, more than 40,000 people from the United States and Canada have taken part in the project.

Project FeederWatch is for people of all ages and skill levels. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 982-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.



WHAT IS THE LAND COST OF ENERGY PRODUCTION?

The assumption [that renewable energy is a free lunch a benign, “sustainable” way of running the country with minimal impact on the environment]. experienced a rude awakening on Aug. 26, when The Nature Conservancy published a paper titled “Energy Sprawl or Energy Efficiency: Climate Policy Impacts on Natural Habitat for the United States of America.” The report by this venerable environmental organization posed a simple question: How much land is required for the different energy sources that power the country? The answers deserve far greater public attention.

By far nuclear energy is the least land-intensive; it requires only one square mile to produce one million megawatt-hours per year enough electricity for about 90,000 homes. Geothermal energy, which taps the natural heat of the earth, requires three square miles. The most landscape-consuming are biofuels ethanol and biodiesel which require up to 500 square miles to produce the same amount of energy

Coal, on the other hand, requires four square miles, mainly for mining and extraction. Solar thermal heating a fluid with large arrays of mirrors and using it to power a turbine takes six. Natural gas needs eight and petroleum needs 18. Wind farms require over 30 square miles.

This “sprawl” has been missing from our energy discussions. In my home state of Tennessee, we just celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Yet there are serious proposals by energy developers to cover mountains all along the Appalachian chain, from Maine to Georgia, with 50-story wind turbines because the wind blows strongest across mountaintops.

Let’s put this into perspective: We could line 300 miles of mountaintops from Chattanooga, Tenn., to Bristol, Va., with wind tur-

bines and still produce only one-quarter the electricity we get from one reactor on one square mile at the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Watts Bar Nuclear Plant.

The 1,000 square-mile solar project proposed by Mr. Salazar would generate, on a continuous basis, 35,000 megawatts of electricity. You could get the same output from 30 new nuclear reactors that would fit comfortably onto existing nuclear sites. And this doesn’t count the thousands of miles of transmission lines that will be needed to carry the newly generated solar power to population centers.

There’s one more consideration. Solar collectors must be washed down once a month or they collect too much dirt to be effective. They also need to be cooled by water. Where amid the desert and scrub land will we find all that water? No wonder the Wildlife Conservancy and other environmentalists are already opposing solar projects on Western lands.

Renewable energy is not a free lunch. It is an unprecedented assault on the American landscape. Before we find ourselves engulfed in energy sprawl, it’s imperative we take a closer look at nuclear power

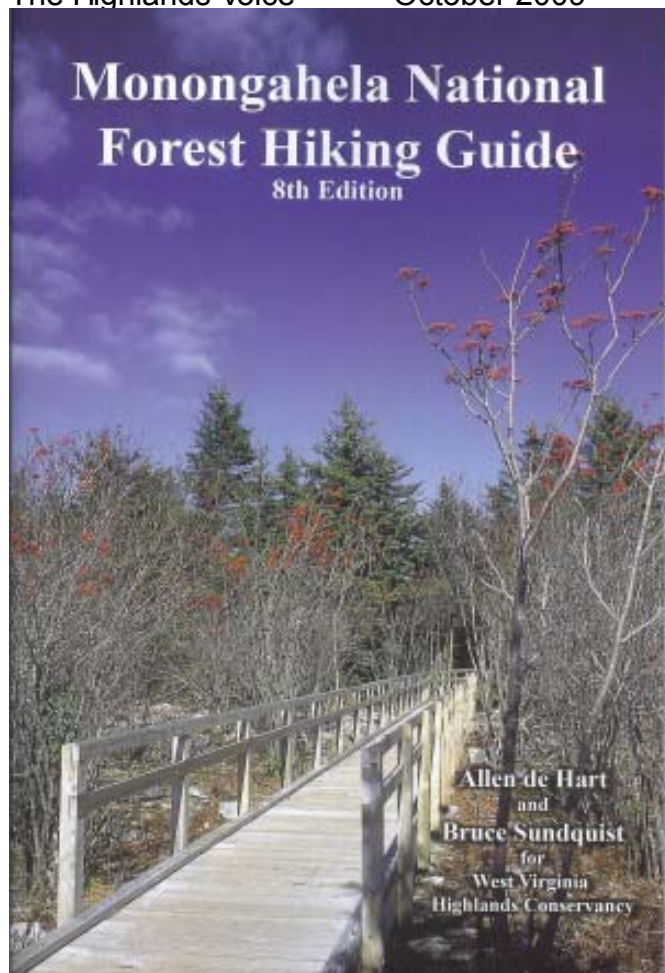
Editor’s note: This is an excerpt from a commentary by Lamar Alexander, Republican Senator from Tennessee. It was originally printed in *The Wall Street Journal* under the title *We’re about to destroy the environment in the name of saving it*. To see the entire study referred to, go to <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0006802>. For a blistering critique of the same study, go to <http://www.ilovemountains.org/news/602>

