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STATE STUDY SAYS MINING AND LOGGING INCREASED FLOODING

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has released a study of flooding in West Virginia watersheds that concludes that mining and logging added to the floods which occurred in West Virginia during 2001.

The study was part of the work of a task force appointed by Governor Bob Wise in response to the flooding which occurred in July of 2001. To perform the study, the Department compared three watersheds. Mining and timbering had occurred in two of the watersheds. The third was relatively undisturbed. Through the use of computer modeling, the study compared the runoff which would occur were the watersheds undisturbed with that which would occur with mining and timbering.

The study concludes that the flow from the mined and timbered watersheds increased by up to 21%, depending upon where measurements were taken.

The study did not draw any conclusions about the increase in the height of the flood in the watersheds. It determined how much the volume of water running off increased as a result of the mining and timbering. It did not convert those conclusions

about the volume of flow into conclusions about how much higher the water would rise as a result of the increased flow. Such a conversion would require more extensive study, something the Department recommended in its study.

In addition to its conclusions, the study contains supporting data which are informative. First, it brings together the rainfall data which various public agencies had collected at the time of the storm. This data makes clear that the widely held public perception about the amount of rain that fell is incorrect. The widely held perception is that this rain was of Biblical proportions, a rain which would have produced a major flood regardless of whether the area had been disturbed by mining or logging. Governor Wise encouraged this perception by referring to rainfalls of "6 to 9 inches of water." According to the study data, only one station (south of Beckley) recorded a rainfall of more than six inches on the date of the flood. Many of the reporting stations reported rainfall of less than two inches and one Boone County station reported rainfall of less than an inch. While the rainfall was substantial by any measure, it was not the catastrophic deluge that many understood

it to be.

The study also brings together previously published data about such things as the relationship between run off and land use. As one might expect, this data demonstrates that there is dramatically less run-off from undisturbed woodland than there is from land of which other uses are made.

In response to the study, the Department made several recommendations for changes in mining methods. They included:

- Require a survey of man made structures located near proposed strip mines to "determine the potential storm runoff impacts."

- Increase the size of sediment control ponds at the bottom of valley fills to better contain runoff from those fills.

- Prohibit the construction of valley fills by dumping material from the tops of ridges down into valleys. Instead, fills would have to be built from the bottom up.

The Department also made recommendations for logging practices. These changes would limit logging within water-

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**From The Western Slope of The Mountains
by Frank Young**

Coal: Actions Make Image

An group of executives and lobbyists for the West Virginia coal industry is calling for a new public relations campaign as the solution "to many of the current issues" facing the coal industry. They say that the industry's "biggest reclamation challengecan be achieved through better education".

A recent funds solicitation letter on CEDAR (Coal Education, Development and Resource, Inc.) letterhead says that "the biggest reclamation challenge of our history" is to "reclaim the understanding and support of our state and nation's citizenry". The letter goes on to say that the purpose of CEDAR will be to facilitate a "knowledgeable and unbiased understanding" of the coal industry by providing "financial resources and coal education materials for implementation in school curriculum grades K through 12".

"Our first venture into this project will focus on Logan and Mingo County schools with more counties to be added later", the CEDAR letter says. The letter is signed by officials of Arch Coal, Walker Machinery, WV Coal Association and Pocahontas Coal Association.

In other words, the coal industry is trying to undue through a school based propaganda campaign the image created through decades of destruction and plunder of natural resources and a 'screw you' attitude toward those who dare suggest that King Coal should be a better citizen.

The CEDAR solicitation letter concludes, "..... education is an important issue and solution for a long term healthy coal industry.....".

Well, coal's image problem is not from a lack of public "education" about the coal industry. The West Virginia Coal Association, Walker Machinery and other coal vendors and coal companies spend millions of dollars on television, radio and newspaper advertising to "educate" the citizenry through their public relations departments. A Massey Coal Company ad in the State journal, a primarily business oriented publication, said that coal is "the clean alternative to wind-mills all over Dolly Sods". (italics mine)

A often repeated WV Coal Association television ad points out one example after another of "successful" developments on mountaintop removed strip mining sites, including the Mount View High School in McDowell County. But teachers and students there know that this high school building is plagued with sidewalks separated from buildings, doors that don't work properly and thousands of dollars in repairs to a facility constructed on an unstable MTR site that lets the building surrounding infrastructure settle and separate.

What can coal do to change it's public image? It can start by using the millions of dollars it slops into politicians' political campaigns for on-the-ground reclamation of mining sites. Or it could di-

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AMERICORPS TRAIL BUILDERS BLAZE ALONG IN WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS

by Frank Young and Sonya Green

DAVIS- A team of AmeriCorps★National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) volunteers engineered a new trail on recently acquired Blackwater Falls State Park BFSP land bordering Monongahela National Forest. The NCCC team, brought in by the West Virginia Trails Coalition, worked on improving the existing trails, as well as scouting a new trail that could eventually connect Dobbin House and Pase Point trails. The team began work on the trails on Thursday, June 20, and finished on Friday, June 28. The NCCC team has now begun trail work at Dolly Sods Wilderness Area.

The NCCC team is supported with financial contributions from the Friends of Blackwater organization and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. WV Highlands Conservancy volunteers supporting the NCCC crew with food supplies, recreation, communications (mail pickup and delivery) and highland regions information include Don Gasper, Frank Young, Carroll Jett, David Saville and others.

The NCCC team will also use their trail building and maintenance skills at Spruce Knob/Seneca Creek area trails and in the Otter Creek Wilderness Area before leaving West Virginia on July 23.

After this project ends, the team will wrap up their 10 months of service, and celebrate their graduation on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 1. Before working with the West Virginia Trails Coalition, the NCCC team has worked on bridle trails in Zaleski, OH, at Almost Heaven Habitat for Humanity in Franklin, WV, served as site supervisors at a Collegiate Challenge Habitat for Humanity build in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and worked with a community-based inner-city program in Washington, D.C. The team is also trained as wild land firefighters, and fought two fires last November in western Maryland.

The team hails from all over the United States. The team includes Pam Broughton from Cincinnati, OH, Eric Campbell from Faribault, MN, Shay DiCocco from Boston, MA, Joslin Fritz from Boston, MA, Waylon Fuller from Mason City, IA, Sonya Green from Calamus, IA, Mark Lindquist from Ortonville, MN, Sam Nesbitt from Mountain Home, ID, Jenn Niemi from Hartsville, SC, and Jamie Wilson from Oerland, PA.

The AmeriCorps★NCCC Capital Region is based in Washington, D.C. Along with the D.C. area, teams from this campus serve Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. The NCCC is made up of teams of volunteers who work with a nonprofit organization or project for up to two months. The 18 to 24-year-old volunteers are chosen from across the nation through an application process for the 10-month residential service program. For more information on AmeriCorps★NCCC and other AmeriCorps volunteer programs, please visit www.americorps.org.



AmeriCorps★NCCC trail development and maintenance team members at Laneville Cabin, near Dolly Sods. Left to right: Eric Campbell, Jenn Niemi, Sam Nesbitt, Pam Broughton, Jamie Wilson, Waylon Fuller, Shay DiCocco, and Sonya Green. Not pictured: Joslin Fritz and Mark Lindquist. Photo by Frank Young

Frank's column, Continued from p. 2

vert those millions of dollars to the bankrupt coal mine reclamation program.

The public image of the coal industry would be dramatically improved if it but followed the laws related to permitting and operating coal mines. Money could not buy the improved image resulting from an honest admission that coal mining destroys land, forests and streams for decades. Making realistic mitigation of these effects to the communities that suffer floods, dust, and loss of quality of life from the effects of mining, processing and transporting coal would make an immense improvement in coal's image.

