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2004 Six Week Count: Windmills 2,172, Bats 0

BATS AND WINDMILLS KEEP COLLIDING

The Bats and Wind Energy Cooperative has studied bat fatalities at the Mountaineer wind farm in West Virginia and the wind farm in Meyersdale in Pennsylvania. To those who are concerned about the bats, the results are not encouraging. Although none were available for comment, it is safe to assume that the bats are not all that thrilled either.

The Cooperative estimates that during the six week study period in late summer, 2004, between 1364 and 1980 bats were killed by the forty four turbines at the Mountaineer facility and between 400 and 600 bats by the twenty turbines at the Meyersdale facility. These estimates are among the highest ever reported, and support the contention that forested ridges are locations of especially high risk for bat fatality at wind facilities.

The Bats and Wind Energy Cooperative was formed in 2003 by Bat Conservation International, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the American Wind Energy Association, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory of the US Department of Energy. The Bat and Wind Energy Cooperative is an alliance of state and federal agencies, private industry, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations interested in cooperating to develop and coordinate research opportunities and identify solutions to prevent or minimize threats to bats.

Estimates of bat kills are necessarily imprecise.

Researchers searched the area around half the turbines every day during the study period for carcasses, including using bat sniffing dogs. The other half of the turbines were searched once per week.



While researchers are reasonably confident that they found a substantial number of the bat carcasses, some will inevitably fall in the weeds and be lost and some will be carried off by scavengers. Because of these uncertainties, it is likely that not all carcasses were discovered. As a result, estimates of bat kills remain estimates.

Although the estimates are not precise, researchers used a protocol to arrive at the estimates.

In their report, they say that they are confident that there is a 90% probability that the actual number of kills was within the range they report.

The researchers chose the period from July 31, 2004, through September 13, 2004, because that six week period was the time when bat fatalities had most often been reported at wind facilities. The researchers did caution, however that a full season is from April through October and that one should assume that bat fatalities occurred outside the study period. During visits to the site in mid-July (before the study period) the researchers noted fatality rates which were as high as those during the study period.

The study did not make any breakthroughs in determining factors which increase bat fatalities or steps wind farm operators could take to eliminate the problem. There were more males killed than females; turbines at the end of a string or in the middle were most dangerous to bats; lighting had no effect. The only turbine where there were no kills during the study period was the one which did not operate during the entire period.

Bat kills at the Mountaineer and Meyersdale facilities went up and down in tandem. More oc-

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From the Heart of the Highlands

by Hugh Rogers

Paradoxical Private Property

Not long ago, as we were driving home on a back road through mountains south of here, Ruth and I spotted, high on a stony ridge, what we thought was a Korean Buddhist temple. For us, this was magical. We were once Peace Corps Volunteers in Korea, and one of our favorite things to do when we got out of Seoul was hike to old temples deep in the mountains. We were overcome by *deja-vu*. Long-lost phrases came back. We would use them to greet a gray-robed monk—after which we'd continue in English.

Unreasonably optimistic, we climbed a gate and hiked up a rutted dirt lane. As we suspected, this was not the main entrance. Nor was it a temple. Yet the charm hardly wore off as we walked through a rock garden, past a pavilion, and around the fantastically detailed replica of a traditional Korean temple, which turned out to be someone's country house. The Virginian owner's and the Korean builder's names were on the cornerstone.

Why stop there? I wrote to the owner. After I explained and asked him to excuse our trespass, I asked a few questions. Had he lived in Korea? How had he found the architect and builders? Had he seen other examples of their work? I added our email address and signed off in Korean.

This was his reply:

Mr. Rogers: Thank you for your letter but as a matter of liability exposure you can imagine my concern that you would see fit to traverse my property without my permission. Our mutual respect for private property rights would lead you to the basis of my concern.

When I told a friend that there was an attachment to his message, she asked, "What was it—a summons?" No, the owner had been more gracious than that. He had sent a copy of the "Certificate of Appreciation" that he had presented to the architect and builder in Seoul. He said it was "the only public expression of my property." On it he had written:

[Name] is a private dwelling designed to present to all that appreciate its beauty a temple in a mountain garden. The Korean architecture of the dwelling appropriately reflects the harmony between the heavens, the earth and man.

The harmony between man and man was more problematic—that did not need to be said. It required strict observance of legal arrangements. Although I disagreed about "liability exposure," since he owed no duty to me, I did respect the owner's position. His concept of property compelled him to restrict his own liberty: in spite of his original intention, he couldn't present his extraordinary dwelling "to all that appreciate its beauty."

I remembered this exchange the other day as I was hiking (with permission) on private land in Pendleton County. The trails were kept open by people who came over the mountain on four-wheelers. No doubt they hunted there, too, in season. It had been that way as long as anyone could remember. In fact, that was the law when this was still Virginia: private landowners could not exclude the public from hunting, foraging, even grazing. The law has changed but old custom prevails in many rural areas. As long as public users close gates, and don't abuse the land or harass farm animals, they are tolerated. This could be our once and future law. In Britain, from which we derived our earliest property law, the "right to roam" over private property has gained increasing protection.

The larger point is that property rights have changed, and should change, over time. As our population grows and our economy shifts and our understand-

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Study First, Act Later. What a Concept**OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING TO THINK BEFORE IT ACTS**

Bush administration officials have announced that they will conduct a detailed environmental study before they scrap a federal rule that prohibits coal mining within 100 feet of streams.

The study could delay the rule change for two years or more. The change had been strongly pushed by the coal industry.

"We don't have a hard schedule," said David Hartos, a U.S. Office of Surface Mining scientist working on the study. "But a ballpark estimate would be 18 to 24 months."

In January 2004, the Office of Surface Mining had proposed to essentially eliminate the 20-year-old stream "buffer zone" rule, which generally prohibits mining activity within 100 feet of streams. Coal operators can obtain variances to mine within that buffer. To do so, companies must show that their operations will not cause water quality violations or "adversely affect the water quantity and quality, or other environmental resources of the stream."

Over the past 20 years, state and federal regulators have allowed hundreds of miles of Appalachian streams to be buried by these fills. In West Virginia and other states, regulators seldom examined whether these fills complied with the buffer zone rule or were eligible for a variance.

In 1999, U.S. District Judge Charles H. Haden II concluded that the rule generally prohibited coal operators from burying most streams with waste rock and dirt from their mines.

In 2001, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va., overturned Haden. But the court ruled only on jurisdictional grounds, not on the merits of Haden's decision.

Even though Judge Haden's decision was overturned on appeal, federal regulators and coal industry officials still moved to rewrite the rule.

The announcement was a major reversal for the Office of Surface Mining.

Originally, the agency argued that its buffer zone rule changes would "not significantly affect the quality of the human environment."

A more detailed study — called an Environmental Impact Statement would not be needed, the Office of Surface Mining said. Environmental and citizen groups disagreed and urged the Office of Surface Mining during a comment period last year to perform an Environmental Impact



Study.

