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Poll Says the People Are Agin' It

DO WEST VIRGINIA RESIDENTS OPPOSE MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL MINING ???

By Cindy Rank

It's hard to believe that we should still be asking that question.

After reading the scientific reports and predictions in the Draft Mountaintop Removal/Valley Fill Environmental Impact Assessment (DEIS), after years of reports of devastating floods and disappearing communities and families uprooted from their ancestral homes, after significant legal victories in the courts, after watching hundreds of brave individuals speak and demonstrate against the practice that is destroying their lives and livelihoods, we SHOULD be asking why this extreme form of mining can be allowed to continue.

However, the coal industry continues to fund massive campaigns to tell the world that coal is wonderful and that coal is a basic necessity for life as we know it and that any means of getting that coal out of the ground and into our lightbulbs is good for everyone. Industry's recent "cleaner and greener" and "coal keeps the lights on" campaigns are wont to imply that all West Virginians still worship at the feet of an ever-beneficent King Coal and that we support

whatever it takes to get the coal out.

Of course, industry's assertions don't ring true to anyone who has seen first hand or heard about the impact mountaintop removal mining is having on the people and resources of the areas where the practice is occurring. But the fact remains that industry continues to claim that it's only a few disgruntled miners, a handful of community dissidents and some radical environmentalists that oppose mountaintop removal mining and not a majority of West Virginians.

This ludicrous assumption has once again been proven false by a recent poll about mountaintop removal mining and environmental attitudes commissioned by the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment and conducted by the highly respected national polling firm Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates.

(As most readers know, the Appalachian Center is the law and policy group that has aided the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and other citizen and environmental groups in appeals and litigation against illegal and devastating mine permits.)

The results of the poll fully support the belief that a solid majority of West Virginia residents **DO NOT SUPPORT** mountaintop removal coal mining! And indeed, many of those who oppose the practice are **STRONGLY** opposed to the practice.

The strength and depth of these poll results prompted Daniel Gotoff, Vice President of Lake, Snell, Perry and Associates to say, "**Rarely do we see such unanimity of opposition. Across the state, a solid majority of voters opposes the practice of mountaintop removal, and there is remarkable intensity to that opposition.** Furthermore, candidates for elected office should take heed, as many voters say they will consider a candidate's opposition on this crucial issue when they cast their ballots."

The survey was conducted June 13-15, 2004. Professional interviewers talked by phone with 500 likely voters in West Virginia. Results of the poll reveal solid oppo-

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From the Western Slope of the Mountains
by Frank Young

WV Environmental Council Convention:

The West Virginia Environmental Council (WVEC) is an organization whose members include many environmental organizations, including the Highlands Conservancy, as well as individuals.

The mission of the WVEC is to facilitate communication and cooperation among citizens in promoting environmental protection in West Virginia, to assist in organizing grass roots groups, to facilitate interaction among established environmental organizations, and to correspond with all appropriate local, state, and federal agencies involved in the management of West Virginia's environment.

Elsewhere in this edition of the Highlands Voice is an announcement of WVEC's annual convention and membership meetings, to be held on September 10th, 11th and 12th, near Spruce Knob in Pendleton County, east of Elkins.

The annual WVEC conventions are very important to that organization- and to the WV Highlands Conservancy and other member organizations. Perhaps most importantly, it is at the annual fall WVEC convention that we have the opportunity to help WVEC and its lobbyists incorporate our policy ideas into its legislative lobbying agenda for the following year.

WV Highlands Conservancy funds a large portion of the costs of WVEC's lobbying team for regular and interim sessions of the state legislature. We need to have WVEC's legislative agenda include our policy goals.

Along with some of our Directors and other members, I will attend the WVEC convention on behalf of the WV Highlands Conservancy. I believe that other groups, especially those that fund the WVEC lobbying activities, would do well to have representative(s) to the WVEC convention as well.

WVEC's group and organizational membership is personally and ideologically diverse, and is spread far and wide over the state. Sometimes this makes it difficult to get its Board of Directors together for a full quorum meeting. The result is that WVEC's daily and weekly activities are managed by its President, Treasurer, office manager and its small Executive Committee, sometimes for many months at a time between Directors' meetings.

But once a year it all comes together in a grand annual convention where everyone who attends has a voice in the next year's lobbying and other activities.

Some of us may soon try to devise recommendations that would help WVEC become more accountable to its organizational supporters such as the Conservancy. A similar effort a couple years ago got sidetracked by our respective dilution of energies available. (translation: we just didn't get around to making this a priority).

In the meantime, I'd like to encourage any who can to attend this year's WVEC convention. The WV Environmental Council can only be as strong as environmentally minded West Virginians demand that it be.

And besides, where better than Spruce Mountain could you spend all or part of a fine September weekend?

WVHC Calendar:

Fall Review- October 22nd, 23rd & 24th
(Board & annual membership meetings Sunday, 24th)

roster of Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs

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Another Pig in the Parlor?

By Ruth Blackwell Rogers

Everyone who has approached Elkins from the west is familiar with the "pig in the parlor," the enormous quarry that looms over town. A Justice of the West Virginia Supreme Court gave it that name in a hearing some years ago. Actually, that quarry has grown so large it is now visible from the east, as you top Kelley Mountain on US 33.

Now the same company that continues to expand that quarry wants to open a new one on the eastern approach to Elkins, above the Shavers Fork.

Travelers and townspeople are so far largely unaware of the proposal, but people living below the proposed quarry have been put on alert. These local residents are familiar with the impacts of quarries because yet another quarry operated by the same company, J.F. Allen, lies just over the ridge from the proposed new quarry. Now the company wants to breach that buffer and put the pig in another parlor.

Residents brought their concerns to Shavers Fork Coalition, which has joined in their efforts to deal with the threat.

The DEP has acquiesced in the residents' demand for a hearing, which will be

held at the Randolph County School board office in Elkins on August 26th, 2004, 6pm.



What are the residents' chief concerns? First, their water. On this part of the Shavers Fork wells are famous for their abundant flow and quality. And second, the quality of their neighborhood. After all, some of the chief attractions in the Elkins area are located in this very place: Stuart Recreation Area, Monongahela National Forest, Bickle's

Knob, Revelle's Campground, Cheat River Inn, Cheat River Lodge and cabins, Lower Cheat Land Company cabins, Calains Cove, Cheat River Campground, Jellystone Park, River Car restaurant, Alpine Shores campground and other campgrounds, stables, and scores of private cabins, homes, and fishing camps.

A spokesman for J.F. Allen has told The InterMountain newspaper that there is "no connectivity" between the quarry and the residents' wells. However, since the permit application was not free of error, residents have questioned this claim and are seeking independent advice on the geology and hydrology. They fear there would be all too close a connection between the blasting, noise, truck traffic, and dust of another quarry and their daily lives and livelihoods.

Ms. Rogers is a board member of the Shavers Fork Coalition, an artist, and all around good egg.

Mountaintop Removal Poll (Continued from p. 1)

sition to the practice of mountaintop removal mining and show that opposition to be broad and deep, across all demographics groups and every region of the state:

- **By a nearly 2 to 1 margin, likely voters oppose mountaintop removal mining** (56% opposed, 29% favored and 15% were undecided)
- Among the 56% who opposed the practice **39% strongly opposed** and among the 29% in favor, only 12% strongly favored
- Among men and women, under and over 50 year olds, across all regions of the state, in union and non-union households alike, responses from all groups showed between 53%-65% opposed and 17%-32% in support. **No one group defined by age, gender, location, etc. supported rather than opposed MTR.**

The poll also shows that voters are overwhelmingly concerned about the findings of federal government studies that describe the impacts of mountaintop removal on the state's environment. After the initial questions about MTR summarized above participants in the survey were read several of the findings from the EIS:

- Upon hearing that if new limits are not placed on mountaintop removal, the estimated area that will be stripped by the end of the decade encompasses 1.4 million acres of forests mountains and streams (over 2,200 square miles), 79% are concerned and only 18% are not.