Increased and more severe flooding, frequent massive coal "slurry" spills, coal trucks loaded beyond the weight capacity designed into local roads and resulting accidents, injuries and death to the public, severe coal dust problems in

communities like Sylvester and Whitesville, the corruption of politicians and regulators; all these things and dozens more of deleterious effects of current mining techniques and coal industry policies will not be cured by a campaign of "better education".

Such a campaign may slightly change the perception of what's happening in coal extraction, transportation and ultimately the burning of coal. And, of course, perception is what the CEDAR organization is all about.

But no amount of "better education" of school students will reduce the dust levels near coal preparation plants, nor reduce flooding, nor bring back even one day sooner the forests destroyed by strip mining, nor return de-capped mountains to their once majestic forms. "Better education" will not bring back people killed by

overweight and unsafe coal trucks and their outlaw owners and operators, nor make the emissions from coal fired power plants any cleaner.

The mammoth problems relating to the coal industry in West Virginia do not result from a lack of education that can be improved by "coal education materials" supplied to schools by the coal industry.

Coal problems will not be cured by how the coal industry goes about "meeting the biggest reclamation challenge" in its history- improving its reputation.

The many incessant problems that spring from coal industry activities come about because of what the industry does. They won't be cured by what it says.

DOESN'T SMELL LIKE CEDAR.....

By Julian Martin

The coal industry knows it is losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the people of West Virginia. Walker Machinery began an advertisement about mountaintop removal reclamation with "contrary to popular opinion..." And Steve Leer, president of Arch Coal, started a defense of mountain top removal with, "Despite widespread criticism of the process..." And recently in a debate Chris Hamilton, vice-president of the WV Coal Association told Roane County High School students that the coal industry was "misunderstood. A couple of years ago in the Charleston Gazette, Ken Ward quoted a coal executive as saying that their polls showed that 80% of the people in West Virginia opposed mountain top removal. The executive was using the poll results to warn that the coal industry needed to launch an all out public relations attack about mountain top removal.

Now comes a letter and a brochure from CEDAR of Southern West Virginia. CEDAR stands for Coal Education, Development and Resource. CEDAR admits "Our coal industry is facing the biggest reclamation challenge of our history. And that job is to reclaim the understanding and support of our state and nation's citizenry." If the reclamation of their reputation is anything like how they reclaim mountains and valleys then we can look for the truth to have its head lopped off and covered with tons of lies.

CEDAR continues, "Many of us in the coal industry believe the solution now, and over the long term, to many of the current issues facing[sic] can be achieved through better education." In other words the issues don't need to be addressed just change the spin.

CEDAR is seeking "...support for a new initiative designed to get coal education back in our schools." And get this, "Its purpose will be to facilitate a knowledgeable and unbiased understanding of the many benefits the coal industry provides in our daily lives..." And they plan to dump some money into this project, "...by providing financial resources and coal education materials for implementation in school curriculum grades K thru[sic] 12."

CEDAR's first targets are Mingo and Logan county schools "...with more counties to be added later." Logan ought to be easy for sure, their superintendent testified in behalf of mountain top removal to a legislative committee. He claimed that they needed more flat land for school buildings.

Rest assured that CEDAR will present little if any "unbiased" treatment of labor and environmental issues. I doubt seriously that the young minds of Mingo and Logan will get to see the great documentary, "Even the Heavens Wept", nor West Virginia Highlands Conservancy board member Bob Gates' classic film "In Memory of the Land and People".

The CEDAR propaganda will most likely not include a "knowledgeable and unbiased" presentation of the coal mine wars,

the Matewan Massacre, the notorious mine guards and the murder of Sid Hatfield by coal industry detectives. Don't expect much about such important issues as child labor and black lung. It is doubtful CEDAR will include coal industry resistance to regulation, taxation and health and safety legislation.

Will CEDAR own up to killing 125 people on Buffalo Creek and the 300 million gallons of sludge dumped into the Tug Fork and the Big Sandy rivers? And will they connect mountain top removal and other stripmining with the two one hundred year floods of last July 8 and this May 2?

It will be a big surprise if CEDAR mentions how much money the coal industry has used to buy politicians. And don't expect to learn from CEDAR about how large coal companies got by with not paying into worker's compensation, and then settled for twelve cents on the dollar--try not paying your taxes and see what happens. How about the 132 forfeited mine sites, the 136 sludge dams, the 1000 miles of streams under tons of rubble and the over 300,000 acres of mountain tops decapitated?

Do you reckon CEDAR will brag on the replacement of miners with machines and call it progress? Will they reveal having eliminated over 100,000 West Virginia mining jobs? Will they justify multi-million dollar salaries for coal executives? Is it likely CEDAR will mourn over one hundred thousand West Virginia miners killed on the job? My guess is that CEDAR will stick with an "unbiased" presentation of "the many benefits the coal industry provides in our daily lives." The mantra will no doubt be "Coal Keeps The Lights On". And you can bet that every student will get a t-shirt with that slogan.

CEDAR plans to infiltrate our schools with 'Coal Fairs' followed by regional coal fairs with "63 Cash Prizes to Category Winners". They plan to provide a "Coal Study Unit" with "Grant Money, Educational Materials, Cash Incentives for participation and performance in each grade level".

CEDAR claims that there will be, "No One Left Behind, Coal study units can be available to every student no matter what discipline or interest because coal affects virtually ever[sic] aspect of our lives." According to their brochure, CEDAR intends to invade the realms of science, mathematics, literature, art, music, technology and social studies with "...an unbiased understanding of the many benefits the coal industry provides in our daily lives."

What do you think about this? Would you like to help organize a program that would give an honest version of the story? Should we file a protest with the WV Department of Education that this propaganda should not be part of any school curriculum? Let me know what you think either in a letter to the Voice and/or to me at imaginemew@aol.com.

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sheds based on acreage, area of timber removed and type of logging used. The Department also recommended that logging companies improve their methods for disposal of treetops and branches left over from logging. The Department further recommended that there be increased inspection of logging operations.

The Department of Environmental Protection does not regulate logging. Instead, logging is regulated by the Division of For-

estry. As a result, the Department of Environmental Protection has less ability to influence the regulation of logging operations. Randy Dye, director of the Division of Forestry, promised to seriously consider the DEP's proposals.

The entire study, with supporting data, is available on line at www.dep.state.wv.us

COAL IS NOT CHEAP

Coal Summit Describes True Cost of Coal Mining

By Cindy Rank

Irony

The Bush administration in Washington looks to coal as the heart of its energy policy while the heart of the nation suffers and suffocates as a result of the mining and burning of coal.

Event

About 15 state, regional and national groups sponsored a three day Coal Summit in Charleston, WV June 20-22, 2002. Members of WVHC joined about 200+ people who attended the sessions held at the Civic Center.

At a time when the President of the United States has made coal a centerpiece of his energy policy, planners of the summit brought together people concerned about the dramatic impacts of the whole coal cycle. Scientists, activists, coalfield residents and artists familiar with and concerned about the impacts of coal mining, coal transportation and coal burning shared information, ideas, stories and song—some outrageously funny, some just outrageous.

From a variety of perspectives the message rang loud and clear: COAL IS NOT CHEAP!

We may not be paying big bucks for our monthly electric bills, but when all is said and done, when the human and other environmental impacts are factored in, coal may well be the most expensive form of electrical power.

Harvard Ayers of Appalachian Voices in North Carolina moderated the Conference and Brent Blackwelder of Friends of the Earth, Robbie Cox of the Si-

erra Club and Ken Hechler of WV were among the featured speakers. Panels of presenters addressed the human, community and other environmental impacts of coal mining and coal burning as well as the politics, economics and alternatives to coal.