In Thursday's Federal Register notice, the Office of Surface Mining said it has "subsequently determined that the preparation of an EIS would be an appropriate mechanism to fully assess alternative approaches to these specific proposed actions and their potential impacts."

In its proposed rule changes last year, the Office of Surface Mining wanted to weaken the test that companies would have to meet for a variance from the buffer zone rule.

Under the proposal, a variance would be allowed if a company showed that it would "to the

extent possible, using the best technology currently available" prevent additional solids from leaching into the stream and "minimize disturbances and adverse impacts on fish, wildlife and other related environmental values of the stream."

In his 1999 ruling, Haden had said valley fills could never meet the strict test for a variance from the existing buffer zone rule.

"When valley fills are permitted in intermittent and perennial streams, they destroy those stream segments," Haden wrote. "The normal flow and gradient of the stream is now buried under millions of cubic yards of excess spoil waste material, an extremely adverse effect," the judge wrote. "If there are fish, they cannot migrate. If there is any life form that cannot acclimate to life deep in a rubble pile, it is eliminated.

"No effect on related environmental values is more adverse than obliteration," Haden wrote. "Under a valley fills, the water quantity of the stream becomes zero. Because there is no stream, there is no water quality."

The Office of Surface Mining said it "believes there may be a need to clarify" the buffer zone rule. The agency cited "highly contradictory views on the application" of the rule.

In its announcement, the Office of Surface Mining said it will accept public comments until mid-August on how to design the buffer zone study.

The Office of Surface Mining also said it will hold "scoping meetings" in Pittsburgh; Knoxville, Tenn.; Alton, Ill.; Denver; and Washington. None of the meetings was scheduled for any of the nation's top three coal-producing states — Wyoming, West Virginia and Kentucky.

Editor's note: This story originally appeared in the Charleston Gazette; it was written by Ken Ward, Jr., Staff Writer. It has been slightly edited for length.

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

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

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

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

**Tell Governor Manchin
No More Mountaintop Removal!
Rally Noon, Saturday, July 30
WEST VIRGINIA STATE CAPITOL**



Kayford "Mountain" May 2005. Mining around Kayford alone has already destroyed over 15 square miles of forests -- equal to a swath 1000 feet wide from Charleston to Princeton, WV, -- and untold miles of streams! Mountaintop removal is a crime against people and the earth! Mountaintop removal is economic insanity!

**Stand Up For Your Mountains!
Stand Up For Your Future!**

Stand with



Friends of the Mountains is a coalition of groups and individuals committed to ending mountaintop removal. Members include Coal River Mountain Watch, Coalfield Sustainability Project, Keepers of the Mountains Foundation, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, West Virginia Chapter Sierra Club and West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

BLACKWATER CANYON UPDATE

By Judy Rodd

Keep Fighting to Protect the Scenic Blackwater Canyon Trail

The United States Forest Service has just completed a "scoping comment period" for their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study of Allegheny Wood Products' proposal to turn the world-class, scenic Blackwater Canyon Trail — located on our public National Forest land — into a commercial logging haul road for AWP (and a road to AWP's planned condominium sites.)

The scoping comment period was from April 13 to May 31st. If you commented, in response to Friends of Blackwater's e-mails and postcards — THANK YOU!! And if you commented back in 2003 (over 10,000 people did) — THANK YOU!!

It is important to take part in this formal public comment process. But making "scoping" comments is not enough — way, way not enough!

In the coming months, we must visibly impress on the Forest Service, and on all of our public officials, the level of horror that we feel — that our National Forest would consider subsidizing a plan to open up our public land, our "Crown Jewel," the Blackwater Canyon — to destructive logging, road building, and development.

The Forest Service and every public official must understand that studies and comment periods are not going to solve this problem. Public officials, including the Forest Service, must decide and promise that they will not facilitate the degradation and destruction of the Blackwater Canyon; and that they will actively work for its protection!!

Say No To Allegheny Wood Products' Public Land Grab!

There is another vital issue at stake. The Monongahela National Forest is twisting the meaning of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act to justify giving away the use of our public lands for commercial gain. This kind of public land - grab by the timber industry will happen again and again — if we don't stand up against it in the Monongahela National Forest.

Please go to the Friends of Blackwater website, www.saveblackwater.org, and follow the mailings and e-mails throughout the coming summer, to keep abreast of how you can make your voice heard on these important issues.

Extensive comments to the Forest Service on the scope of the study and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act are on the Friends of Blackwater website.

Issues that the Forest Service must study include:

Solid research on endangered species along the Trail and on lands that border the Trail — where a logging road and intended land use changes to develop condominiums sites will alter critical habitat. More endangered species have been found in the area, including additional West Virginia flying squirrels, Cheat Mountain salamanders and Indiana bats raising young in the forests in the Blackwater drainage.

Cultural resources. New information is available from the West Virginia Division of Highways on the cultural resources in their Blackwater Trail Phase I study, published in May of 2003 which states that the trail is an historically protected site.

De-watering of the Blackwater River from a proposed mine should be studied. The reduction will make the River more vulnerable to degradation from sediment from road building and development in an area already prone to erosion and slippage.

AWP claims of access to the trail under Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act must be studied. Our lawyers say this law does not apply because the AWP property is not surrounded by federal land.

The Friends of Blackwater will let it be known when the EIS Alternative Plans for Blackwater Canyon are published. Meanwhile, help keep the pressure on this summer. We must not lose our scenic



MORE BATS AND WINDMILLS (Continued from p. 1)

curred on low wind nights. From these facts, the researchers inferred that some sort of weather related or food availability related factor was at work.

For three of the six weeks of the study period, researchers used thermal imaging to track both bats and insects. These studies confirmed that most of the bat fatalities occurred on low wind nights. The bats appear to be attracted to movement and would occasionally chase moving blades. They will, however, investigate non-moving blades as well as the masts of the turbines.

The study suggests further research, including full season studies and investigation of the relationships between weather and blade movement and bat fatalities. It also suggested investigation of techniques to make wind turbines less attractive to bats.

Although we are now well into the 2005 season, no bat fatality research is currently going on at the Mountaineer or Meyersdale sites.

This lack of research during 2005 is a result of a dispute in the most productive approach between Bat Conservation International, one of the members of the Bats and Wind Energy Cooperative which conducted the research, and Florida Power and Light, the owner of both the Mountaineer and Meyersdale sites. Bat Conservation International wants to continue the bat fatality studies, expanding the research to include the entire April through October season. It also wants to explore the possibility of turning off some of the turbines during some off and measuring lost

power and reduced bat fatalities which results. Florida Power and Light wants to limit research to developing "deterrent" technologies. A "deterrent" is some sort of acoustical device to keep bats away from turbines. Florida Power and Light will allow access to its sites for deterrent testing but not for research into bat fatalities or techniques for reducing bat fatalities by turning off some of the turbines.