- Upon hearing the finding that more than 1,200 miles of streams in Appalachia have already been buried or destroyed by mountaintop removal coal mining, with another 1,000 miles projected for burial and destruction in the next ten years if limits are not placed on MTR, again 78% expressed concern.

After hearing more about mountaintop removal participants in the survey were told that many people responding to such a survey often change their minds at the end of the survey and were re-asked the question about their opposition or support of the practice. A full 66% expressed opposition to the practice, only 26% still expressed support and 8% remained unsure.

In addition to questions about mountaintop removal, the survey asked West Virginians their opinion of current environmental policies and laws, as well as their thoughts on the Bush administration's handling of environmental issues. In response, a majority of the West Virginians polled said that they supported strengthening current environmental laws and 60% of those questioned reported being strongly opposed to changes made to federal environmental laws by the Bush Administration.

More poll results can be found at www.appalachian-center.org. Check it out.

Rumor has it that the coal industry has conducted their own polls, but all we've seen is increased PR, intrusion into the public schools by the coal sponsored CEDAR program, and more permits coming faster every day.

WAY TO GO WEST VIRGINIA NATURE CONSERVANCY

By Don Gasper

The Nature Conservancy in West Virginia has been continuing to acquire lands throughout West Virginia. This year they, in their now 40 years, have been involved in the transfer of over 100,000 acres in West Virginia. If owners are willing to sell or lease their land the Nature Conservancy can facilitate these transactions.

In the recent case of property on the South Branch of the Potomac they were able to negotiate a lease for 1,126 acres of land. This would be a permanent lease that would assure the owner that it would be preserved in its natural state. The owner, Mr. Edward W. Stipel agreed to entrust this family inheritance to the Nature Conservancy, as both wanted expert management to achieve preservation and recovery with some degree of compatible controlled public use. It is virtually untouched since the first logging. Some cedar trees on the steep 1,200 foot tall cliffs were found to be 300 years old, perhaps 500 years old. It is a dryer area, receiving only 35 inches of rain each year. It is a biologically diverse and important area.

The land is just downstream of the U.S. Forest Service "Smokehole Campground" and its canyon. It connects and is surrounded by United States Forest Service land. It includes both hillsides on three big meanders of one of the best smallmouth bass rivers in the world. These river miles come to 3 miles. It is a square chunk of land about two miles across, and accessible from Highway 220 near Petersburg.

In another transition, property located throughout the middle of the Monongahela, in eight parcels, were purchased outright and turned over to the National Forest. When Congress approves the funds, \$1.8 million, for the Monongahela's budget, the Nature Conservancy will be reimbursed. (Senator Byrd's office particularly is able to facilitate this.) In this case the Beckwith Lumber Company at Slaty Fork, W.V. realizing the value to the public of these parcels, so located and of such biological significance, Mr. Beckwith was willing to sell. These eight total 1,401 acres.

These eight are described here briefly. There are 457 acres along Dry Branch for about a mile before Cougar Spring emerges and the Trout Hatchery developments - about 2 miles above Whitaker Falls on Elk River. The popular Elk River trout catch and release area ends at the falls. The land extends along the curve for over two miles, above the railroad along the hillside above it. It adjoins Monongahela National Forest all along it, above. This then is the northern tip of Gauley Mountain where Elk River has cut through. Gauley Mountain extends in the National Forest south for over 10 miles. Gauley Mountain top is accessible mainly by the U.S.F.S. foot trail #438 and their road #24 from Sharps Knob right in the middle. Also Chimney Rock Run, a steep pretty little stream near its mouth is a part of this purchase.

There is on this same Gauley Mountain Top an "inholding", an isolated parcel of almost a mile square surrounded by U.S.F.S. land. It is listed though as only 200 acres. It is significantly the last bit of private land on Gauley Mountain. This is an awesome solid block of mountain top.

There is a "Spruce Flats" tract on the head of the Williams River near Locust Knob and Big Spruce Knob where the native brook trout streams Day Run and Beaver Dam Run start. It is high, above 4,000', one mile long, and 232 acres.

Thorny Creek is crossed by Highway 28 about 8 miles east of Marlinton. Below the Boy Scout Camp it is a brushy sunny valley. The property downstream of the highway has been acquired. It

included 2 miles of Thorny Creek, both sides of the bottom and up the north hillside. It is 335 acres.

A parcel called "Top of Allegheny" consists of 220 acres of forest land at nearly 4,000'. This appears to be though more than a mile square on the Monongahela's map that they sell for \$6. It is the head of Shingleblock Run that runs west, and to the east is "the top" on Frank and Buffalo Mountains near highway 250 going into Virginia. The whole area is very scenic. It has a dryer type of vegetation but it is subject to hurricanes every few years from Virginia. It is then a fragile headwaters.

There is an inholding of only 20 acres at 4,313' at "Barlow Top" that has been acquired. It is right in the middle of an otherwise 3 mile by 3 mile block of U.S. Forest Service land, so it is vital. WV DNR has developed 10 game food plots and roads to them as a part of the Monongahela's wildlife program.

The last two are small 10 acre acquisitions, but they are on native brook trout streams.

Finally, mention should be made that again, just in the last year, a little further east in Hardy County where large areas of wild forest and public land are fast becoming rare, The Nature Conservancy arranged a sale of 1,200 acres adjacent to the Nathaniel Mountain Wildlife Management Area. This land was turned over to W.V. Division of Natural Resources for expansion. Westvaco accepted \$1.1 million, and the D.N.R. repaid the Nature Conservancy from hunting and fishing money and its Conservation Stamp fund.

The Nature Conservancy in West Virginia is doing wonderful work by working with diverse groups, holding land themselves and transferring other properties to the U.S. Forest Service and W.V. D.N.R., to protect the land and assure public access to them while land is still available. Congratulations on their 40th anniversary, and their fine work.

OOPS!

Last month the *Highlands Voice* reported that a developer had begun construction of towers for wind turbines on Rich Mountain. This was incorrect. The company has begun constructing meteorological towers, a part of stations designed to collect weather data as a part of the planning of the project. Constructing meteorological towers indicates that the company still intends to proceed with the project (or at least continue to give it serious consideration). The towers it is constructing, however, are not the large towers designed to support a wind turbine. We regret any confusion this mistake may have caused.

A SAUNTER AROUND LAKE SHERWOOD

By Mike Juskelis

July 9th through July 11th: This was a scheduled West Virginia Highlands Conservancy/Sierra Club outing at Lake Sherwood in the Monongahela National Forest, WV. The focal point of the trip was an 11 mile moderate circuit hike with 10 stream crossings but only a modest 500 foot elevation gain over 2 miles. Allen, Mary, Don and I arrived at camp on Friday. Fred from Charleston, WV joined us Saturday morning.

Lake Sherwood is a family oriented campground with large campsites, swimming, fishing, boat rentals, etc. It's a great place to bring the family but most hikers seeking solitude tend to shy away from such places. There is a decent trail system in the area but it is under-utilized because of this. It's gotten bad enough that the Forest Service had to close several trails because of under-use.

There is, however, a partial solution for the hiker who wants a change of pace but doesn't want to put up with the hub-bub of the main camping loops. There is a tenters only loop known as Cale's Knoll that sits atop a pine-crowned hill above the beach. The 10 sites are mostly small, prohibiting use by large families and as stated are for tents only. There is running water and flush toilets on the loop and the lake bathhouse is a 5 minute walk from the loop.