Presenters included Judy Bonds and Janice Nease (Coal River Mountain Watch), Mimi Filippelli, Beverly Braverman and Wyona Coleman of PA (Tri-State Citizens Mining Network), Rick Eades, Dianne Bady and Janet Fout (Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition), David Rouse (Kentuckians for the Commonwealth), Cindy Rank (WVHC), Ben Stout (Wheeling Jesuit University), Rick Webb (U of VA) (& previously of WV Mountain Stream Monitors and the 1979 DLM SLAPP suit fame), Ori Loucks (Miami U), William Sharpe (Penn State U), Ulla Reeves and Stephen Smith (Southern Alliance for Clean Energy), Lisa Evans (Clean Air Task Force), Joel Schwartz (Harvard School of Public Health), Ellen Fister and Bill McCabe (Citizens Coal Council), Tony Delucia (American Lung Association), Peter Adels (PennFuture) and Rebecca Sherman (American Rivers).

Field trips took people to Whitesville and Kayford Mountain to see and hear some local residents talk about the impacts in those areas. Flyovers of the same area were provided by Hume Davenport of SouthWings. (It's difficult to imagine, but pilots with SouthWings have flown more than seven hundred people over the coal fields of Eastern KY and Southern WV. — Thank you Hume D. and Susan L.)

Songsmith Kate Long and flat picker Robin Kessinger of Charleston as well as Chadd Watson of Boone, NC and the

Contrarians added welcome musical dimensions. Gerry Hawkes presented his slide show "Air Pollution and Dying Forests" and Sasha Waters' recent video "Razing Appalachia" was shown.

Displays by the various groups as well as a new mountaintop removal brochure were available throughout the conference. (Check with Julian Martin about the brochure!)

All in all, the summit was well worth the time and effort so many people put into it the past couple of months. It provided a good next step in strengthening the ever expanding ties of local, state and national activists in our attempt to address the role of coal in the energy policies of the US and the world.

(The one sadly disappointing mishap of the event occurred at the very end of the third day when in haste to wrap up in a timely fashion, Ken Hechler's introduction by Julian Martin was skipped. Anyone who knows Julian, his story telling ability and his admiration for Ken, knows what a hoot of an ending we all missed. It was our loss. — Next time, Julian.)



SURFACE MINE BOARD UPHOLDS DENIAL OF LONGWALL MINE EXPANSION

By Judy Rodd

Mettiki Coal Company was seeking a permit to longwall mine under the North Branch of the Potomac River in Grant County, West Virginia. The West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection denied the permit because subsidence from the longwall mining would de-water a high quality trout stream. Mettiki appealed this decision to the Surface Mine Board.

Trout Unlimited asserted intervenor status in the Board hearing proceedings. Lawyer Joe Lovett, assisted by West Virginia Highlands Conservancy summer law intern, Spencer Dennison, represented TU at the hearing.

Friends of Blackwater also helped with the challenge. After a two-day hearing, on May 29, 2002, the Surface Mine Board agreed with the DEP and TU on the issue of de-watering, and gave the company 45 days to come up with a new plan for the mining that excludes longwall mining under the North Branch.

This important ruling may also help protect the Blackwater River!!! Mettiki has plans for longwall mining under the Blackwater River, *just 80 feet below the surface*. This ill-advised plan would majorly de-water the Blackwater, and would injure important tourism and recreation resources. The Blackwa-

ter under-mining permit is up for review by the DEP. We hope the Surface Mine Board's Mettiki precedent will help protect West Virginia's most precious water resources from de-watering and pollution.

Toxic acid mine drainage and mine subsidence damage have ruined hundreds of miles of West Virginia streams. It's a good sign when state environmental regulators say "no" to more destruction. Of course, the Board's ruling may not be the final word — it can be appealed to court — so stay tuned!

CITIZENS TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS ON MINING MATTERS

By Cindy Rank

Irony

Congress is spending great amounts of time, attention and money in the cause of homeland security, while coal mining continues to destroy homes and terrorize the communities of Appalachia.

Events

In late April the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a rule change that would "clarify" the definition of fill to make it legal for the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to grant permits to dump waste into streams – like waste rock from mining.

On May 8th in a lawsuit filed by the Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), Judge Charles Haden ruled that the Corps had illegally granted a Kentucky coal mine permit that proposed filling six miles of intermittent and perennial streams. Furthermore, the Judge ruled, EPA's change in the "fill rule" violated the Clean Water Act (CWA) itself.

On June 6th WVHC members joined other citizen and activist groups from across Appalachia and several national groups in Washington DC for a Congressional Hearing called by Senator Jim Jeffords (VT) to discuss the "fill rule", and for a press conference following the hearing.

In addition to listening to representatives of EPA and Corps of Engineers the Senate Committee entertained comments from a five member panel of experts who spoke to a large hearing room packed to overflowing with coalfield residents, national environmental groups, congressional staffers, media, etc.

Joan Mulhern of Earthjustice has been outstanding in her efforts in Washington to assist the national groups in formulating and delivering their message about Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR) in general and most recently the "fill rule" in particular. For this hearing she successfully and convincingly rose to the yeoman task of summing up the far-reaching regional and national impacts of the rule change.

Mike Callaghan, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment here in WV, described himself as the new sheriff in town and attempted to reassure the committee that proper enforcement of the rules was now the law of the land in his state.

Bruce Wallace, noted biologist from

the University of Georgia, has been one of the experts involved in the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) RE: MTR and Valley Fills. Dr. Wallace testified to the importance of the headwater streams that are being buried and to the long-term deleterious effects current and future fills would have on the larger streams throughout the region.

Mike Whitt, Mingo County Redevelopment Authority Director, emphasized that "diversifying the Mingo County economy through support of the mining industry is an important part of our future."

Kevin Richardson, native of Kentucky and one of the world famous Backstreet Boys, spoke of his horror in seeing the extent of destruction to his native state and neighboring WV during a flyover of the area. Mr. Richardson's appearance was the cause of much consternation for Senator Voinovich (OH), and provided an excuse for Sen. V and other Republicans on the committee to boycott the hearing. However, the Backstreet Boy from Kentucky quickly vindicated himself with a thoughtful, reasoned, reasonable, articulate and heartfelt presentation that quickly stifled all jokes about his right to testify.

(Even in our car the lighthearted comments about navel piercing that permeated our trip to DC turned into grateful acknowledgements on the way back for the thoughtful use of celebrity to highlight a cause that needs and deserves all the attention we can muster.)

The afternoon press conference added further depth to the testimony given at the hearing. Robert Kennedy (Waterkeeper Alliance President) introduced the briefing against the backdrop of slides put together by OVEC (Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition) and with a recent video created by WVHC Board member Bob Gates playing in full view at his side. Anyone who heard Kennedy speak at last years Environmental Conference in Charleston knows how much concern, anger and determination he brings to the MTR issue.

The passion of coalfield residents Julia Bonds, Pauline Canterbury, Freda Williams, Larry Gibson (all of WV) and Lucious Thompson, Teri Blanton, Nina & Mickey McCoy (all of KY) rounded out the feelings of the day as they spoke of their homes and their heritage that are being destroyed.

Kentucky Backstreet Boy Richardson ended the conference with some additional remarks and encouraged those present who enjoyed the gift of celebrity to use their visibility to bring attention to the rape of the land and the lives that is taking place in Appalachia.

On June 18 Judge Haden declined to suspend his earlier ruling that the ACOE had no legal right to permit the filling of streams with waste rock from coal mining, and that the "fill rule" change was an allowable extension of the Clean Water Act.

We are grateful to Sen. Jeffords for holding the Congressional Hearing, and to the organizers and the sponsors of all aspects of our trip to DC ...and of course, to Judge Haden.

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OUTDOOR WRITERS CONFERENCE GETS AN EARFULL

By Cindy Rank

Irony

The United Nations declared the year 2002 "THE YEAR OF THE MOUNTAINS" while coal mining continues to tear down hundreds of mountains in Appalachia.

Event

As the three day coal summit was winding down June 22nd in the Charleston WV Civic Center, the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) was setting up for their 75th Annual Conference in the adjoining meeting rooms.