“ECOTERRORISM”: NEW THREAT OR NEW RHETORIC

By Renae Bonnett

The ecological movement has survived banter from the beginning; but the newest nickname, “ecoterrorism”, offers cynicism the environmental community should not ignore. This latest word jumble fuses two distinctly unrelated terms, ecology and terrorism, forming what the FBI calls the number one terror threat in America. According to the May 19, 2005, FBI report, “ecoterrorism” draws the attention of the US government’s antiterrorism efforts onto defenders of nature. Unlike former “green” or “nature lover” nametags pinned on environmentalists, this latest appellation is not a pet name exemplifying positions on ecological issues.

The logical meaning of “ecoterror” implies ecological terror. This meaning meets with commonsense and syntactic interpretation, but reasoned definitions have no consequence in a world of neologism, words fashioned to appease the desires of the word’s creators.

In a Newsmax article, dated May 20, 2005, Wes Vernon discusses the recent decision to move “ecoterrorism” to the top of the FBI list. Vernon’s article greatly relies on information arising from the May 18, 2005, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee meeting, held by Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), and the finding which quoted FBI head John Lewis as concluding that the potential for terror from environmental groups outweighs any other in America today. This clarifies the government’s definition of “ecoterrorism”, but the article fails to explain how the term came about, who invented it, or the limits of its application.

An examination of the term lands a researcher square on the website (of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, a group advocating the industrialization of natural resources under an idea of business or corporate rights.

The website carries the profile of the group’s main phrase turner and vice president, Ron Arnold. Mr. Arnold authored the 1983 Reason Magazine piece entitled “Eco Terrorism.” The Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise further credits Arnold as the father of the Wise Use Movement, a manifesto advocating that environmentalism is senseless. The Center for

have a blurb regarding hoaxes, the site leaves the act of reporting terrorism to the honor system, user-friendly menus, and any individual’s perspective.

In the perspective of some, forest clear cutting, mountain leveling, filling air and water with toxins, risk the health of humans and the environment well into the future and qualify as acts of ecological terror. Part of that perspective suggests if someone stood in the way of such acts, or brought attention to attacks robbing the nation of its very ability to sustain life; labels like “hero” and “patriot” would apply. Nevertheless, this perspective does not exist in the present consideration of the FBI report nor with Mr. Arnold and his group at the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise website. In their perspective, “ecoterrorism” is the potential or possibility of vandalism or aggressive action by folks defending America’s air, water, and land.

In light of the FBI’s newly designated national terror threat priority, perhaps some wonder if hate groups, clinic bombers, and gangs suddenly evaporated across America. That is not the case. Although international terrorists carried out the events of September 11, 2001, horrific acts of terror have spun from groups right here at home. Timothy McVeigh’s links to supremacist, militia-type groups are well known; his actions killed scores of people in Oklahoma City, including children. Terror has struck in the form of bombs and murder meant to carry out the message of anti-abortion activists. Yet, in the eyes of the FBI, these groups fall short of the danger posed by nature lovers.

Here lies the turning point, the place people should pause for contemplation and question the wisdom of allowing hate groups to slip out of focus, while the FBI spotlights “tree-huggers” and “peaceniks” as potential terrorists.



the Defense of Free Enterprise website boasts of Ron Arnold’s work with committees in Washington DC, highlighting Arnold’s 1998 testimony before Congress advocating a link between environmentalism and terrorism. Curiously, Vernon’s Newsweek article discussing the FBI’s conclusions on “ecoterrorism” omits mention of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, Ron Arnold, or their lengthy work to characterize environmentalism as dangerous as well as an impedance to the industrialization of natural resources.

From the cdfef.org site, you are only an anonymous mouse click away from reporting terrorism in your own backyard. The Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise’s site offers to aid in the reporting of so called terrorists in the claim “...[t]o operate a network by which information on environmentalists or environmentalists who may have committed a crime in the name of saving nature...”. While the site does

SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE IN LONG SLEEVE MODEL

We now have I [heart] Mountains long sleeve shirts in sizes M,L, XL. The shirt is heavy cotton and white with blue lettering. The heart is red. \$15 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

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 the I [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. \$10 by mail. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to Julian Martin, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

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, and XXXL. \$10 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:

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WVHC
Box 306
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

Join Now !!!



West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
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✕

Yes! Sign me up.

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Student/	\$15		
Introductory/			
Other	\$15		
Regular	\$25	\$35	\$50
Associate	\$50	\$75	\$100
Sustaining	\$100	\$150	\$200
Patron	\$250	\$250	\$500
Mountaineer	\$500	\$750	\$1,000

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

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Working to Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful!

MORE FROM PRESIDENT HUGH (Continued from p. 2)

ing of ecology sharpens, land uses we permit and rights we protect will have to adapt. The colonial-era understanding that landowners could neither exclude nor harm the public by their use of the land, yielded during the Nineteenth Century to an overriding concern for industrial growth. What landowners did and who they kept out was more and more a matter for private decision. We are heirs of that period. There is no better example of the extremes it reached than mountaintop removal mining.

Recent protests against mining practices have focused on a Massey Energy-owned facility that operates a coal preparation plant, loading silo and sludge impoundment above Marsh Fork Elementary School in Sundial. The silo is 150 feet away from the school. The state Department of Environmental Protection has permitted Massey's application to build a second coal-loading silo there. The situation has become intolerable for parents and activists with Coal River Mountain Watch. Their demands for toxicity testing of the school's air and soil have apparently been granted,

but only after the protests climaxed with arrests for trespass.

Katherine Kenny, a spokesperson for Massey Coal, said, "I know the people who are protesting don't agree, but there's nothing going on that isn't done at processing plants across the country." Everyone does it. That may be true. If so, we, the public, have permitted it, and we can withdraw our permission.

It's a long way from my private trespass in Virginia to the public-interest trespass at Sundial, and I can't get back in the length of this column. Instead, I'll recommend an article, "The Culture of Owning," in the March/April issue of Orion magazine. It's by Eric Freyfogle, a professor of law at the University of Illinois, who writes: "Americans have largely forgotten the links between property rights and the common good."

They're not doing enough already? **LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO HELP COAL**

Finance subcommittee C of the West Virginia Legislature has agreed to look at all aspects of West Virginia's coal industry during the interim sessions of the Legislature. According to chair Billy Wayne Bailey, D-Wyoming, this includes examining the tax structure, permitting, infrastructure — anything that affects coal.

The Subcommittee intends to visit both surface and underground mines as part of its work. Bill Raney, head of the West Virginia Coal Association, offered to arrange the tours.

The committee accepted a motion by Sen. Sarah Minear, R-Tucker, to meet more than once within a three-day interim session, if it's deemed necessary.

The panel also wants the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to conduct a walk-through in its permitting process — long a thorn in the industry's side.