We met Fred at 9:00 sharp Saturday morning and began our hike by walking counter-clockwise around the lake to the Meadow Creek Trail, walking through stands of pine trees as we went. We saw 3 cyclists on the Lake Trail. That was to be the last human contact we would have until we returned to the beach 10.9 miles later. Talk about under-utilized!

We proceeded up Meadow Creek and bushwhacked to what I believe to be either an old mill or dam for a very small reservoir. We continued up the creek. All of the 10 crossings were non-issues since the water flow was so slow. During almost that entire seg-

ment we were either engulfed in Mountain Laurel or Rhododendron. We made it to the Connector Trail in record time and turned east, passing through a wildlife clearing, to the intersection with the Allegheny Mountain Trail. At one time views of Lake Moomaw and Lake Sherwood were to be had as you walked this 3.8 mile stretch of ridge line but they have all been blocked by new timber growth, a good thing in a way. We headed Southwest on this trail and enjoyed a brisk saunter to the final trail intersection, the Virginia Trail. The sign has been

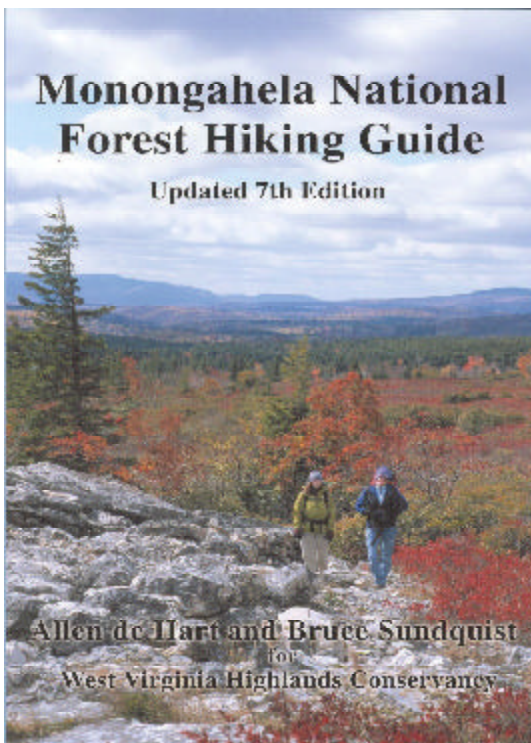


A red spotted newt suns himself.

Photo by Mike Juskelis

stripped from the post but the intersection is obvious. We descended quickly to the Lake and retraced our initial steps back to camp.

A half hour after our return it began to rain. We all sat under Don's canopy and re-hydrated as we waited out the storm. It passed in a couple of hours and the remainder of the day was spent cooking, cleaning up and sharing a toasty campfire. Sunday we broke camp and headed home at our leisure not in any particular hurry to return to reality.



Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

Published by the

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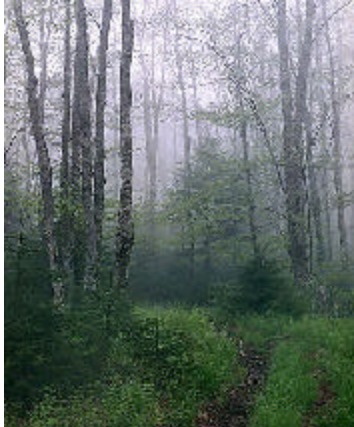
www.wvhighlands.org

Some tinkering still necessary

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE AND WEST VIRGINIA WILDERNESS COALITION MOSTLY ON THE SAME PAGE

By Matt Keller

Last month's edition of The Highlands Voice reprinted a Rick Steelhammer article from the Charleston Gazette about Wilderness and the U.S. Forest Service. It talked in some detail about potential new Wilderness areas. With a few exceptions, these are the same areas that the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition (WVWC) has done



Spring in the high cloud forest near Mt. Porte Crayon. The mountaintops in the area are often enveloped in fog. Photo by Jonathan Jessup.

an inventory and evaluation for and will likely be proposing for federal Wilderness designation.

As part of the Monongahela National Forest Plan Revision currently under way, the US Forest Service must do an inventory of current and potential new roadless areas. That is step one. Being a 'roadless area' provides a set of protections for an area (although currently under question given recent actions by the Bush Administration) apart from just being in federal ownership. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club – West Virginia Chapter and other organizations feel this step was done incorrectly and that much more roadless acreage exists on the Mon that was not identified during this first step. While all areas that qualify as roadless may not be prime candidates for Wilderness designation immediately, their status as roadless will provide them with protection and the chance to heal so they may be proposed for Wilderness status in the future.

The areas that did make the USFS roadless inventory (step 1) and were therefore evaluated for Wilderness potential (step 2) are mostly the ones the WVWC is currently considering for Wilderness. There are a few exceptions. Tea Creek Mountain and Canaan Loop/Canaan Mountain are areas with well established mountain bike use.

By law, the USFS must evaluate these areas for wilderness because they are most definitely roadless. After meeting with various representatives from the mountain biking community, the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition decided not to pursue wilderness designation for these as well as the Little Mountain area near Durbin because mountain biking is not permitted in wilderness. It is worth mentioning that Tea Creek and Canaan Mountain have very solid Wilderness potential according to the Forest Service, which makes that particular concession a large one on our part.

In the Forest Service's improper handling of the roadless inventory, they failed to identify some areas that are very much roadless and have a level of wildness that qualifies them for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. They identified only part of the Roaring Plains area that should qualify, leaving out just under 8,500 acres south of Forest Road 19 and Dolly Sods Wilderness and east of Forest Road 70. Technically, the 15,000 acre Roaring Plains area

being proposed by the WVWC would be three units, similar to Laurel Fork North and South Wilderness Areas. These three units are all big enough to be stand alone Wilderness areas.

The only thing separating the three is a pipeline and the road leading to it (FS 70), which is high clearance and open only seasonally for hunting. The pipeline and road would remain outside of the legal wilderness boundary. The area is some of the most beautifully scenic, remote and rugged country in the state and one of the best candidates for Wilderness designation we have. The Forest Service also failed to identify the North Fork Mountain, Lower Laurel Fork, Laurel Run and Little Allegheny Mountain areas, all of which are big enough and wild enough to be designated Wilderness.

While the Forest Service has identified 16 areas and conducted a Wilderness evaluation for each, a decision to recommend any of them won't happen for some time. When their Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is released, a range of alternatives, some recommending certain areas for wilderness, some not, will be available for review and comment. If they happen to select one of the alternatives that recommends wilderness in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Forest Service will recommend the area(s) in question to Congress for federal designation.

Most of the wilderness areas we have today were not brought about in this fashion. They were brought forth by citizens' proposal like what the WVWC has been working towards over the past couple of years. Even when the Forest Service recommends Wilderness, it takes a concerted effort of citizens to get the Wilderness bill introduced and passed, as with the Cranberry and Laurel Fork bill in 1983. The Highlands Conservancy and The Wilderness Society played inte



The broad and flat plateau of the Roaring Plains. This is about 3100 feet above the Potomac River below. Photo by Jonathan Jessup.

gral roles in this effort as well as the passage of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act of 1975 which gave us Dolly Sods and Otter Creek.

The Sierra Club – West Virginia Chapter played a key role during the last Forest Planning Process in making sure future wilderness areas were protected under the 6.2 management prescription. At the time, no new Wilderness areas could be recommended due to language in the Cranberry bill. The areas that members of the Club and other groups helped to protect are the ones we are looking at for Wilderness today. They are likely eligible only because they were protected.

We hope to continue this tradition of 'people protecting wilderness', by continuing to work towards the introduction of a new West Virginia Wilderness bill in the very near future. As always, your support is greatly needed. Please contact your Senators, Representative and Governor Wise by phone, fax or letter, and let them know that you want to see legislation introduced that will protect more Wilderness areas on the Monongahela National Forest. Addresses and talking points can be found on our web site: <http://www.wvwild.org>.