As a scheduled speaker at one of the sessions June 23rd I was able to attend the keynote by WV's own General Chuck Yeager. As he regaled the audience with amusing stories of his hunting prowess both on land and in the air and made reference to the "Environmental Whackos" that are "agin every thing we're fer", I looked behind me and chuckled. For there was the ubiquitous enviro whacko Viv Stockman proudly setting up the great OVEC display table full of pictures and articles and brochures about mountain top removal mining. Great juxtaposition!

I represented WVHC at a morning "Newsmakers" session on Mountaintop Removal Mining. Also on the panel were Mike Callaghan (DEP Cabinet Secretary) and the ubiquitous Bill Raney (WV Coal Association).

Though somewhat prepared for my 12 minute presentation, I allowed the first two speakers distract and rattle me more than I usually do. Mike C was positively underwhelming in his description of the mining method that blows up mountains and buries streams and Bill R was positively overwhelming in his description of the wildlife habitat created by this same mining.

In describing Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR), Mike Callaghan showed slides depicting the mountains of Southern WV with line drawings of small little mounds that had two seams of coal running through them and adjoining little dips filled with a few little lumps depicting a valley fill. Even the pictures of actual sites were laughable. The largest fill picture was one with a mere six lifts. (When the valley fills are finished off, the face, or final front side of the fill is graded into 50 feet high stair-step 'lifts' sloped at an angle toward a 20 ft wide ledge and then another 50 ft high lift, and so on.)

Then Bill Raney in his 12 minutes praised reclamation at these sites as providing great wildlife habitat and described MTR coal mining as a process of transforming a resource of little value

into one of greater value. (I couldn't tell if he was talking about the coal or the land itself.) Then he described valley fills as sophisticated and highly engineered structures.

Well, I must be staying home too much, or working too many hours at the clinic, because I really couldn't quite regain my composure enough to make the lucid presentation I had prepared. ... Or maybe it was the past few days at the coal summit that highlighted the omissions and exaggerations that I am all too familiar with and usually am able to address in a more measured fashion. At any rate.

I did point out the irony of the United Nations declaring the year 2002 as the "Year of the Mountains" while here in WV people are watching the mountains of their youth and future being blasted apart and dumped into streams. I also suggested that the wildlife I had seen on various reclaimed mine sites seemed to be dashing for cover. Deer, bear, turkeys, boar, etc. may be more visible on these sites at the moment, but

even the draft EIS is showing that the destruction of the rich and diverse mesophytic forests means the long term loss of cove hardwoods and other food sources that have supported wildlife populations. The loss of thousands of acres of whole forest ecosystems will permanently change the wildlife in the area. And, as the EIS also points out, isolated wetlands that are temporarily attractive to ducks, are a sorry substitute for the diverse wildlife that is being lost.

I showed some aerial photos and some of the slides that were used in Penny Loeb's 1997 US New & World Report article to give a more accurate view of the breadth and width of MTR throughout the region, including shots of valley fills three times the size of the largest one Mike Callaghan showed.

I encouraged the audience to avail themselves of the flyovers that Sierra Club had arranged with Hume Davenport of SouthWings.

I talked with a few of the writers in attendance and saw amazed looks on some faces. However, the most memorable reaction came in a phone call from a columnist in Oregon who had some followup questions to ask. He mentioned similarities between the struggle here with coal and the struggle out West with timber and noted that although people in Oregon at first believed they couldn't survive a decrease in timbering, after twelve years they're doing fine. But what struck me most was his reaction to the flight he had taken over the mine sites. All he could say was: **"THE SCALE OF IT IS SHOCKING!"**

Amen to that.



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EASTERN COUGAR FOUNDATION TO HOST SEMINAR

By Helen McGinnis

The Eastern Cougar Foundation will present a program on eastern cougars in the WESTVACO Center at Coopers Rock State Forest near Bruceton Mills, West Virginia, from 4:00PM to 8:00 PM on Saturday, August 3rd. Topics to be discussed include: Do cougars live in West Virginia and elsewhere in the eastern forests, or are they extinct? If they still do live here, how is evidence of their existence found and evaluated? What is the prognosis for the recovery of this magnificent top predator in our eastern wild areas?

At 4:00 PM, Mark Jenkins, proprietor of the Cooper's Rock Mountain Lion Sanctuary, will give a tour of his shelter for displaced and neglected captive cougars. Visitors will meet each cougar individually and learn their stories and the history of the shelter.

At 7:00 PM, Todd Lester will address the topics mentioned above, focusing on West Virginia. He will display casts of tracks, skins, skulls and scats of several wildlife species and exhibit a display board showing sites of verified cougar evidence. Visitors are urged to bring their tales of cougar sightings and any possible evidence, such as track casts, photographs, videotapes, and scats.

Lester is the founder and president of the Eastern Cougar Foundation (ECF; www.easterncougar.org), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to verifying evidence of individual cougars and cougar populations in the East, gaining protection for all wild cougars in the East, and teaching tolerance of cougars.

At 8:00 PM, Bob Wilson of Garden City, Kansas will give a PowerPoint presentation on wildlife "captured" in "candid" moments with infrared triggered remote cameras. Cougar populations are recovering on the Great Plains and are reoccupying former habitat from the Rocky Mountains eastward. They have recently been documented in several midwestern states. Wilson has heard many convincing reports of sightings of cougars in Kansas. He has yet to record a cougar on film but has many delightful shots of white-tailed and mule deer, coyotes, bobcats and raccoons and tips to pass on regarding the use of remote cameras in seemingly bleak terrain.

Chris Bolgiano, award-winning author of *Mountain Lion: An Unnatural History of Pumas and People* and *The Appalachian Forest*, and Vice President of the Eastern Cougar Foundation, will sell autographed copies of her books. The ECF's new eastern cougar tee shirts will be on sale.

Refreshments will be served, and there will be time to talk with other eastern cougar advocates. To aid the ECF in planning, please contact Helen McGinnis at 304-227-4166 or helenmcginnis@meer.net if you plan to attend.

Camping is available at Chestnut Ridge Park, right next to the WESTVACO Center, and in the nearby State Forest for \$17.00 per night. For reservations in the Coopers Rock State Fork campground, call 304-594-1561. There are several motels in Morgantown, and the Maple Leaf Motel is in Bruceton Mills (304-379-4075).

For further information, contact Mark Jenkins at 304-379 or Helen McGinnis at 304-227-4166



SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT FLOODING

By Don Gasper

"You can't dump 6" to 9" of water in an area in a very short period of time and not have some kind of flooding." Governor Wise said this just after last year's flooding in southern W. Va. Quite true. However, we now know, thanks to D.E.P.'s careful study, that rainfall amounts were exaggerated. Even the standard sediment ponds located throughout the area built to contain a 25 year/24 hour rain were not challenged on July 8 when 5.3" fell at Mullins and the average throughout the area was just over 3".

Compaction and generally a rain saturated condition of the soil caused so much of this added rain of July 8 to run off. Further rains in late July caused further flooding. Flows remained fairly high in soils and streams from a May 16 rain to the July 30 rain storm as there were 5 major rainfall events in this interval.

There were 29 rain gages available for use in the D.E.P. study for the 5 storms. The average throughout the area totals only 6.5" for all 5 storms. The total was greatest for Summersville Lake, and was 14". There were 5 other places that got over 10" of total rainfall last spring.

This was a terrible and "unusual" situation with flood after flood. However, this is not an unusual amount of rain. What is

unusual is the growing amount of disturbance. Flooding again this year confirms that this disastrous flood response to near normal rainfall is now usual.

This study, that of the Governor's Study Group, those of the U.S. Corps, and the very able U.S. Geological Survey should confirm this conclusion. This is a speculative conclusion offered by Don Gasper on June 13, 2002.

This is based on an early report of the D.E.P. study by the Charleston Gazette. Their initiative and timely reporting is much appreciated.