OUR READERS WRITE--THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

Dear Editor:

I'm writing about some recent comments in the Highlands Voice (and elsewhere) about Linda Cooper's article on wind power.

Like the authors of those comments, I live in the West Virginia coalfields. My daughters went to school across from a coal loading yard. The Whitetail mine in the Upper Freeport seam is just down the road. Over half of the streams in my home county, Preston, are permanently poisoned by mine waste.

I fought coal companies on environmental issues — for a living — for a decade. We sued regulators right and left; we won some battles, and lost some, too. I helped found a watershed group in my neighborhood that manages a \$4 million dollar community stream treatment trust fund that we took from a coal company. Our kids are monitoring and protecting the stream, and hopefully their kids will, too.

Because of my experiences as a coalfields resident, I believe it's not right to criticize people who are fighting for their community's welfare against giant corporate wind farms.

Of course, windpower's day is coming.

But right now there are absolutely no siting regulations. Big law firms are telling their giant power company clients: "Get in now, lock in a site, before there's regulation!" What happens? Secret negotiations with the county commission, backroom deals, and lo and behold! — "grandfathered" permits, before there's any consideration of local impacts.

People who do not live or own land in the long ridges of the High Alleghenies, or who do not visit there for recreation and renewal, may not appreciate that the brilliant, unspoiled, Switzerland-like scenic vistas of this area are the primary economic value of these lands.

With no siting criteria, corporate tax subsidies for wind farms allow them to externalize

the true cost of their operations to local communities. Sound familiar, fellow coalfield residents? So, in the Highlands, long-term resident families, farmers, and recreational landowners and developers are saying "no" to the entirely uncompensated destruction of hundreds and



hundreds of miles of scenic landscape.

Meanwhile, the rare bats and birds that the turbines kill by the thousands are a good legal angle for opposing unregulated wind farm siting — because the law is more specifically protective of certain creatures than it is of people and their property.

Every energy expert, from every perspective, agrees that in the near term, twenty to forty years, no Appalachian power plant capacity or projected coal usage would be affected by Appalachian wind power, even at land-use saturation. The multi-billion-dollar scrubbers being installed on the John Amos Plant will

cause ten times more Appalachian coal mining than what thousands of wind plants would avoid — because the scrubbers will allow medium-sulfur West Virginia and Kentucky coal to be used, instead of low-sulfur coal from Wyoming. (Because those scrubbers won't be able to capture Co2, they will do nothing for global warming.)

In the Highland counties of West Virginia, at courthouses and in barbershops and cafes, ordinary folks say that we should stop corporate wind farm siting until there are siting regulations that take into account long-term impacts — on nature, and on real estate values, tourism, and development potential. Members of Congress like Allen Mollohan and Lamar Alexander have joined this call.

The recent comments on Linda Cooper's article suggest that the writers, who like me (and Linda Cooper) live in the West Virginia coalfields, "suffer more" than people who are coping with industrial wind farms.

There is no place in the Voice for this kind of victimology and invidious comparison. I hope the Editor will exercise some discretion to prevent this from going further, or people will turn from the Voice. The WVHC is a platform, but one of the accepted "rules" of using the platform is not to bait others who are using the platform, too.

By the way, Linda Cooper began fighting strip mining 30 years ago. She is a native of Tucker County (also in the coalfields) and her environmental/community organizing and activist credentials are exemplary. An apology would show the sensibility of the commenters and their cause.

Tom Rodd
Moatsville, WV

Dear Editor:

A little late, but I wish to write a note regarding an article in the April, 2005, Highlands Voice.

On pages 13-15, there is an article talking about the economic effects of a "High Allegheny National Park." It sounds to me like a good idea. I very much appreciate the Shenandoah National Park here within driving distance of the Shenandoah Valley.

I've traveled through the area of Blackwater Falls, Canaan Valley, Dolly Sods, et cetera many times. The area would be ideal for a National Park - or a recognized State Park that would encompass a large area. Throw in a few elk, and it would be a national attraction on the East Coast!

As distances become "smaller" and populated urban areas be-

come larger, we need more areas to which we can escape, and enjoy the out-of-doors. Recognizable parks are a primary need. If the area were large enough to encompass many of the natural attractions between Route 33 and the H Corridor. It would easily become a recognizable area that rivals other national parks in the nation. And as I've said before, even a State Park with boundaries that encompass already proven scenic attractions would be an economic attraction.

The large state park in Upper New York State is so planned that already existing communities are incorporated into the Park.

Just a few thoughts.

Robert McFadden
Bridgewater, VA

ON WILDERNESS AND VALUES

Commentary by Russ Young

I've enjoyed the op-eds written for the Charleston Gazette by Mary Wimmer of the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition. Her 2003 article, supporting the establishment of new wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest was rebutted by Dennis LeBare. His rebuttal was a truly remarkable load of opinions. Here is how I summarize the differences between their positions: Some people have a reverence for nature and the way it was designed to work, while others seem to think that all of existence revolves around humans and was intended solely for their exploitation.

Mr. LeBare wrote in his rebuttal to Ms. Wimmer, that the West Virginia license plate logo "...means that our lovely state is in a 'Wild and Wonderful' condition now—not something we are trying to achieve. We don't need Wimmer and her ilk to deliver it. We have it. God gave it to us." I wonder if he has seen an aerial photograph of the mountain top removal operation just a short drive from my home in eastern Kanawha County; is this how we're to treat what God gave us? LeBare repeatedly refers to "environmental extremists"; but as long as the land continues to be raped in many brutally unrepentant ways, he must expect that someone will pursue its protection and preservation.

LeBare goes on to say that "Lack of timbering has cheated the jurisdictions that contain the Mon Forest out of millions and millions [of dollars]!" Actually, it's likely the only folks who've even potentially been denied any lucrative windfalls are those out-of-state interests that roll in, perform major extraction, and then roll out again—all the while taking note that West Virginia is an easy mark.

"Since you can only walk [in the wilderness], deer hunters go elsewhere so they can use vehicles to get their game out!" LeBare continued, "Deer hunting is a huge economic machine in West Virginia! There's 78,000 acres of wilderness now. Enough!" Every year in this state, more than 220,000 deer are slaughtered (some prefer the term "harvested"). Enough!

"Old forest lacks the shrub, vine and under story layer of younger forest and provides virtually no cover or food for wildlife. But the young, dog-hair thick brushy forest does!" wrote LeBare. Humans can exhibit laughable audacity, such as in the concepts of "forest planning" and "wildlife manage-

ment"—as if we're somehow more knowledgeable and capable of those tasks than even nature itself.

LeBare referred to a meeting he convened that included many experts, including a biologist from the Ruffed Grouse Society. Ever notice that the creatures supported by organized human "so-

sponsors in the legislature for resolutions he drafted opposing wilderness expansion. "Why?" LeBare asks. He then answers that, "Legislators know common sense when they see it." Sometimes, this can be true. Often, though, they also know the smell, sound, taste and feel of the almighty dollar.