Join Now and get a free gift!!



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www.wvhighlands.org

We are now offering a wonderful incentive for new membership applications we receive. We have had beautiful National Geographic books donated to us and are offering them as premiums to new members. Join now, using the form below, to get your free gift.

The Emerald Realm, Earth's Precious Rain Forests. Together, earth's tropical rain forests make up a globe girdling emerald realm that occupies just 5 percent of the world's land area-yet nurtures half its plant animal species. From this cornucopia pours an array of foods and herbs, medicines and chemicals, and a variety of construction materials. The magnificence, the fragility, the mystery of "the most diverse, the most complex, and the least understood ecosystem on earth" are yours to experience in this 200 page National Geographic book. A \$20.00 value free to new members. **Premium available to new members only.**

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Mail to: West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321



Tumult on The Mountains by Roy Clarkson
McClain Printing Company – Parsons, West Virginia 1964

"Tumult on the Mountains – Lumbering in West Virginia, 1770-1920" portrays the lumber industry from its inconspicuous beginnings through a century and a half of progress. As long as the virgin timber supply lasted, the industry grew, slowly at first, then with ever increasing speed to a climax in 1909. By this time much of the original timber was destroyed and the industry rapidly declined.

Much of the information was obtained from letters and personal interviews with remaining "old-timers" who fondly recalled the old days and shared their experiences with him. 257 full-page pictures are used in the book to depict every phase of the lumber industry. The preservation of these photographs along with the comments of the vanishing "old-timers" is a most valuable contribution to the history of West Virginia.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has a limited number of these books, signed by the Author, Roy Clarkson, below his hand written message; "Keep West Virginia Wild, Wonderful." Roy is a long-time member of the Highlands Conservancy. Proceeds will benefit the campaign to designate more Wilderness on the Monongahela National Forest. This book is a must-read for anyone with even a casual interest in the forests of West Virginia. Thanks to Roy for this generous contribution to our efforts.

We are selling these signed editions of Tumult on the Mountains for \$45. Price includes shipping.

You Are Invited To:

The West Virginia Environmental Council Annual Convention

September 10, 11 & 12, 2004

Location: The Mountain Institute at Spruce Knob, near Circleville (outside of Elkins, WV)

Featuring: Workshops, Music, Outings, Environmental & Sustainable/Small Business Booths, Regional meetings, Priority Setting for Legislative Lobbying, Silent Auction & more....

For more information, or to register:

Contact Denise at the WVEC office – (304) 346-5905 or deniseap@earthlink.net. WV Environmental Council, 1324 Virginia Street East, Charleston WV 25301

Begins Friday, September 10th at 4:00 pm : Registration, evening social, silent auction begins (bring some items to contribute!), booth set up, refreshments and music.

Saturday, September 11 : Breakfast, Opening Session Circle, Regional Meetings, Lunch on your own, Workshops & Outings, Keynote Speaker, Potluck Dinner (bring a dish to share), Silent Auction ends at 9:00 pm, Music around the campfire far into the night....

Sunday, September 12th: Breakfast, closing circle. Convention ends at 1:00 pm (WVEC Board of Directors Meeting: 1:30–3:00 p.m.)

Directions:

From Washington, D.C. and Points North of D.C.

Follow I-95 South to Washington, D.C., and take the Beltway (495) West around the city. Get on I-66 West and proceed to I-81. Follow I-81 South to exit 247B at Harrisonburg, Route 33 West. Follow 33 West into West Virginia, through Brandywine, Franklin, and on to Judy Gap (approximately 14 miles after Franklin). At Judy Gap, turn left onto 28 South and follow directions from Judy Gap on (below).

From Points West:

Follow I-79 into West Virginia and to exit 99 (Route 33 East) at Weston and Buckhannon. Follow Route 33 East through Buckhannon, Elkins, Seneca Rocks, and on to Judy Gap where 33 and 28 split. Continue on 28 South and follow directions from Judy Gap on.

From Judy Gap:

Follow Route 28 South through Circleville (3 miles) and Cherry Grove (3 miles). Approximately 2–3 miles after going through Cherry Grove, turn right on 28/10 toward The Mountain Institute and Spruce Knob Lake (there will be a small Forest Service sign). After about 3 miles turn left at a stop sign near a hairpin turn and go another 4 miles to a set of low stone columns and a red farm gate on the right at the top of a hill. (If you go down a very long hill and over a bridge at a small creek you have gone too far.) Turn right through the red gate marked: "The Mountain Institute." Bear left, and follow the dirt road 1 mile through farm land until you get to the large round yurt buildings. You're there!

Mountain Institute Phone: (304) 567-2632
WVEC Phone: (304) 346-5905

Speakers Available!!!!

Does your school, church or civic group need a speaker or program presentation on a variety of environmental issues? Contact Julian Martin 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston WV 25314 or imaginemew@aol.com or 304-342-8989.



BUMPER STICKERS

To get a free I[heart]Mountains bumper sticker(s), send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Julian Martin, WVHC, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306



BROCHURES

The Sierra Club, Citizens Coal Council, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Focus(Kentucky), Big Sandy Environmental Coalition(Kentucky), Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy 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, WVHC, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

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

West Virginia Environmental Council Keeps Plugging Even When Legislature Not In Session

ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL GOES TO SEAT OF GOVERNMENT TO PETITION FOR THE REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES

By West Virginia Environmental Council Lobbyist Conni Lewis (Edited by Frank Young)

Spring (2004) Interims and other Activities

April

Interim Meetings of the West Virginia Legislature:

The April interims were held simply to announce the subjects of the interim committees and to receive the usual reports from various agencies.

Other activities

In early April, Ray and I attended the annual meeting of the Model Forestry Policy Project in Nashville. Other attendees from West Virginia included Frank Young and Don Gasper. Of particular interest was the new multimedia presentation on mountain top removal by Appalachian Voices (Lenny Kohm). I serve on the MFPP steering committee with the hope that we can learn enough to change forestry laws in West Virginia.

Earth Day at the DEP was an opportunity for DEP to issue its first State of the State report. Next year's report should be more comprehensive, since the department didn't realize the gaps in its data. Well, duh. And of course, what isn't measured isn't managed.

Don Garvin, Liz Garland and I attended the April meeting of the DEP advisory council. The meeting focused on DEP's record at the legislature this year.

There were environmental conversations or other contacts with USPIRG, the Appalachian Regional Commission, various DEP officials, and other.

May

Interim Meetings of the West Virginia Legislature

Little was accomplished. Forest Management basically set up its list of topics to cover during the year. Rule making was given background on the EQB study resolution and the four issues in contention. Water resources also was briefed. It continues to be a well attended meeting.

Other Activities

Environmental activities included attendance at Artists for the Environment. Unfortunately it was poorly attended. Rick Eades was the speaker at the League of Women Voters annual meeting. He was a huge hit- far more popular than Mike Callaghan (who was patronizing) or Joe Manchin.

Miscellaneous activities included the Blackwater Wildflower pilgrimage, which was a wonderful opportunity to gently educate visitors about some West Virginia issues.

June:

Interim Meetings of the West Virginia Legislature

In June, the interim meetings become substantive. Ideas are actually discussed. Occasionally, the direction a committee will take becomes apparent.

The highlight for us was the Forest Management meeting which heard presentations on forest health issues. I had arranged for an E-council rep to speak - Don Gasper. He was well received, even though there was no microphone to amplify his gentle voice. He spoke of the mineral depletion in forest soils, a critical if under appreciated issue. The other speakers focused on the pests and diseases that confront our forests.

Agriculture heard a presentation on ginseng. Should it be a crop? How should a profitable crop (dependant on healthy forests) be managed in West Virginia?