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



West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Spring Review Tour Of Old Growth Forest © 2002 Jonathan Jessup.com

The Fun You'll Have If You Do Join--Hikers Take a Break at a Spring Review Outing

FEE DEMO: FRIEND OR FOE?

Editor's Note: "Fee-Demo" is a term for the experimental practice of charging user fees in national forests. It is designed to gauge public sentiment for this practice before deciding whether or not to make it a permanent part of Forest Service policy.

In an earlier issue, the Public Lands Committee of the Conservancy asked for member comments upon this policy and what the position of the Highlands Conservancy should be. In the May issue, Dave Saville vigorously attacked the practice. Then all heck broke loose. Dave's piece has provoked enthusiastic commentary on the issue. Here it is:

I'm glad I was going to let my subscription to *The Highlands Voice* run out if Dave Saville's commentary in the May 2002 issue is the Conservancy's stance on the fee demo program. I think fee demo can be improved but it's hardly the evil villain opponents make it out to be.

I am not in cahoots with a corporation or the USFS although I have fought fires for them and the NPS. Most of all, I am a fanatical hiker/camper/backpacker and good hiking trails are my major concern. Back in the budget cut/balanced-budget days of the early 1990s, I got sick and tired of crawling over and around blowdowns and seeing trails grown over with brush. Without the prodding of the ARC but with the utmost concern for viable hiking trails, I wrote my Congressional representatives and told them I thought it'd be good if hikers like me paid a few dollars to help maintain the trails they use. Seemed reasonable to me and it still does.

Where I worked for the Forest Service I saw first hand the good Fee Demo did for hikers and campers. The Fee Demo money allowed USFS recreation managers to hire 2 people in the summer to drive the forest's roads to pick up dumped household garbage (diapers, beer cans, etc.), clean up unofficial campsites and close off trampled and eroded areas and assist recreationists with advice and info.. The size of Wilderness area trail crews jumped from 1 and 2 to 4 and 5 (respectively) due to Fee Demo money. They've rebuilt bridges washed-out by glaciers and rerouted trails to more environmentally-friendly locations while still covering the basics of clearing off blowdowns and cleaning out drainage

bars. A majority of this would not have been possible without user fees. Without user fees, the FS would have let some of those trails and camps go. This is true. I didn't read it on a webpage. I saw this with my own eyes and as a hiker, I liked it.

I'm disappointed Mr. Saville parroted (apparently without question) the paranoid conspiracy theories about ARC and Fee Demo from Wild Wilderness's webpage. The motorizing of federal lands began many years before the Fee Demo passed in 1996. Unfortunately, demand for motorized recreation on public land will continue, fee demo or not, as long as so many people enjoy riding OHVs. I think motorizing public lands would be awful. I do not like their noise, exhaust, or impacts to soil and solitude. But whether OHVs take over trails has a whole lot more to do with the activism of motorized access groups like the Blue Ribbon Coalition and local dirtbike clubs and any sympathy with them at the local ranger district. Fee Demo simply is not a factor.

Also, the move to concessionaire management of campgrounds is not related to Fee Demo. That started 10 years (1987, Saville) before Fee Demo was implemented and will continue, Fee Demo or not, as long as the FS is not given enough money to maintain campgrounds and held to efficiency standards. The Forest Service only turns those campgrounds over to concessionaires when they do not have the money to properly upkeep them. In this way, Fee Demo can actually lessen the trend towards campground concessionaires.

In his commentary Dave Saville wrote, "Those who seek to package and sell a nature experience see wildness as something to be tamed and overcome" and "Any widespread attempt to manage, package and sell undeveloped recreation will only result in the destruction of that type of recreation". Really? Howie Wolke, one of the founders of Earth First! now lives as a wilderness guide in Darby, MT. I can hardly believe that it's his intention or he'll be successful in "taming" and "overcoming wildness" not to mention the many other river, horse packer and fly fishing guides across the country who do indeed "package and sell" "nature experience"s. Thousands of wilderness guides sell managed, packaged trips every summer and it has hardly destroyed the pleasure of backpacking for guides, clients or others.

Unfortunately, if fee demo is re-

pealed Congress will not pick up the difference with increased appropriations. If that happens, many trails on federal land will return to their overgrown, underfunded conditions of the 1980s and early 1990s. Recreation is in direct competition for funding with tax cuts, "the war of terrorism", domestic security, prescription drugs for seniors, education, defense spending and other generally politically popular federal programs.

In practice, Fee Demo has nothing to do with "profit" or "corporations". It's merely about helping pay for underfunded public infrastructure. All of this is really just a minor public finance issue and has nothing to do with devious corporate takeovers of public land despite the alleged agendas and coincidences.

I'm not saying we should give the agencies no oversight on how to use Fee Demo or other user fees. That'd be a mistake. But, I see no reasonable evidence of a connection between Fee Demo and corporations, "motorizing", or any nonsensical hyperbole about the "Disneyfication of Nature". It's a shame a modest fee system to help pay for clearing trails and fixing up broken down outhouses has been blown into a wacky conspiracy theory. As a result, our trails and campgrounds will deteriorate and so will many people's hiking experiences.

Jeremy Boyer
Bend, Oregon

Dear Editor:

Once in a while some concern is so thoroughly detailed and documented that if action is called for we should respond. Dave Saville has done this for us in the May issue of *The Voice*. It is a superb and insightful article that does great credit to the W.Va. Highlands Conservancy and himself.

As a further example — Tennessee State Parks' attempt to make each park a profit center has resulted in park closures, declining public patronage and fewer donations. Even where expected to be most successful privately run golf courses there are not meeting payments. "They have put profits over preservation and net revenue above nature." - commented a former Park employee.

Dave has left little need to learn more before asking our federal government and legislators to adequately fund those agencies that hold in stewardship our outdoor

More on User Fees

recreation opportunities so they do not have to make a profit - as of course they would if privatized.

Let us be sure each one of us write, because as Dave informs us, the tide has already shifted in Washington and our heritage is being altered and lost.

I am sure the W.V. Highlands Conservancy will itself consider writing such an important letter.

Don Gasper

Wilderness is Freedom, when it is Free.

I agree with Dave Saville, that the Recreational Fee-Demonstration Program is a serious threat to low impact public land users and to the agencies that are mandated to administer the program. If the 'demonstration' program ever gets signed into law, I fear favorite hiking and backpacking spots of the Monongahela NF, like Dolly Sods, could one day charge \$5 a day for a parking pass or the 'economical choice' of a \$30 annual parking pass.

The only thing this 'demonstration' program demonstrates is whether citizens chose to comply, or not to comply with the law. If you chose not to comply there is a chance that you will receive a citation from \$5 to up to \$100. So the program by design is really quite well thought out. Another big problem besides the threat of being ticketed is that parking passes can be a real pain to obtain. Finding a friendly retail store that sells them for a small profit could mean you having to drive a good long ways out of your way. Because of this frustration in finding a permit, many people may even decide to give up the idea of going on a hike all together. I work at one of the few National Parks that sells these permits, and I have been able to see for myself the frustration visitors have at the idea of needing a permit for a hike they wanted to do an hour back up the road from where they had just come from.

Some people don't have too much of a problem with the Rec. Fee-Demo. Program because they think all the money goes for trail maintenance. However, this is not the case. Much of the money goes for pavement, flushing toilets, motor boat put-in spots, videos, and visitor centers. Thus, most of the money is used for front country development and not backcountry trails. Because fees are charged most often at major backcountry trailheads, the program

discriminates against backcountry, low-impact users, who are often the least likely people to be enjoying flushing toilets.