At last we agreed when LeBare exclaimed, "Private landowners beware!" By all means, every West Virginian should beware of; blasting that shatters their windows; 60+ ton behemoths that pulverize their roads; layers of dust that cover all their possessions; drilling that sucks their otherwise perpetual wells dry; subsidence that drops the earth out from under their feet; flooding that sweeps their homes off foundations; slurry and sludge pond breaches that poison all life in their streams....

China and India, the world's most populated nations, are working feverishly to expand their economies. The toll they will exact on the earth's resources might soon match, and eventually exceed, even that of the United States. This creates a never ending demand on all land—and ceaseless pressure to make West Virginia resemble Kansas. Some view this as economic opportunity, and it is—but not for most West Virginians. It hasn't been for almost a century and a half of statehood, and neither will it be in the future. It's time to begin making critical decisions about that fate.

I'm no real authority on this subject, except that I'm a nature lover and I try to keep current on associated issues. Mr. LeBare, though, was listed as having many credentials, among them a master's degree in ecology. I may have to reexamine my own understanding of the definition of that term; for, if the views he holds are truly those of an ecologist, then I've been sadly mistaken about the study of the relationship between living things and their environments.

Russell Young is on the board of directors of the Kanawha State Forest Foundation and is past president of the Handlan Chapter of the Brooks Bird Club. . Russ works as a residential designer and has written articles for Graffiti and the Charleston Gazette about historical preservation.



Shattered tree from lightning strike.
Photo by Jonathan Jessup.

cieties" are either a) subject to legally regulated slaughter, or b) now strictly protected after being slaughtered to near extinction?

LeBare wrote that there were a lot of co-

STILL IN NEED OF SOMETHING TO READ

Dear Mr.. McFerrin:

We would just like to bring to your attention and to that of your readers a couple of articles in the March/April 2005 issue of Orion Magazine that we believe are pertinent to West Virginia and the issues which The Highlands Voice address.

The first is an article by Eric T. Freyfogle titled "The Culture of Owning," and calls for "...a new concept of liberty that doesn't equate 'property rights' with personal freedom." This insightful article discusses the concept of property rights as personal freedom defined by Thomas Jefferson, and addresses the evolution of America's changing definition of private property rights to reflect our nation's changing times. During these changing times we have strayed from the "good of the people" and "do no harm" principles of property ownership to the belief that private property ownership gives one the right to simply do what one wants with their property, regardless of the consequences

to others.

The second Orion article is written by Laura Paskus, entitled "The Union Makes Them Strong," discussing the recent "blue-green alliance" of industrial worker unions and representatives of the environmental movement. This seemingly unlikely coming together of the United Steelworkers of America and the Sierra Club addresses the issues of American job security and alternative energy initiatives. The two groups were brought together "... under the guidance of the Public Health Institute, a New York-based non-profit that helps people build coalitions."

These two very informative articles are pertinent to West Virginia for one very simple reason: COAL.

As former West Virginians now living in the state of Mississippi, we hope that our beloved hills and mountains will still be there when we retire back to the "farm" near Fayetteville.

Troy O. Martin & Pamela Bailey, Vicksburg, MS

LOTS OF FUN AT THE WILDERNESS COALITION WORKSHOP

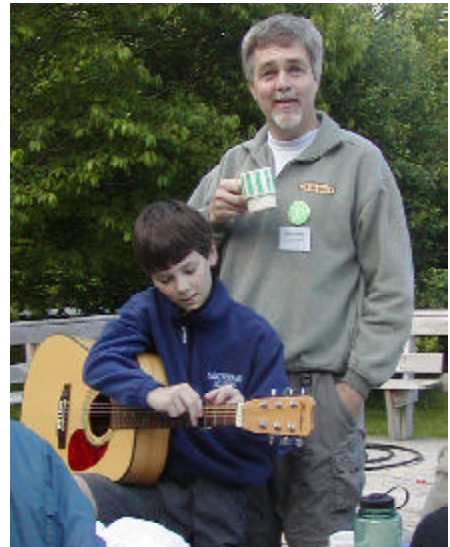
The yurts and accommodations at The Mountain Institute's Spruce Knob campus provided an excellent venue for the weekends workshops and outings.



Wilderness Campaign Coordinator Matt Keller tells it like it is.



Doug and Rush Milam entertain us during breakfast on Sunday morning.



KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY

The draft of the new management plan for the Monongahela National Forest is at the printers. Most of it is currently on the Forest Service's website. It will probably be released in late July for a three month public comment period.

Comments submitted before the draft release in late July are not considered. Those wishing to comment will have to wait until then.

WAY TO LEARN ABOUT WEST VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources publishes *West Virginia Wildlife*. It is a quarterly magazine on plants and animals in West Virginia as well as what the Department of Natural Resources is doing to study, protect, manage, etc. those plants and animals.

Subscriptions are free and come highly recommended by Don Gasper.

To subscribe, write:

West Virginia Wildlife
P. O. Box 67
Elkins, WV 26241

GROUPS OPPOSE POWER PLANT IN GREENBRIER COUNTY

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, The Greenbrier Watershed Association, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, and Coal River Mountain Watch have objected before the West Virginia Public Service Commission to the issuance of a siting certificate to Western Greenbrier co-Generation, LLC. If approved, the certificate would allow Western Greenbrier to construct and operate a facility in Greenbrier County. The facility is an experimental project designed to generate electricity by burning both newly mined coal and waste coal from a waste coal site at Anjean.

In objecting to the facility, the groups made the following arguments:

1. The Western Greenbrier Co-Production proposal is a "demonstration project", the first of at least four similar projects. The Public Service Commission should consider the environmental impact of all.

2. As a demonstration project, Western Greenbrier should, but does not, use state-of-the-art pollution control technology and low impact fuels. Instead, the project reaffirms the use of low-quality waste coal as a primary fuel source, does not use the best pollution control technologies for all pollutants, and helps lead the region away from sustainable sources of power. The reliance of the project on waste coal and significant amounts of high quality coal also promotes continued mountaintop removal coal mining. At a minimum, the project should significantly reduce their proposed sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury emission rates, to meet Clean Air Act requirements for Best Available Control Technology, and reduce emissions of other hazardous air pollutants including acid gases, and heavy metals.

3. The proposed power plant is advertised as a "co-generating power plant of advanced design that will be the center of a synergistic eco-park." Since, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, the project is a "high-risk" activity that utilizes unproven technologies that may not be commercially viable, the PSC should examine the plant on its own without giving credit for activities which may never materialize.

4. Western Greenbrier LLC has struggled to finance this project; so far it has relied almost entirely upon public money. Were the electricity really needed, financing the plant would not be such a struggle. Many of the actions proposed in addition to generating electricity – creation of the eco-park; creation of an agricultural project that can use generated heat to create a commercially viable floral, fruit and vegetable market; marketing of Woodbrix; buff-

ered ash adequately treating AMD from the Anjean waste pile – require significant capital expenditure for implementation. If the partnership struggles to finance the plant by relying almost entirely on public money, the PSC should not expect that secondary projects will be fully implemented or implemented at all.