Finance Committee B is once again studying property tax issues. This committee bears watching given the impact of managed timberland, payments in lieu of taxes and conversion of privately owned land to public ownership. Nothing came out of last year's similar committee. The Wirt County Commission was there to tell their story- 30% of the county is owned by one entity and they pay a pittance in property taxes. I was later told the company is clear cutting, but I haven't been up there to see it.

Clean elections met and discussed funding mechanisms.

The most critical meeting was Rule Making, which is studying the issue of water quality standards. This committee has never before had a study resolution, so they are plowing new ground. This is in addition to all the usual rule making activity. EPA brought in two people to explain the EPA water quality process in exhaustive detail. Questions had been solicited before the meeting from several interested parties. Only two groups responded with questions: WV Water Co. and the Rivers Coalition/Ecouncil. The night before Rule Making had had another meeting and EQB was not on the agenda. So Mike Ross trotted out Chris Hamilton to do his routine about manganese etc. Chris did it again in the meeting and pretty much attacked EQB in general and even Libby Chatfield. He was not called on this. Libby acquitted herself well in the thrust and parry of discussion with the legislators.

During the interims I was interviewed by James Dao of the New York Times and put him in touch with Jon Hunter to discuss the connection between MTR and floods.

Activities

In early June I was interviewed by the *State Journal* on timber issues. The story was published as part of a special focus on forestry issues. Most of the interview was left on the cutting room floor, which is ok.

Late June was the meeting of the DEP Advisory Council at which they reviewed the proposed rule changes for 2005. I had read most of them in advance and found few reasons to object. However, I have suggested to Mary Ann Maul that she will want to look carefully at one of the air regulations. It has potential problems.

June 28 through 30 was the national meeting of the Multi State Working Group, a national organization of government and private sector people working toward sustainability and new approaches to regulations. Speakers came from several countries, including Great Britain and China. Allan Tweddle and I were able to attend for free, thanks to Dave Bassage who is active in MSWG. We were inundated with material and information and were tickled to see so many entities struggling to reduce their environmental footprint. And in every private sector case, profits improve. Allan and I would like to bring this message to others. Tim Mallan of AEP also attended, but I didn't notice other people from West Virginia's private sector.

During the meeting I was interviewed by DEP's consultant on sustainability issues. We strayed far from the intended subject matter but I think it was useful. I would recommend that others also participate in the process.

(Editor's note: This report was originally submitted by Conni Lewis, and was edited for length and currency by Frank Young)



West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

Outings Chair: Jonathan Jessup, 703-204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

August 7, Saturday Flat-water Canoe Float Flat-water canoe float through the six mile long Buckhannon River pool at Buckhannon. Meet at Sheetz on Corridor H at 11. Take out will be about 3 p.m. It is a pretty, generally clear reach and we will have some current to push us along. Fishing should be good. Bring everything and just show up. If you need information, call Don Gasper at 472-3704.

August 7-8, Sat-Sun. Ramsey's Draft Wilderness. Nice old growth forests in GW National Forest. Day 1, strenuous hike in rugged river basin, then up to Hardscrabble Knob of 15 miles. Day two, 16.5 miles but less strenuous. Shuttle available from near DC. Contact: Dimitri Tundratarkd@hotmai.com, 301-770-9639

August 6-8, Fri.-Sun. Mount Rogers High Country Backpack (VA). 21 mile strenuous hike with spectacular views of the open highlands and surrounding mountains. Open areas are similar to a hilly Dolly Sods but with better views and a more remote feel. Hike is mostly above 4000' elevation and about half exposed meadows. Please bring appropriate rain gear and equipment. Trails can be rocky and wet and weather can be unpredictable at times. Prior backpacking experience required. Hopefully, the Highbush Blueberries will be ripe. Limit: 10. Contact Eric Shereda for more information at: backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468

August 21, Sat. Explore Fisher Spring Run Bog. This large, open and seldom visited bog is just within the Dolly Sods Wilderness and is one of only ten national natural landmarks in West Virginia. Wildflowers and many plant life forms adapted to bog and high elevation conditions are the focus of this trip. Active bear area. ~5 hours with optional camping that evening. Waterproof boots suggested. Can be combined with hike on the next day. Leader: Jonathan Jessup. (703) 204-1372, jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

August 22, Sun. Dolly Sods Scenic Area on Allegheny Front and Dolly Sods North. Enjoy stunning mountaintop views across many miles of mountains from unique, wild, open rocky tundra on the backbone of West Virginia. We'll then cross FR75 and head into North Sods for a walk in more open country. Last year's trip went well with great weather and a cool dip in Red Creek. ~6 miles, 2 of which are rocky. Can be combined with previous day's hike. Leader: Jonathan Jessup, (703) 204-1372, jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

August 27 – 29, Fri.-Sun. Blue Bend, MNF. Car Camping / Shuttle Hike. Three day trip in the Monongahela National Forest. Camp along scenic Anthony Creek under the Hemlocks and surrounded by mountains. Hike Blue Bend Loop trail and Anthony Creek trail and South Boundary trail. Those wishing to meet at the trailhead on Saturday and not car camp are welcome. On the way home visit the Hump Back covered bridge and scenic Goshen Pass. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

September 4 – 6, Sat.-Mon. – Spruce Knob Area - Labor Day Weekend. Easy 3-day backpack/ base-camp/ hiking trip to the back side of Spruce Knob, spending both nights at Judy Springs (former) campsite. The rest of the time will be spent hiking and exploring the ridge-tops, stream-sides, foot trails and high mountain meadows behind Spruce Knob. Or you can just enjoy the immediate surroundings of Judy Springs. 7 total miles of backpacking — all along Seneca Creek. Prior backpacking experience required due to the remoteness of the area. Limit: 10. Contact Bruce Sundquist, 724-327-8737 or bsundquist1@juno.com

September 11 – 13, Sat.-Mon. Otter Creek Wilderness Backpack. Backpack overnight in this unbelievable wilderness. Hike 14+ miles with several wide stream crossings. Limit of 10 participants. Optional Stuart Recreation Area Car Camping Friday night at modern campground with all facilities. Reservations suggested for the campground. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

September 25 - 26 and October 2&3 Red Spruce cone collecting volunteer opportunity. As part of the Highlands Conservancy's Red Spruce Restoration efforts, we will be collecting cones from various areas in the Highlands including Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Monongahela National Forest, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Blackwater Falls State Park. Contact Dave Saville 304-284-9548 daves@labyrinth.net

(More outings on p. 11)

(Continued from p. 10)

September 25 – 26, Sat.-Sun. Seneca Creek Backpack.

Fourteen+ miles in the Seneca Back Country utilizing Huckleberry trail, High Meadows trail and Seneca Creek Trail. Several wide stream crossings. Limit of 10 participants. Distant travelers can set up a base camp at Spruce Knob lake Campground Friday evening and stay till Monday if desired. Reservations suggested for the campground. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 8 – 11, Fri eve – Mon morning. Dolly Sods North and Roaring Plains.

Car camp at Seneca Shadows for 8-10 mile moderate hike in Dolly Sods North on Saturday and Jonathan Jessup's hosted 5 mile Roaring Plains Canyon Rim Hike on Sunday. Those wishing to meet at the trailhead on day 2 and/or 3 and not car camp are welcome. Reservations suggested for the campground. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com

October 10, Sunday. Roaring Plains Fall Foliage on Canyons Rim Trail.

Day Hike. Medium difficulty, depending on weather. Explore and witness spectacular, remote, rugged, rocky and rarely visited high elevation country with several jaw dropping views. Be prepared for cool temps and possible weather. Only one 400ft climb. ~5 miles. Finish hike by 5pm. See photos at <http://www.jonathanjessup.com/rp-set1.html>. Possible optional nearby day hike on Oct 9th for those interested. Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

Almost Anytime. 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 a lunch— there is a picnic area on Larry's mountain. Just call Larry or Julian Martin. Leaders: Julian Martin, (304)342-8989, imaginemew@aol.com and Larry Gibson, (304) 586-3287 or (304) 549-3287 cellular.