While the program is a mighty obstacle for conservationists to break, it nonetheless provides a huge window into better approaching broader abuses of our public lands by logging, mining, and grazing. Here's how. The very purpose of the Rec. Fee-Demo. Program is to help create money for work on the tremendous backlog of projects on public lands. However, what the Forest Service doesn't tell you is that more often than not, these monies are only replacing other monies from recreation and restoration budgets that continue to be cut. What is happening, in effect, is that many members of congress and our president are backing the idea that our public land agencies should be able to break even, or even post a profit. Call me crazy, but I doubt the BLM and Forest Service will be able to concentrate too hard on managing for endangered species, when it needs to get out the cut, build the ski resorts, or pump out the oil.

The Forest Service as a 'multiple-use' agency by law must manage for a variety of purposes. But not surprisingly, a very very small piece of the overall budget is spent on recreation. A humungous slice is spent in the form of a subsidy given to logging companies by paying for logging roads for them. Other big slices include losses from mismanagement, restoration from their own destructive programs, and under market sales of forests, grazing lands, and mining contracts.

So the question can easily then be asked, what are the priorities of our public lands agencies? Subsidies for extractive industries or providing for the free use of our wilderness areas by citizens. Let me note here that the free use of Forest Service and BLM lands has been the rule since their creation. Having the option of taking a free hike to ones favorite fishing hole and catching dinner is, as far as I'm concerned, is what makes America great. People like Teddy Roosevelt, worked endless hours making sure wilderness would always have the potential to effect Americans lives for the better, as it did for him. Because of the conservation achievements he made, our country has been fortunate enough to keep its wilderness culture.

So now, one of the bricks in America's foundation, is being chiseled out and being

readied to be removed. I am for the freedom of the wilderness and the free use of our trails, lakes, meadows, and mountains. If you do not agree with the Rec. Fee-Demo Program, the best thing to do is to write to your senators and representative. The state legislatures of California, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Colorado have all passed resolutions against the program. I don't see why West Virginia and surrounding states shouldn't do the same. See www.freeourforests.org and www.wildwilderness.org for more information.

Bryan Faehner, Maryland

OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS: FOE

Editor:

As Governor Wise pushes the truck panel to complete their study, we can guess their recommendations — raise the weight limits to 120,000 lbs and give industry a "legal license to kill".

Before, most of the death, destruction and subsidy were experienced in the southern coalfields; with a weight increase, all West Virginians will pay. All will travel with overweight trucks; all will suffer road and bridge damage, and all taxpayers will "foot the bill". More than just southern West Virginians will die.

Testimony at expert meetings reported to the panel that the cost to upgrade and maintain roads and bridges would be extreme. Who will pay for this? If weight doesn't matter, why is road and bridge damaged expected with increased weights? A panel member asked, since they already haul over 120,000 lbs wouldn't that decrease the damage. The expert answered no because this would no longer be contained in the southern part of the state.

How much more can the taxpayers of West Virginia pay? As industry is laughing on their way to the bank, our corrupt elected officials continue to sell out the citizens of West Virginia.

Change can only come from the people. Vote NO to any legislator that votes for the 120,000 lbs increase.

Julia Bonds
Rock Creek, WV

ANOTHER READER SPEAKS

Dear WVHC:

I am enjoying my six-month free subscription to the Highlands Voice and wish to thank you very much. I have every intention of becoming a paid subscriber at the expiration of my free, trial period. However, there is one opinion I would like to express concerning the WVHC position with respect to environmental concern.

Environmental concerns and discussions often encompass such topics as global warming, toxic emissions, water quality, fossil fuel use, air quality, water quality, and forest preservation. But, one subject that is often overlooked is the pollution and waste that is generated in food production.

Some examples:

1. It takes 600 gallons of water to produce one pound of feedlot beef.
2. Livestock farms now generate an estimated five tons of manure for every person in the United States each year.
3. Every year in South and Central America, five million acres of rain forest are felled to create cattle pasture.
4. In the United States, seventy percent of the land in the western US is used to graze cattle (including 306 million acres of public land), resulting in erosion and the loss of native plants and animals.
5. Poultry, a "commodity" produced on a large scale in some sections of West Virginia, is also a major contributor to excessive energy use, pollution, and waste. It takes roughly six pounds of feed to produce one pound of chicken. For every pound of meat produced, we lose about five pounds of topsoil in growing the soybeans, corn and other grains used as feed.

This statistical information was found at the Earthsave.org website and all sources are credited and listed.

In the Highlands Voice April 2002 issue, Volume 35, Number 4, page 16 is an invitation to attend the 2002 Spring Review. I highly commend the WVHC for sponsoring this event and many others. I also note in the "Meals" section, for the Saturday evening dinner, you "will be barbecuing some chicken, hot dogs and hamburgers." Although this

AND WE REPLY

Dear Cliff,

Thank you very much for your excellent comments about the beef and poultry industries and their effects on the environment. You are right. I am very glad to see our members "keeping us honest." But frankly, it is hard to drive down any rural road and not see the damaging effects of meat production. Cows in streams, over grazing leading to serious topsoil loss, streambank destabilization, water contamination and siltation. In the eastern portions of West Virginia the Potomac River and many of its headwater streams are seriously impacted by the factory farming of chickens.

I would like to report however, that we did not serve chicken at our 36th annual Spring Review, and the hot dogs were actually "Wonder Dogs", a soy based meatless version of this popular American barbecue fare. I am most happy to inform you, and our readers and members, that we did serve "real" hamburgers, but that they were made from "Petite Beef" produced by Headwater Farms. Petite Beef is grass fed not from feed lots. It is naturally lower in fat and is free of hormones and antibiotics. It is raised by family farmers in the Potomac River headwaters who

dietary fare is habituated in our culture, its ecological impact should not be ignored by any serious environmental group or organization. I realize the issue of whether man is a vegetarian or omnivore is still debatable. Personally, I feel the scientific evidence is conclusive that man is a vegetarian. But, my opinion aside, the environmental movement as a whole is made up of many vegetarians who not only see the inherent health dangers in the consumption of animal products, but the ecological destruction as well. Eventually, I think the WVHC will have to take an official position on this issue as vegetarianism continues to grow due to the concerns I've mentioned and many more I have not. Perhaps the WVHC will consider an article or two in the Highlands Voice on the matter. And, even a blend of vegetarian food selections at its events along with some informational leaflets and brochures on vegetarianism versus the consumption of animal products? Most vegetarians are more than willing to pay a nominal fee to have vegan and vegetarian food selections at functions.

Again, I enjoy the Highlands Voice and believe the WVHC is a strong and well-organized environmentally concerned group of people. As a life long resident of the state of West Virginia, it's comforting to know there are organizations like the WVHC that watchdog our legislators, state government, and corporations. Hopefully the WVHC will begin considering the environmental impact of factory farming of animals and the human consumption of all animal products. There is a wealth of information available on the Internet advocating vegetarianism and supporting the same with scientific data. Here are just a few:

<http://www.earthsave.org/>

<http://www.vegsource.com/>

<http://peta-online.org/>

I have saved this letter onto the floppy disk enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely,
Cliff Swiger
Fairview, WV

protect the river and streams from the potential negative impacts. They use low-impact sustainable farming practices like streamside fencing, rotational grazing, and encourage growth of diverse grasses. These practices avert harmful erosion and siltation and reduce run-off that threatens the health of the Potomac River.

The average item on your dinner plate traveled over 1300 miles from the farm where it was grown. To do so requires energy for packaging, processing, cooling, shipping, preserving, storage, marketing, and repeated handling, to name a few. By buying locally-grown produce and meat, West Virginians support West Virginia growers and get fresher, higher quality products. In the process, they reduce energy consumption, while helping to protect local farmland from development and thereby promote greenspace. Food dollars stay in state and circulate to improve our local economy, instead of going into the pockets of out-of-state corporations. Consumers develop a closer relationship with the people growing their food, and learn a little about the impact they have on the land through the simple act of buying groceries.