5. The proposed project is not necessary or preferable in order to clean up the Anjean gob pile or other gob piles. The coal industry is currently obligated to pay money into the State's Special Reclamation Fund sufficient to remediate in perpetuity acid mine drainage discharges like the one at Anjean. If the Special Reclamation Fund is not sufficient to remediate the site, the coal industry is legally obligated to pay more money into the fund to clean it up. Taxpayers should not be forced to clean up a mess made by the coal industry – a mess for which the coal industry is still legally responsible. Nor should the PSC fall victim to the assumption that the gob piles will be eliminated. Significant portions of the gob are likely to be too low in BTU value to burn, even when co-fired with higher quality coal.

6. Significant quantities of ash and CFB wastes will be generated and must be disposed of.

7. It appears that the owner of the Anjean gob pile is bankrupt. If that is the case the Western Greenbrier project should not allow that owner, or subsequent owners, to escape environmental liabilities resulting from their ownership of the property. Indeed, it may be improper for the owner of the gob pile to sell it to an entity that lacks the financial resources to clean up the pollution discharged from the pile.

8. The plant will cause a loss of property values and aesthetic offense because of environmental degradation including plant noise, dust and congestion from truck traffic, and degradation of air and water quality.

9. Taxpayer expense of maintaining and upgrading local roads to accommodate traffic from the facility.

10. Adverse impacts to air quality from power plant emissions of NOx, SO2, hazardous metals and radionuclides and particulates including increased smog.

11. Adverse impacts to health. Increased respiratory ailments can occur in the area of power plants but impacts on the young and elderly are most likely.

12. Economic impacts from environmental degradation. The decision to support this project will have numerous negative impacts on the economy. Emissions from the project and other plants in the project network will degrade air quality and may push the region into non-

attainment for ozone. Degradation of air quality will not only trigger more stringent Clean Air Act controls but will have a negative impact on tourism, potential growth of other industries, and life quality in the area.

13. Western Greenbrier must evaluate the economic impact from loss of jobs at existing power plants whose generation capacity is displaced by the subsidized Western Greenbrier facility. Since West Virginia already produces substantially more electricity than is consumed in the state, it is likely that new capacity will largely serve to displace existing generation, thus any potential economic benefits from the new facility must be balanced against losses at existing facilities.

14. Adverse impacts from emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are currently not regulated by the WV-DEP, but will disproportionately impact West Virginia residents due to our unique susceptibility to floods, droughts and other adverse weather events. Future regulations to limit greenhouse gas emissions must be considered inevitable, and Western Greenbrier should document how it proposes to adjust to a future "carbon-limited" regulatory environment. These should include mitigation for greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration programs to offset their emissions. At a minimum, Western Greenbrier must include "Capture Ready" designs in their engineering plans so that appropriate carbon sequestration equipment can be installed cost-effectively when the inevitable mandates are implemented.

The groups are represented by The Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment.



CANAAN MOUNTAIN BACKPACK

By Mike Juskelis

Most hikers in the region head for places like Dolly Sods or Otter Creek for this holiday weekend. Don't get me wrong. I love those places but sometimes it's nice to enjoy a touch of solitude with your friends on such occasions. The foot traffic in the aforementioned hiking venues grows increasingly higher on holiday weekends with each passing year. The addition of signs to Dolly Sods North and the Wilderness further adds to the congestion. This year I decided to find a place that was relatively easy to get to, right in the middle of a popular tourist

area but still offer the feeling of a wilderness experience ... and solitude. ders that you have to literally squeeze through while lowering yourself down about three feet at the same time), passed the park stables and found ourselves hiking up Engine Run along the Davis/Allegheny Tr.

We lunched at the shelter at the intersection with the Plantation Trail. The air was pretty chilly so before long we threw our packs back on and proceeded down Plantation Trail and then on to the Railroad Grade Trail. The forest is thick with mature Hemlocks, Spruce,

Whatever its origin, it was a nice site and easily held all of our tents. Later in the year it will be filled with the smell of hay scented Fern. Around nine o'clock we saw our first and only mountain biker of the trip.

We woke up early the next day to more glorious sunshine and by 8:30 found ourselves descending Lindy Run Tr. This north section is no longer maintained by the Forest Service. Its sign has been removed from its northern junction with CLR13 but the trail still exists. It's a beautiful trail although extremely muddy in spots, just like the other trails on the mountain. The hiker is surrounded by rhododendron, huge hemlocks and spruce intermixed with yellow birch and assorted hardwoods. When you're not walking along the Run you can still hear it as it courses down its route to Blackwater Canyon.

I got a kick out of recreating this photo found in the MNF trail Guide of a lone hiker strolling along an enormous sandstone outcrop near water's edge. This time there are three hikers in the shot.

Along our final leg we stashed our packs near the parking area for the Lindy Point Overlook and walked out to enjoy even more fantastic views. On our way back to our packs we met our first real group of people as couples and families began driving down from the lodge and campground. We made quick work of the road walk and enjoyed a pleasant cool down stroll along the Shay Trace Ski Trail. We were back at the lodge by 11:30. Not counting the Lindy Point Tourists we saw two hikers and their dogs and the one night riding mountain biker in twenty-three miles of hiking. I think that's pretty close to achieving a sense of solitude.

On the way out of the park we made a quick visit to the namesake falls and then proceeded to the Purple Fiddle in Thomas for one last lunch together. As we said our good-byes it began to rain. The trip ended as it began.



Deja vu on Lindy Run Trail: Left photo by Allen de Hart (MNF Trail Guide, 7th ed.), date unknown. Right photo by Mike Juskelis, May 30, 2005.

area but still offer the feeling of a wilderness experience ... and solitude.

The seeds of the plan were planted last September when Janet and I rented a cabin at Blackwater Falls State Park. I hiked alone for three days, exploring the park trail system and about 80% of all the MNF trails within the constraints of CLR 13 (Canaan Loop Road 13). Over those 3 days I hiked about 30 miles and saw no hikers and only one mountain biker. After I went home and worked up the data I had collected I decided that a 23 miles/3 day circuit on Canaan Mountain might provide more solitude than the other popular venues while losing very little, if any, of that Monongahela magic that we all enjoy.

I was joined by Doc, The Coca-cola Kid, Chardonay, Dr. Mike, Hungry Ted, Indiana Moser and Cognac Jack. It had been raining since Cumberland but as if on cue the weather broke exactly at noon, our predetermined step-off time. The walk along Yellow Birch Trail was pleasant. The Rhodos and Hemlocks quickly engulfed us. In no time we passed through an area I call the Big Squeeze (Two large boul-

Rhododendron and Mountain Laurel. Even though the sun had come out, the canopy almost totally blocked it out in spots. By four o'clock we had made camp, another shelter next to a pleasant, gurgling, rocky stream. Dr. Mike and Chardonay laid claim to the shelter while the rest of us pitched our tents on a hill behind it.