LONGVIEW PLANT AGREES TO LOWER EMISSIONS

By Ken Ward, Jr.

Developers of a proposed Morgantown power plant have agreed to tighter pollution limits to resolve a challenge of their state permit. GenPower LLC also agreed to donate \$500,000 a year to a project to mitigate the effects of add rain and global climate change.

Lawyers for GenPower filed the proposed settlement agreement and permit modifications with the state Air Quality Board.

"All parties were pretty happy with the results of the settlement," said Tom Wheble, project manager for GenPower's Longview Power operation.

The deal was worked out between GenPower and three environmental groups that had challenged the company's state air pollution permit. The groups were the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited and the National Parks Conservation Association.

Needham, Mass.-based Gen-Power wants to build the Longview plant along the Monongahela River near Madsville, north of Morgantown. The \$900 million facility would generate about 600 megawatts of electricity. The plant would employ about 60 people and create, at peak employment, about 1,600 construction jobs, the company says.

In a draft permit, the state Department of Environmental Protection proposed to allow the plant to emit more than 19 million pounds of air pollution every year. Under the DEP permit, those emissions would have included up to 6.4 million pounds per year of sulfur dioxide and 4.3 million pounds of nitro-

gen oxides. Officials from the DEP Division of Air Quality said the plant was a "state-of-the-art" facility, and refused to tighten the permit limits.

The environmental groups, represented by Wendy Radcliff, a lawyer from the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment, appealed to the Air Quality Board. Board members had planned an early July appeal hearing, but rescheduled when the parties indicated that they were trying to negotiate a settlement.

Under the 10-page settlement, Longview will be limited to emissions of 4.8 million pounds of sulfur dioxide and 3.5 million pounds of nitrogen oxides every year — reductions of 25 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

"The Sierra Club does not support construction of this plant, but the agreement does address many of the air pollution issues citizens raised during public comment," said Jim Kotcon of the West Virginia Sierra Club.

Additional compliance, enforcement and maintenance provisions would be added to the air permit. It also provides for the first-ever continuous emission monitor for mercury to be included in a coal-fired power plant permit.

"The plant will have to be operating much more efficiently, with much tighter controls on all aspects of the facility," Wheble said.

The settlement also requires a public comment period on any future, alternative plan

to mitigate air pollution impacts on the Otter Creek and Dolly Sods wilderness areas and Shenandoah National Park.

"Parks and people count on responsible industries striving to be as clean as possible, not as dirty as they can get away with," said Joy Oakes, the parks' association's Mid-Atlantic director. "We challenge other coal-burning power plants to aim for emissions comparable to Longview's."

Once the Longview plant starts to operate, the settlement requires the company to donate \$500,000 a year for 10 years and \$300,000 annually after that to a new nonprofit group that will work to reduce add rain and greenhouse gas emissions.

Lany Harris, a spokesman for Trout Unlimited, said that part of the settlement is "unprecedented in the region."

"What's really remarkable is that for the first time in this part of the country, there is a permittee who takes seriously the problem of global warming," added Joe Lovett, executive director of the Appalachian Center. "If only our politicians or the DEP were as willing to admit there is a problem and to try to do something about it."

Longview still faces another air quality permit challenge and is seeking approval from the state Public Service Commission. The company hopes to begin construction in 2005 and start operations in 2008.

This story originally appeared in The Charleston Gazette.

3rd Annual
Garden Party at Walnut Farm
Saturday, August 21, 2004
Wilderness Campaign fundraising event

Join us for an afternoon of good music, good food, good friends and good times as we raise some much needed funds for our Wilderness Campaign.

For 3 years we have been methodically laying the groundwork for a West Virginia Wilderness Bill. It was in 1983 when the

attend this annual event.

The Walnut Farm, just outside Morgantown, is the home of Highlands Conservancy Administrator Dave Saville and also home of the West Virginia Raptor Rehabilitation Center and the location of the West Virginia Land Trust's Zimmermann Nature Preserve.



Mary Wimmer (far left), Elizabeth Zimmermann, and Chase Sutton (right) enjoy last year's Garden Party.



West Virginia Highlands Conservancy was last successful in protecting more Wilderness in our state. Then it was the Cranberry and Laurel Fork Areas that were protected. Now, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, we are poised to get additional lands of the Monongahela National Forest permanently protected. This is a critical time for our campaign, and we need your help and support now more than ever.

Look for an invitation in the mail soon, but plan now to

BLACKWATER FALLS PARK GETS AWARD

Senator Robert Byrd, D.-WV was one of several dignitaries who congratulated Blackwater Falls State Park for being named a "21st Century American Heritage Place" by a national conservation group.

At a July 23, 2004 award ceremony at the Park Lodge near Davis, WV, Tom St. Hilaire, Director of Americans for Our Heritage and Recreation, presented the award. Hilaire read a letter from Byrd in which the Senator said: "The beauty of the park has provided countless people with a taste of satisfaction and happiness that may tincture their aesthetic remembrances for life. One of my fondest memories was when I visited the park with my grandson, Michael. I put him on a pony and he loved it. It is a memory that I shall never forget."

Blackwater was chosen for the national award because of the Park's ability to provide "close to home recreation and

a variety of recreational opportunities like hiking, fishing, swimming and horseback riding."

At the award ceremony, Park Superintendent Rob Gilligan displayed a map



of 500 acres of new Park land acquired with the help of the Land and Conservation Fund.

West Virginia State Senator Jon Hunter spoke on behalf of Governor Bob Wise. Hunter noted that the new Park land connects to the Town of Davis, ensuring access for local residents. Also in attendance were West Virginia Delegate Stan Shaver, Parks Chief J. R. Pope, Deputy

Chief Ken Caplinger, and Blackwater Falls State Park Assistant Director Melissa Brown. The ceremony was also attended by local trail enthusiasts, conservationists, and other State park personnel.

Judy Rodd, Director of the Friends of Blackwater Canyon, thanked the Wise administration and the group's nearly two thousand members for supporting the enhancement of the Blackwater area. Rodd read from J. Lawrence Smith's book, *The High Alleghenies*, describing a new era of stewardship for special places in the Highlands of West Virginia. Friends of Blackwater is working to map trails and plant trees on the new property.

Summer Board Meeting Highlights

By Hugh Rogers

Three years ago, the Highlands Conservancy's board of directors engaged in a self-analysis and planning process we called "Future Focus." We began with an all-day meeting at Jackson's Mill and over the next year we established some new committees and procedures. But the press of our day to day work kept us from pursuing other changes. At Peter Shoenfeld's instigation, this summer we revisited Future Focus.

What have we done so far? First, the new Finance Committee has rationalized our budget process. Bob Marshall, our current treasurer, can sleep a little easier than his predecessors. Committee heads know that spending money and raising money are inextricably linked.

Second, we redefined Dave Saville's job from quasi-independent contractor to regular employee and raised his pay and benefits. That was long overdue. We still haven't changed the "administrative assistant" title, though. The job description in his contract doesn't really match the work he does.

Third, we recruited new board members and slightly improved our diversity of age and gender. This is an active board. Sixteen of us were sitting around the table at the Green House in Elkins. A few seats for organizational directors are consistently vacant.

Judy Rodd, who spearheaded the initial Future Focus effort, pointed out that the recent growth of our capacity to work on issues has not come from additions to our staff but rather from partnering with other groups. On the wilderness campaign, we work with the Wilderness Society and Sierra Club; on mining, we work with Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, and West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC); on legislation, we work with the West Virginia Environmental Council; etc.