Sincerely, the Spring Review 2002 Committee

TUCKER COUNTY WILDFLOWERS

By Heather Biola

What wildflowers do hikers look for in June after the Lady's Slippers are gone and before the Rhododendrons bloom? For answers to this and other botanical questions, it helps to go with someone in the know. Karen, our Highlands Trail Foundation guide, uncovered several Jack-in-the-pulpits June 1st in the Monongahela National Forest. She led a wildflower hike starting at 10:00 a.m. near the intersection of US 219 and Moore Station Road in Tucker County on the way east to Parsons.

Lester and Mary Beth rode in by motorcycle from their home in Harman. Cliff and Carol of Elkins brought along a wildflower book to verify the names of each floral specimen. This writer also hiked. The Allegheny Highlands Trail Map showed where Forest Service Road 933 led up a hill to a cool, wooded path named "Lower Shingletree Trail." The wildflower hikers struck a leisurely pace stopping often to look at flowers and foliage on the way.

"You have to decide if you want to exercise or botanize," said Mary Beth. She took time to identify several edible and medicinal plants near the path. They included Sicilian Anise, a spice used in Italian confections; Teaberry, found in popular American chewing gum; and Cohosh, used for treating menstrual cramps.

A wide variety of mushrooms and other fleshy fungi pushed up through the soft carpet of decaying leaves and green moss. Squawroot, also known as Indian Corn, stood four or five inches

high on the forest floor. These cone-like yellow-brown parasites live on old tree roots.

The reference book was a great help when questions arose. For example, what is a True Forget-me-not? Most people mistakenly call the delicate little spring Bluets with four petals, "Forget-me-nots." However, true Forget-me-nots have five petals and a sturdy stalk with dark green leaves. Untrained wildflower lovers, who don't go by the book, often mistake the common yellow Cinquefoil for a Buttercup. This novice, not knowing a Stinging Nettle from a Nasturtium, got an itchy red spot on the leg. Luckily, Karen's Handy Wipes washed away the offending fluids and relieved the pain from the nasty Nettles.

The botanical discoveries catalogued on the two hour hike included: Bunch Berries, Christmas Ferns, Hay Scented Ferns, Tulip Polar, Mountain Laurel, Trailing Arbutus, Violets, Wild Roses, Wood Sorrel, and Yarrow. Hikers also saw a dead Luna Moth and heard many birds as they went. Lester picked a healthy handful of Wild Strawberries near the end of the hike for a treat.

The experts said that the Lower Shingletree Trail would be a good place to find a Lady's Slipper or Trillium in May because they saw the foliage for both plants. They also noticed that Rhododendron buds are setting on and should be in bloom later in June.

For more hiking information see the Highlands Trail Foundation web site www.highlandstrail.org.



Squaw Root



Jack-in-the-pulpit

LIMITED TIME OFFER

TIME RUNNING OUT TO COMMENT ON MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST PLAN

August 1, 2002, is the deadline to comment on the revision to the management plan for the Monongahela National Forest. This plan will guide the management of the forest for the next 10-15 years. It is important that you be heard. Send your comments to:

NOI - FP Revision
Monongahela National Forest
200 Sycamore St.
Elkins, WV 26241



Tall Trail

By Carroll Jett

Do you know which trail in the Monongahela National Forest is the most heavily used? North Fork Mountain? Frosty Gap? Roaring Plains? Blue Bend? Meadow Creek? All these and many others are exceptional trails, but the most heavily used (according to the U.S. Forest Service) is the Seneca Rocks Hiking Trail (#563) which begins at the Visitors Center and runs to the observation platform near the top of Seneca Rocks. Although this trail is only 1.3 miles from top to bottom, it drops in elevation from 2300 feet at the top of the rocks to 1560 feet where it crosses the North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac directly behind the Visitor Center – a vertical drop of 740 feet!

There are 7 benches strategically placed along the way for those who need to take a break on the way to the breathtaking view from the top. There are also several interpretive signs describing the geology, history, soil, and botany of the area, as well as protective signs at ecologically sensitive and dangerous walking areas.

If you are middle-aged (or beyond) and not in good physical condition, you should allow yourself about an hour and a half to reach the observation platform. The trek back down will be more leisurely and take less than an hour. Take a water bottle and a snack, and treat yourself to a magnificent view of the valley below! It's a great place to watch the sunset.

The WV Trails Coalition hosted an AmeriCorps team of volunteers to work on a series of trail projects last year, including the Seneca Rocks Trail. With the support of other groups, including the WV Highlands Conservancy, the newly formed Friends of Blackwater, the USFS, and the WVDNR, the coalition is currently hosting another AmeriCorps team this June and July to do trail work at Blackwater Falls, Dolly Sods, Seneca Creek Back Country, and the Otter Creek Wilderness areas.

A HIKE FOR THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

By Ruth Blackwell Rogers

Celebrating the West Virginia highlands at the Summer Solstice on a high place with a great view—what could be better? I had picked the Roaring Plains but I thought I had better check out one detail. My plan was to follow South Prong Trail from its upper trailhead on FS 19 to the elbow where it turns sharply west. From there, we would bushwhack south up on to the Plains and the spectacular view. According to the Highlands Conservancy's Mon National Forest Hiking Guide, "From the E tip of the meadow [the view] very experienced hikers sometimes walk off-trail along the ridgetop 0.9 mi to South Prong Trail." Could somewhat experienced hikers do it in reverse?

To be sure, I scouted the area a couple of days before, and got whacked to a standstill. I had to return the way I came. Back home, I emailed a person who might know the way through: Jonathan Jessup. After all, Jonathan's photographs were one of the strongest lures to explore the Plains.

Jonathan generously responded with a lengthy description that would guide us to the Hidden Passage (his capitals). He said I had been very near it while I pushed through rhododendron and spruce and wandered in a boggy meadow. The Hidden Passage was the ONLY WAY to get from the elbow of the South Prong Trail to the Roaring Plains.

And so on June 22nd three of us set off on the adventure. Others had signed up but shied away, perhaps sensing the leader's uncertainty. My husband Hugh and I were determined to find the Hidden Passage; Peter Shoenfeld was dubious. All three of us had compasses and used

them. The first part turned out to be easy. Following Jonathan's directions, we passed the broken hunting stand and the three-stone cairn and quickly found ourselves in the Hidden Passage. I had come within spitting distance of it two days earlier.

The trail was very faint and often ran out. We walked through grassy glades, cherry and birch woods, and fern avenues until we came to a hill described in Jonathan's directions. We climbed up through the woods and over rocky areas and emerged in more open territory of grass, hawthorn, and exuberantly blooming laurel.

When we struck a well-worn trail through blueberry and spruce, we knew we had arrived. Soon the magnificent view of North Fork Mountain stretched away to the east. We ate lunch as we absorbed the view, then found a spot to shake our rattles, dance, and disperse our good feelings on the winds in all directions. We felt gratitude for all the wonderful peaks and high places in the highlands.

After the rattles were put away, Peter expressed his doubts about the return. Somehow, though, our search for a nearby bog led us into an attempt to retrace our steps. We quickly became confused by the deer trails leading this way and that, began to go this way and that ourselves, and reached again and again for our compasses. Many faint tracks looked familiar; none matched the way we had come. We forged ahead, changing course whenever we ran into impenetrable thickets. Doubt grew as we faced more and more thickets. Peter suggested heading west to find Forest Road 70 but Hugh and I weren't ready for

that and didn't expect the terrain to be easier.

From time to time we fanned out on the wooded slope to look for a trail, but were foiled by rhododendron thickets and had to retreat, find a way around, or plunge through. We often looked at Map V-C-1 that we'd photocopied from the Hiking Guide. Mind you, we were not "lost." We knew we would find our way back. We were just having quite a time doing so. In particular, we didn't recognize all the streams dissecting the hill. Were we east or west of the route we'd come by?