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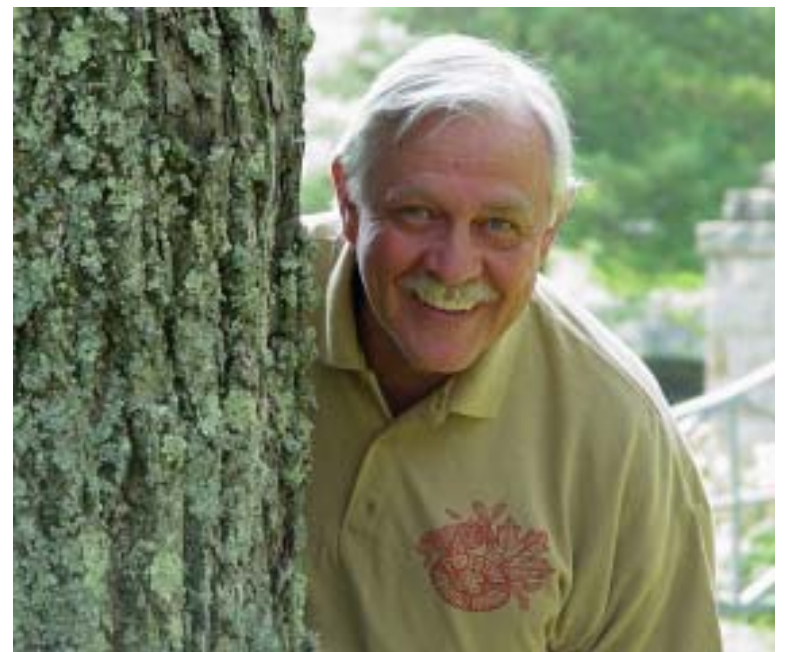
A FRIEND REMEMBERED

Someone Dave Saville always introduced as "West Virginia's Greatest Naturalist," Bill Grafton, forester and botanist extraordinaire, passed away unexpectedly on Friday September 11. He was only 70 years old. He was well known all around the state. He was a kind and gentle soul, soft spoken but an excellent and passionate educator. Bill worked for the WVU Extension Service and was very active with the WV Native Plant Society, including as its long-time newsletter editor. He was instrumental in getting the Master Naturalist program up and running in West Virginia

Bill was an avid environmentalist and was considered an expert on the botany of the Appalachian region. He taught at WVU for 43 years, during which time he impacted the lives of many throughout the state and in the College of Agriculture and Forestry. Bill made major contributions to the state's botanical archives and helped found the WV Master Naturalist program. He was a constant presence at National

4-H Forestry contests, WV Forest Industries Camp and Conservation Camp. He was co-editor of the Checklist and Atlas of the Vascular Flora of West Virginia. He was active in the WV Native Plant Society, Wildlife Society, Forestry Alumni, American Forestry Association and The Nature Conservancy. Bill was inducted into the WV Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame and was an honorary member of WVFFA.

Known for orchid hunting, Bill was happiest surrounded by nature and friends. He is survived by his wife, Emily Williams Grafton, in a marriage of 29 years; a son, Daniel Grafton; his brothers Edwin, James, Allen, Charles, Thomas and Donald; and a sister, Margarete. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Marie and Neola "Bet," and a brother, Michael.



Bill Grafton

Photo courtesy of Nathan Beane