Again we discussed the relative merits of amateur and more professionalized organizations. We are an amateur organization—but we could be better-organized amateurs. We'll begin with a more accurate job description for Dave, and then take the bigger steps: other staff needs, fundraising opportunities, and strategic planning.

The board it keeps a-changin'. At this meeting, two long-term members resigned. Pam Moe, West Virginia Rivers Coalition's representative, is leaving for a

full-year teaching position in Alaska. Judy Rodd, our Senior Vice-President, has to concentrate on her Environmental Services and Education Center. She'll continue to report on Blackwater issues (or send a representative!). We'll miss them both.

Our next meeting, on October 24th, will begin with elections for all officers and five directors-at-large. John McFerrin, Cindy Rank, and George Beetham are serving as a nominating committee. Please contact any of them (see the roster) if you have suggestions or would like to serve.

Logging: It may be difficult to believe if you haven't spent much time at the Capitol, but those who know say the timber lobby has been even more successful than Big Coal! The legislature has resisted even the most minimal restraint, i.e., a simple notice to adjacent landowners. We had a spirited discussion of the Model Forestry Practices Act. Jonathan Jessup called it a "pipe dream:" good work, good science, bad psychology. He'd have us work with private landowners, encourage peer review, and demonstrate that sustainable practices are in their own interest. Others insisted that the largest land holding companies seem uninterested in sustainable practices. The result is their downstream neighbors are being washed away. Frequent flooding may finally convince our legislators to address the worst abuses. This issue goes to the Legislative Committee for its annual priority setting.

Wind Energy: Since our last meeting, Atlantic Renewable Energy has given up on its controversial Gauley Mountain project. On Rich Mountain, site of another project we oppose, meteorological towers (not turbines) have been put up, but that developer has not applied for a permit

Public Lands: The Lower Clover timber sale just outside Parsons is the first in the country to follow the Bush Administration's streamlined regulations. Comments must be submitted before the Forest Service has had time to assess what it plans to do. In this case, though, the sale was announced before, and then put on hold pending the endangered species amendment to the forest management plan, so we built on old comments.

Plan revision: 200,000+ acres eligible for the roadless initiative under the Clinton Administration would be moved into

the 6.2 management prescription category—but simultaneously the definition of 6.2 would be weakened. More recent drafts ameliorated some of the worst changes and work continues with the planners.

Wilderness: On Sept. 19, the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act will be celebrated in Washington, and the Highlands Conservancy will have a table at the event.

Car race victory: The organizer withdrew a special permit request to use several forest roads over Labor Day weekend. The proposal drew lots of comments, particularly from coalfield residents, another sign of our growing solidarity in defense of mountains. In part due to Julian Martin's tireless communications work, the spirit of cooperation among "green" organizations has improved a great deal.

Mapping: in the last board meeting report, Jim Solley was recognized "for his work on maps." We should be more explicit. According to Dave Saville, for three years Jim has been the "go-to guy" for mapping and inventorying potential wilderness areas. More recently he has been producing maps that show the spreading devastation of mountaintop removal mining in the counties of Southern WV.

Mining: Victory in the Corps of Engineers nationwide permit case inevitably brought more work, in the form of case by case analysis and comment. The ultimate issue will be the cumulative impact of so many mines. The public's concern is growing: a recent poll commissioned by Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment (ACEE) found a 2-to-1 majority opposed MTR mining, with 15% still undecided.

Highways: The Highlands Conservancy has joined WVRC and other state and local groups and individuals in opposition to the proposed 219 bypass around Lewisburg. Our legal intern, Nathan Fetty, working at ACEE, prepared the comments. On its web site (www.appalachian-center.org), click on "more" at the index) ACEE suggests that WVDOT wants to build a new four-lane US 219 all the way from Corridor H, near Elkins, to US 460 (Corridor Q) in Virginia. Like the Corps of Engineers, which has on its shelves a dam for every stream, state highway departments dream of ever more concrete.

Car Races on the Mon Nipped in the Bud

FOREST SERVICE RESPONDS TO PUBLIC OUTCRY

By Dave Saville

Many of you may recall last October, when Doug Oliver, Gauley District Ranger for the Forest Service, illegally opened up the Cranberry Backcountry to motorized public travel for the first time in history. Following an intense public outcry for this violation of the Forest Plan, Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson boldly apologized, admitted that this was a mistake, and promised more diligence in preventing such abuses of the Forest in the future.

Three months later, an organization called Rally Promotions, L.L.C. of Knoxville, TN, approached the Forest Service for a special use permit to hold a car race on the Monongahela National Forest. As if to add insult to injury from the Cranberry Backcountry debacle, Forest Service personnel in charge of special use permits encouraged them to submit an application. They said they could see no harm from the event, or any reason why closing over 100 miles of Forest roads to the public would be a problem, or why the permit should not be issued.

The event, Rally West Virginia, would have been headquartered at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. It would have taken place during one of the busiest visitation weekends to the Forest, Labor Day weekend, September 3&4. Only roads open to the public would have been used. Cars would have traveled at upwards of 100 miles per hour. Roads in the upper Shavers Fork, Cheat Mountain Backcountry, as well as Middle Mountain Road adjacent to Laurel Fork Wilderness, and others would have been used.

I use the past tense here, because, there will be no car races on the Mon this year. Because someone was paying attention. Because someone, obviously not the Forest Service staff who wanted to permit such an inappropriate use, cared. Someone realized that closing the forest to the public, that racing cars through the Wildest and most Wonderful part of our state, that certain uses of our public lands, are unacceptable.

That someone, actually those someones, are the hundreds of people, most likely including many of you who are now reading these words, who stood up and let the Forest Service know that closing the Forest to the public and turning the Mon into a car race track, is NOT an appropriate use of the Monongahela National Forest.

For those of you who hadn't heard about this incident, I wanted to pass it along, not so much so you can be outraged too, but rather so you can understand better the threats the Mon faces. Everyone wants a piece of it. We cannot routinely depend upon the Forest Service to do what's right for the Monongahela National Forest. It takes the steady, watchful eye of the diligent public. It takes a public that is ready to speak out when the Forest Service is considering allowing abuses to the Mon.

Because there are only 30 days to comment on special use permits, and many other "projects" on the Forest, it is difficult to get the information out to the public in a timely fashion. We all do our best to activate our collective friends and constituencies. In this case, we were successful in demonstrating a strong public opposition, and were able to put a stop to this. One of the roles the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy takes very seriously is to watchdog the management of the Monongahela National Forest and other public lands in West Virginia. We are paying attention.

Thanks to everyone who rallied to quash this latest effort to degrade and diminish the wild wonder of the Mon. If you would like to be kept in the loop about the management of the Mon, please contact the Forest Service and ask to be included on their mailing list of proposed actions. 304-636-1800 or 200 Sycamore St Elkins, WV 26241.



ELECTIONS COMING!

The October 24, 2004, Annual Meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy includes the election of officers as well as the election of approximately six at large members of the Board of Directors. Right now the nominating committee (George Beetham, John McFerrin, and Cindy Rank) is looking for candidates for those positions. If you are interested in an office or have an idea of a member who would make a good officer, please contact a member of the nominating committee. Their addresses are shown on the roster of officers on page 2.

The Annual Meeting receives nominations from the floor as well as through the report of the nominating committee. Whether you contact the committee or not, you could still be nominated from the floor.

This is your chance to serve the Conservancy by taking a leadership role. As if that weren't enough, this is also an opportunity to gain elected office without having to raise a gazillion dollars or ride across the country on a bus giving the same speech over and over.