Hugh argued for west. He pointed out a certain topo pattern and for the first time Peter saw that north on the photocopied map was not at the top of the page. Aha! he said, you've been covering the north arrow with your thumb! From that moment it was easier to reach consensus on the best direction to bushwhack. A distinct trail appeared and we realized we were in the Hidden Passage. More particularly, we were by the stream in the Hidden Passage. So we paused, removed our boots and socks, and dandled our feet in the stream. I am often teased for my insistence that dandling is an important part of every hike, but I notice that everyone else feels better when they follow my example.

Now thoroughly at ease, we made our way back over the eastern stretch of the South Prong Trail. It is a beautiful trail, garden-like in late June with the laurel in full bloom. For 2.5 miles it follows the Allegheny Front, in some places separating boggy spruce, birch, and blueberry from dry oak, pine, and maple. Back at the trailhead, Peter almost felt good about trusting Hugh and me.

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey Schedule

July 11-14 (Thur-Sun) Bicycle trip on the Greenbrier River Trail. Travel the entire 75 mile rail trail on bikes while camping out at Watoga State Park. "The former Greenbrier Division of the C. & O. Railway was built at the turn of the century to serve the booming timber industry of that time. The trail passes through numerous small towns and traverses 35 bridges and 2 tunnels as it winds its way along the valley. Throughout much of its length, the Trail is directly adjacent to the beautiful Greenbrier River and is surrounded by peaks of the Allegheny Mountains." Contact Susan Bly at (304)258-3319 or sbly@shepherd.edu for further details.

July 13 (Sat) - Canoe Trip. Six scenic, flatwater miles on the Buckhannon River Pool just above Buckhannon. Meet at Sheetz in Buckhannon at 11 AM. Leader: Don Gasper, (304)472-3704.

Aug 17 (Sat)-Explore Fisher Spring Run Bog. This large, open and seldom visited bog is just within the Dolly Sods Wilderness. Wildflowers and many plant life forms adapted to bog and high elevation conditions are the focus of this trip. Waterproof boots are a must. Leader: Jonathan Jessup, (703) 204-1372, jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

Aug 31-Sept 2(Sat-Sun/Mon) North Fork Mountain backpack Sat-Sun with Mon. Forest Hiking Guide author Bruce Sundquist. Prior backpacking experience required, carry your own water, 12 miles total. An optional third day will be spent exploring Dolly Sods North. Leader: Bruce Sundquist, (724) 327-8737, bsundquist1@juno.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.

A PAIR OF BARDS TRY THEIR HANDS

OBSESSION

by Mae Ellen Wilson

Springtime just drives me crazy.
How I love the woods,
the flowers, the flame and pink azalea.
I mourn the fate and must save those beauties wild
from teeth of chain saws and backhoes.
So dig I must to save a precious plant child .
and seek the same trees and type of soil
in the woods of my wildflower haven.
Now this does take a share of toil.
My back will ache.

EARTH AND TREES

By Tad Ingalls

Forest floor all covered in moss
How I would mourn your coveted loss
To the ax and saw at last

If I had the money I would buy your stay
So you could live many a day
Oh how I like a mushroom foray

You feel like a carpet under my feet
Which you are by nature's decree
Forever wild I would like you to be

You will be here after I'm gone
For my time here is short
Compared to the endless ground

When I go absorb me, O ground
So I will always be part of your mound
Blessed be the ones who never frown

coming attractions

July 13 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Summer Board Meeting

July 27 Garden Party at Walnut Farm, 1978 Smithtown Road, Morgantown

August 1 Deadline for comments on management plan for Monongahela National Forest

August 2 Sustainability Fair, Lapaix Herb Farm, Alum Bridge (near Weston in Lewis County)

August 3 The Eastern Cougar Foundation will present a program on

eastern cougars in the WESTVACO Center at Coopers Rock State Forest near Bruceton Mills, West Virginia, from 4:00PM to 8:00 PM

September 6-8 West Virginia Environmental Council Annual Fall Conference, Bluestone Conference Center

October 11 - 13 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Fall Review

October 13 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Annual Membership Meeting and Fall Board Meeting

January 25, 2003 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Winter Board Meeting

BIRDING SPEED By Jack Slocumb

According to Dr. Ed Gates, there are two speeds when you are hoofing it in the out of doors - hiking speed and birding speed. Birding speed is definitely the slower of the two.

Ed is a West Virginia Highlands Conservancy member, and he works professionally as a wildlife and habitat ecologist at the U. of Md.'s Appalachian Laboratory in Frostburg, Md. Much of his research over the years has been focused on Avian Ecology, and during this time he has managed to make some important contributions to understanding how fragmented landscapes affect bird populations and behavior. And so we were fortunate, indeed, to have Ed with us as our volunteer leader for the Mountain Odyssey Bird Observation outing at Blackwater Falls on May 25th.

About 14 wide-eyed bird enthusiasts, some experienced birders - and others just interested - showed up at the Blackwater Lodge on Saturday about 8:00 AM ready to see what the morning had in store. The proverbial dangling binoculars and an awkward assortment of bird identification manuals accompanied our "avid" group as we meandered along the edge of the woods near the lodge, out to the overlook, and then up the Loop Road to the Pendleton Falls scenic viewpoint. It was a very short walk, but, as I would find out, distance doesn't really matter a whole lot when you get caught up in birding. It has its own rhythms, its own kind of time, its own very satisfying obsessional life, it seems.

During the course of only 2 ½ hours, under Ed's very patient (at least in my case)

leadership, we were able to identify 20 different beautiful species. These included Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures sailing the thermals above the canyon (Black Vultures can be distinguished from Turkey Vultures by their dark heads and, from a distance, by their somewhat horizontal wing span - as compared with the dihedral configuration of Turkey Vulture wings). Also to be seen were a pair of nesting Cedar Waxwings, Mourning Doves, Purple Finches, Robins, Blue-headed Vireos, Red-eyed Vireos, Dark-eyed Juncos, Wood Thrushes, raspy croaking Ravens, cawing Crows, the ubiquitous Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Veeries, Chipping Sparrows, and, of course, the elusive warblers - Magnolia, Blackburnian, Canada, and Black-throated Green. There were also a few species that some of our party *thought* they might have seen flitting around, but whose actual presence continued to remain only at the speculative stage.

It was actually quite a feast for a morning's saunter. Such a variety of species in such a small area is, well, very heartening. This, I would venture to guess, may reflect the integrity of habitat provided by a fairly unbroken protected forest environment - such as is the case in parks like Blackwater Falls. But, as Ed pointed out to our group, the population sizes of many neotropical migrant birds are actually in continuing to decline - owing to the ongoing loss of hospitable habitat in both North America and in the birds' wintering areas in Mexico, and Central and South America. Blackwater Falls and places of its

ilk, where birds can still find environments where they can cavort, thrive and reproduce, are becoming more and more the exception these days.

Besides having the good fortune of spotting so many different species, there was for me, and maybe for the others, too, an added pleasure: going at our poke along pace, there emerged a very different sense of my bond with things wild than what I usually experienced on my more quick-striding walks. It's a seeing more into the *depth* of the forest, a kind of consciousness of the essences that abound within a small wooded plot of earth, a meditation, an intimation, an awakening, so to speak, to what I might call the *Tao* of bird space. A very nice thing.

We finally rounded off our little tour gazing longingly (what other way is there?) across the gorge at the long white cascade and spill of Pendleton Falls, gushing out from somewhere along the opposite canyon rim and plunging willy-nilly down through the trees for a thousand feet or so it seems to be swallowed up by the faintly visible Blackwater River below.

As I took in the sweep of the distant falls on the other side of that great abyssal space, I couldn't help but wonder momentarily about how the very small epiphanies of the world - like the fleeting blaze of color of a Blackburnian Warbler darting in and out in the foliage, or the high pitched buzz of an unseen Veery somewhere - seem somehow to be ineffably bound up with the cosmic.

It's the sort of thing that crosses your mind at birding speed.