The next day we broke camp around nine and hiked out to CLR13 and headed to the focal point of the outing, Table Rock. What a view! This is where we met the first two humans on the trip, a father and son out for a day hike with their dogs.

We reached camp by 3:30. The rain never materialized so we enjoyed a longer than usual evening camped out in the woods. I don't know the history of the spot but it must have had some relevance back in the logging days. It's an almost perfect circular opening in the spruce about 10 yards from the headwaters of Lindy Run. A small pile of left over gravel in one corner makes me think the area was connected to the maintenance of either the Plantation Trail or the jeep trail that preceded it long ago.



BACKPACKING AT DOLLY SODS NORTH

By Mike Juskelis

It felt great to get away from the first major east coast heat wave of the year. In Baltimore we went from a pleasant spring with crisp, cool temperatures to the customary heat and humidity of the region overnight, almost as if someone had turned on a switch. Here on the Allegheny Front the highs would be in the low 80s with nighttime temps in the 50s. Hopefully a gentle breeze and the rolling clouds would further comfort us on our journey.

I was joined by Water Bug, Shutterbug and Indiana Moser, together known as the Water Rats, as well as Al, Wendy, Mike and Vicki. We started down the Bear Rocks Trail at 12:30. Wild Azaleas dotted the scenery before us. The Mountain Laurel will be popping out soon, maybe in two weeks but not today.

It became apparent early on that water crossings were going to be an issue on this trip, not because of high water but because of the propensity of the Water Rats to "jump in" at every given chance. We crossed the head waters of Red Creek easily enough but then there was one splash, two splashes, then three splashes behind us as Leena, Andy and Don dropped their packs, kicked off their boots and began to frolic in the cool water. We let them "have at it" for about ten minutes and then slowly enticed them to get back on the trail. We made good time traveling up Raven Ridge, I think mainly because there was no water to be had. Someone had removed the marker for the reroute of the Rocky Ridge Trail but we were able to spot the USFS bomb warning sign that is posted on the trail and bushwhacked over to it. We were only off course by about one hundred yards.

We hiked along the ridge to Rocky Knob where we took an extended break. From the highest rock one has an almost 360 degree view of all that is around you: Canaan Mountain and Valley, Dolly Sods North, Raven Ridge... etc. Scheduling issues prevented a scouting trip to locate suitable campsites for this outing but John and Trudy Phillips had assured me that we would find plenty of places to camp on the Left Fork of Red Creek just north of the Black Bird Knob Trail.

They were right. By 6:00 we were pitching our tents in a mature Red Spruce Grove with the creek at our feet. Surprisingly, the Water Rats accomplished their chores first before taking the prerequisite soak in the creek in a Hot Tub-sized pool a little downstream from the campsite. Shutterbug was appointed fire attendant for the night and Indiana was the self-proclaimed Fire Marshall. Wood was at a premium so the fire was small and short-lived but that ended up being OK. One by one everyone realized how tired they really were and finally called it a day.

We awoke to clear blue skies. One could tell we would see high

temperatures again but the humidity had diminished greatly. We hit the trail a little after nine. By 10:00 we were stashing our packs along the upper reaches of the Red Creek Trail and descending to "The Forks" of Red Creek.

Needless to say the Water Rats, and everyone else, had a blast as they waded in the swimming hole and splashed about under the mini-waterfalls. A three foot water snake, obviously perched on his personalized warming rock, refused to retreat and watched the antics of our crew for our entire stay. After everyone was totally refreshed we climbed back up to the junction with Black Bird Knob Trail and recovered our gear. Everyone thought that stashing our packs was a good idea since the climb back would have been a lot more strenuous with loads on our back.



We hiked up Upper Red Creek Trail and descended to the final crossing of Red Creek on Dobbin Grade. By this time we all had the routine down pat. We crossed the stream, took off our packs and pulled out the munchies as we watched the trio frolic in the water one last time. To be honest I was a bit jealous. For the entire trip the water looked so inviting but I had recently received a deep cut on my calf and the doctor advised that I stay out of untreated water until it was healed. Still, a wet bandanna draped over my head as I lay amongst the Bluets was a reasonable substitute.

We resumed the last leg of the trip, checking out the minute carnivorous Sundew plants growing around those dreadful seeps that have become the hallmark of Dobbin Grade as we went along. Finally we retraced our steps on Bear Rocks Trail back out to our cars parked on FR75, taking in the green bogs accentuated with the rich pinkness of the Azaleas one last time. The trip was over by 2:00. We freshened up as best we could, said our good-byes and parted company by 2:30. Once again DSN had left a group of hikers feeling tired but eternally rewarded with its beauty.

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 imagine mew@aol.com or 304-342-8989.

FREE MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL BUMPER STICKERS

To get a free **I(HEART)Mountains** bumper sticker(s), send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Rd., Charleston, WV 25314

MOUNTAIN LAUREL FESTIVAL

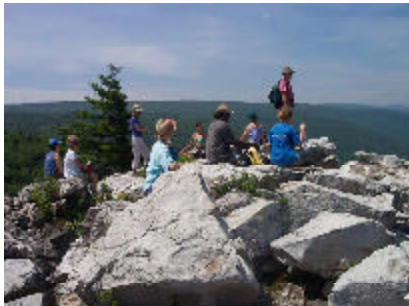
By Mike Juskelis

It felt so good to be away from the heat and humidity of the city. It was still warm in the North Fork Valley and the haze was pretty thick but it was nothing compared to the sweltering conditions in the Baltimore/D.C. area.

I was joined by Janet, Ann, Carol, 3 Marys, Miriam, Pat, Bob, Joy and Daryl. We had all arrived and were ready to hike up to the top of Seneca Rocks by 3:30. I've hiked up to the top of this wonder of nature countless times. I'll admit that some of the novelty has worn off but I still get a kick from others seeing North Fork Valley from this lofty perch for the first time. It wasn't hard to talk the entire group into scrambling up the last few yards to the very top. They thought they were finally seeing WV! They were ... sort of ... but then most of them didn't know what tomorrow's hike through Dolly Sods would bring them.

The next day we were out of camp by a little after 8:30. We dropped off one half of our vehicles at the Blackbird Knob trailhead on FR75. Even before the hike started all were impressed with the expansive views across the Sods and the dense floral display of Mountain Laurel. It looked like we arrived at the peak of the festival!

We jumped into the remaining vehicles and drove down to the Dolly Sods Picnic area on FR19. Our plan was to hike Rohrbaugh Plains, Fisher Spring Run, Red Creek and Blackbird Knob trails back to the cars on FR75, a total distance of 10.2 miles.