BACKPACKING THE ROARING PLAINS

by ERIC SHEREDA

My third trip to the Roaring Plains and Haystack Knob area was the most interesting and exciting by far. As usual for my experiences this area, we hardly saw anyone. However, the wildlife was everywhere. The weather was favorable for the most part but we did get dumped on a few times. It had been two years since I actually hiked on the Canyon Rim but it was still awe-inspiring and beautiful beyond compare.

Our group of five set out on a mild Friday morning from the South Prong Trailhead. We passed several small bogs filled with



sphagnum moss, cranberry and sundews. About a mile out we took a small side trail out to the overlook near Pancake Rocks. On the rocks, we saw a huge black snake, which hurriedly slithered away when we startled him. We continued out

South Prong until we reached the Hidden Passage. We followed the passage without incident until the person behind me yelled, "Snake!" I turned around thinking we had spotted another black snake. To my surprise, I had walked over, without stepping on, a huge timber rattlesnake. My heart was really pumping now. I don't know how I missed it. It didn't rattle and it didn't really move after we spotted it. We were lucky.

We pressed on eventually reaching the Seneca Meadows campsite. Near here, Brad spotted a tiny fawn lying in the grass just beside the trail to the pipeline. We dropped our packs at the pipeline and headed for the overlook of Roaring Creek Canyon. What a place to have lunch. We could hear the creek far below us as we ate lunch and snacked on wild blueberries. We returned to our packs and headed around Roaring Creek Canyon as we pressed on to our destination on the Canyon Rim. We had a relaxing evening, enjoying ourselves after a tiring day.

On Saturday, we broke camp and followed the Canyon Rim trail. It was rather hazy so the views were not as spectacular as we would have liked. At the same time, the clouds kept a lot of the heat off of us, which was nice in the open areas that are usually so hot. We pressed on eventually joining up with the Roaring Plains Trail before heading toward Haystack Knob via the old railroad grade on the southeast side of Mount Porte Crayon. As we hiked, we noticed countless bear prints along the grade as well as multiple piles of scat. There were even several skinned trees that may have been from bears looking for grubs. During one of our breaks we were sitting along side a creek with a deer trail intersecting it. A little fawn came running down the deer trail. It saw us and turned

away. We were rather surprised to see a little fawn all by itself but we soon found out why. About thirty seconds behind it followed a small tan coyote. It saw us and promptly turned around and headed back up the trail.

We continued on, reaching the campsite in the grassy shadow of Haystack Knob after bushwhacking up from the railroad grade. We quickly pitched our tents before the rain. After the rain, we headed up Haystack to have dinner but were chased down by one LOUD crack of thunder on the way up. We eventually made it back up for a spectacular 350-degree view right before sunset.

The Roaring Plains Trail is often white due to quartz pebbles embedded in the underlying sandstone. The lower heath in the foreground have not yet gone fully green for the summer. Photo © Jonathan Jessup.



On Sunday, we got up bright and early to hit the long 12-mile trail. We retraced our steps after bushwhacking back down to the railroad grade. We made pretty good time and were back at the Roaring Plains Trail in no time. Not long after, we got dumped on again. We suited up and continued on undaunted. As we neared the pipeline, the sun came out again. We stopped and had lunch on the pipeline intersection with Red Creek. We watched the crayfish as we were drying out. Afterward, we concluded our hike by following the forest road back to the trailhead.

As we unpacked and got ready for our respective trips home, I couldn't help but notice how many people were driving up and down the road to Dolly Sods. It was so wonderful to be out on a Fourth of July weekend and only see a total of 4 people on the trails. This really speaks of how remote and unspoiled the Roaring Plains really is. I truly hope that this area receives the Wilderness protection that it rightly deserves so that others may get a chance to experience its hidden wonders.

Call for Volunteers!

Enjoy a relaxing Saturday afternoon on the upper Shavers Fork of Cheat! Ride the Cheat Mountain Salamander for free! Help Shavers Fork Coalition and partners collect data aimed at improving the trout habitat. It's easy. Call or email Ruth Blackwell Rogers at 304-636-2662 or ruthbr@vhighlands.org to sign up.

RAHALL INTRODUCES RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE WILDERNESS ACT

Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) and a dozen of his colleagues from both sides of the aisle have introduced a House resolution marking the 40th anniversary of the enactment of the Wilderness Act. This conservation beacon created the National Wilderness Preservation System and protected the first nine million acres of Americas public wilderness.

Original cosponsors of the Wilderness resolution are Representatives Charlie Bass (R-NH), Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), Mike Castle (R-DE), Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), Jim Greenwood (R-PA), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), George Miller (D-CA), Nick Rahall (D-WV), Chris Shays (R-CT), Mark Udall (D-CO), Tom Udall (D-NM), and Curt Weldon (R-PA)

John Dingell is one of the great heroes of wilderness preservation, said Doug Scott, policy director of the Campaign for Americas Wilderness. Forty years ago, he helped ensure that the Wilderness Act became law. As one of the leading advocates for wild-life conservation in American history, Congressman Dingell has always stressed the critical importance of protecting wildlife habitat, one of the key purposes of wilderness preservation.

The Wilderness resolution celebrates the contributions of great American writers, poets, and painters, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, William Cullen Bryant, and Thomas Cole in defining the United States' distinct cultural value of wild nature and unique concept of wilderness. It also notes that leaders such as President Theodore Roosevelt reveled in outdoor pursuits and sought diligently to preserve those opportunities for molding individual character, shaping a nations destiny, striving for balance, and ensuring the wisest use of natural resources, to provide the greatest good for the greatest many.

"We applaud all the House cosponsors for shining the spotlight on the value that wilderness has for all Americans. And just as people worked across party lines 40 years ago to achieve this landmark law, support for this resolution shows that lawmakers can work in a bipartisan effort to preserve something important for America's future," added Scott.

In the last four decades, the National Wilderness Preservation System has grown from nine million to 106 million acres, and protects land in 44 of the nations 50 states. Yet this is still less than 5 percent of the country's landmass.

The House resolution is a companion to the Senate resolution introduced last month by Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI), and cosponsored by 8 Republicans and 3 Democrats.

The 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act is September 3, 2004. For more information about the Wilderness Act or to read the resolution, visit <http://www.wildernessforever.org/>. For an update on the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's recent advocacy for more wilderness, see story on p. 6.

T SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-Shirts with the I[heart]MOUNTAINS slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL \$8 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:

Julian Martin
WVHC
Box 306
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

OFFICE DEPOT OFFERS ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

Do you wish you could recycle that old PC or other electronic equipment?

Between now and Labor Day, Office Depot stores will accept, free of charge, unwanted computers, mice, keyboards, handheld PDAs, flat panel displays, laser and inkjet printers, scanners, All-in Ones, Fax machines, Desktop copiers, cell phones, and TV's and TV/VCR combos of less than 27 inches. Collected electronics will be recycled and processed by Hewlett Packard. Products made by any vendor are accepted. Offer is limited to one product solution, such as a PC, monitor, mouse and keyboard or one individual product, such as a PDA, per customer per day. No TV consoles, furniture, laptop batteries, rechargeable batteries or electric appliances.

The program is available in the Continental U.S. only. For details contact your local Office Depot store, or go to the internet at: www.officedepot.com.

HATS FOR SALE

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy caps for sale. The cap is khaki and the pre-curved visor is forest green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in gold above We [Heart]Mountains. The heart is red, We and Mountains are black. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. \$8 by mail. Make check payable to WVHC or West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to Julian Martin, POB 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Fun Is On The Way

FALL REVIEW
OCTOBER 22-24

The annual Fall Review of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is scheduled for October 22-24. There will be speakers, outings, and all manner of activities combining fun and things that are good for you. The annual membership meeting and the quarterly board meeting will both take place on Sunday, October 24.

This year, Review planners are planning a Red Spruce Ecosystem Restoration theme. Watch the Voice for details as they develop.