This is a good introductory hike for newcomers to Dolly Sods. One starts off walking through a boreal Red Spruce forest with a thick Rhododendron under-story, carpets of hay-scented ferns, moss covered rocks and trails lined with Pink Wood Sorrel.

As we reached the edge of this forest we paused for a few minutes. I suggested that everyone study their surroundings because this is what all of Dolly Sods and Dolly Sods

North used to look like. Everything else we would view today would be the result of man's use and misuse of this mountaintop plateau and the attempt by nature to right itself.

We passed through several clearings, some full of grasses and wild flowers, others full of the sweet aroma of even more Hay-scented Ferns. We climbed up onto a railroad grade and followed it through a long stretch of hardwood forest before being dumped out into a thicket of Mountain Laurel in its prime.

Everyone was impressed with the richness of the bloom. After forcing ourselves to walk through a virtual tunnel of flowers without sneaking peeks of the valley we arrived at the infamous "Unnamed Vista". We scrambled across the rocks and took in the view.

There are probably other more awesome views in the Mon but there is something to be said for being able to peer down into a valley knowing that there is no trace of civilization down there. Yesterday's haze was gone so we lingered a bit knowing that it is not that often that all of the variables line up to make a totally perfect hiking day. Even the Lion's Head on the opposite side of the valley was clearly visible!

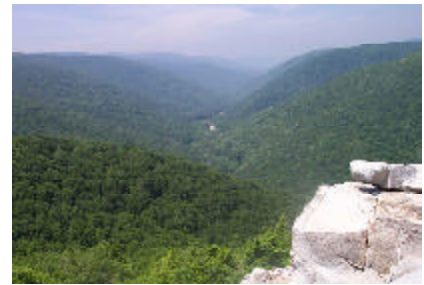
After our protracted stay at the vista we continued on our course, walking through more Mountain Laurel, Hay-scented Fern, hardwood forest and railroad grades to the junction with Fisher Spring Run Trail. We descended to Red Creek Trail and followed another old railroad grade upstream to a popular swimming hole below a waterfall. Almost everyone took advantage of the cold mountain stream. We alternated between swimming in the pool, sitting under the pulsating streams of the waterfall and basking in the sun. It seemed like we were there forever, not wanting to leave our little oasis.

We eventually got ourselves motivated. We crossed the creek above the falls since the water level was so low. We made quick work of the steep climb that has to be accomplished when hiking this part of the trail and soon found ourselves at "The Forks of Red Creek".

Some of us were back in the water without even thinking. Most of the rest, after realizing that they might not get the chance to do this again anytime soon, quickly joined in for one last swim. This is a great place to cool off and the scenery is top drawer but we all agreed that the lower swimming hole was more refreshing. Although smaller it was

deeper and cooler. After lowering our body temperature a few degrees one last time we once again put on our daypacks and climbed up through more Mountain Laurel thickets to Blackbird Knob.

As we came closer to the end of the hike we had to walk along a stretch of trail that was totally open to the sun and she was shining quite brightly today. It seems that little



piece of trail was harder to negotiate than anything we had hiked over the entire day... then we stopped and turned around, taking in the Sods and distant ridges as far away as the Roaring Plains. No words were spoken ... maybe there was a sigh or two ... as people pulled out their cameras to take a final picture at the end of an excellent trip. The fatigue seemed to melt away. The remainder of the hike was brisk and effortless. We hit the boardwalk that marks the home stretch and soon returned to our cars, all in the best of spirits.

Everyone was tired upon our return to Seneca Shadows so we passed on the usual bonfire and called it an early night. The next day we filtered out of camp one-by-one, all glad to have had the experience, many vowing to return again.



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FREE MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL 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 brochure entitled "Mountaintop Removal Destroys Our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!" For a copy send a self addressed stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

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

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

July 9th-11th, Otter Creek Wilderness 2 night Backpack, MNF, WV: Hike 14+ miles with several wide stream crossings. Camp near beautiful waterfalls and swimming holes. Limit of 10 participants. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

July 23rd, Flat-water float on the Buckhannon River. Six miles long float with some paddling and some current too. Bring fishing rod if you'd like to. Meet at the Sheetz in Buckhannon at 11am and we should be back at 4 or 5pm. Contact Don Gasper (304) 472-3704. No e-mail address for trip leader.

August 6th-7th, Canaan Fir Cone collecting volunteer opportunity. The Highlands Conservancy has been working for many years conserving West Virginia's unique Balsam fir nicknamed "Canaan Fir." Threatened by overbrowsing by white-tailed deer, and an exotic insect pest, the Balsam Woolly Adelgid, this special member of the forest community needs our help. These trees are not reliable cone producers, and only bear cones once every 3-6 years, last time in 2001. This outing is dependant on a cone crop this year. Contact Dave Saville 304-284-9548 daves@labyrinth.net.

August 12th-14th, Fri.-Sun. Mount Rogers High Country Backpack (VA): Enjoy a 21-mile backpack with spectacular views of 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. Contact Eric at backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468 for more info or to reserve your spot. Limit 10.

September 3rd-5th, Roaring Plains, Hidden Passage, Canyon, Rim 2 night Backpack, MNF, WV: 13+ miles with packs plus an optional side trip w/o packs along Long Run Canyon Rim. Night # 2 may be dry. Loads of fantastic views! Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

September 3rd-5th, Fri.-Sun Seneca Creek/Spruce Knob Area or Tea Creek Area: Still Planning -- Information forthcoming. Contact Eric at backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468 for more info or to reserve your spot. Limit 10.

September 23rd-25th, High Meadows/Seneca Creek Backpack, MNF, WV: Car Camp at primitive Spruce Knob Campground on Friday night. Backpack 13 miles from Spruce Knob to the headwaters of Seneca Creek on Saturday/Sunday. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

Late September/Early October TBA. Dolly Sods North: Still Planning. Information Forthcoming. Contact Eric at backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468 for more info or to reserve your spot. Limit 10.

October 8th-10th, Great North Mountain Backpack, GWNF, VA/WV: 21+ mile strenuous backpack featuring 4 fantastic overlooks. Will hike 7 miles on day 1, 10 miles on day 2 and approximately 5 miles on day 3. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 8th-9th and October 15 & 16: Red Spruce cone collecting volunteer opportunity: (two weekends!) 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 and Canaan Valley State Parks. Contact Dave Saville 304-284-9548 daves@labyrinth.net.

October 8th and 9th Trip into Roaring Plains, when the fall colors are at max. Trip leader: Susan Bly. Outing and details still tentative.

October 15th-17th, Cranberry Wilderness Backpack, MNF, WV: Approximately 24 mile circuit mostly along the drainages of North Fork of Cranberry River, Cranberry River, Beechlog Run, Laurelly Run and Middle Fork of Williams River. Mileage breakdown: 7 – 10 – 7. Should still have good fall colors this far south! Experienced Backpackers only. Limit of 10 participants. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

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. Contact in advance to schedule a time and date.